
Book Reviews

Visions and Revisions of Empire: Reflections on a New History of the Habsburg Monarchy

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Judson, Pieter M. *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. xiii + 567, 7 maps, 40 illus.

OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES, a steady stream of histories of the Habsburg monarchy and/or its ruling dynasty has appeared, reflecting the renewed interest in the region after the collapse of the Soviet bloc in central and east-central Europe. These histories—among which English-language publications predominate—fall into three broad categories. Firstly, there are those, such as Martyn Rady’s recent contribution to Oxford University Press’s *Very Short Introduction* series, that take a “from-the-beginning-to-the-end” approach in chronological terms.¹ French historian Jean Bérenger’s classical overview of the history of the Habsburg lands since 1273, first published in 1990 and subsequently translated into German and English, probably constitutes the most substantial contribution in this vein (that is to say, for the period after 1989 that is under discussion here).²

Secondly, several scholarly works have focused primarily on the dynasty, taking the Habsburgs as the main story, but in effect narrating much of the history of the eponymous polity, too. Among such histories, Andrew Wheatcroft’s cultural historical approach to “Habsburg history” (a term used here as shorthand for the history of the lands under Habsburg rule) stood out for its innovative overview of dynastic self-representation and myth making from the time of Rudolf I onward.³ Paula Sutter Fichtner’s more recent study is notable for its emphasis on the links between dynasty and society, as successive rulers faced the challenge of associating “the House of Habsburg with the changing material needs, values, customs and behaviour of [its] peoples without compromising the aura of sovereignty.”⁴ Other scholars have provided useful introductory overviews, while varying in the extent to which they have embraced new research.⁵

My grateful thanks to those colleagues who read and commented on this piece: William Godsey, Judit Pál, Matthias Egger, and Dan Unowsky.

¹Martyn Rady, *The Habsburg Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2017).

²Jean Bérenger, *Histoire de l'Empire des Habsbourg 1273–1918* (Paris, 1990).

³Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs: Embodying Empire* (London, 1995).

⁴Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburgs: Dynasty, Culture and Politics* (London, 2014).

⁵Compare: Heinz-Dieter Heimann, *Die Habsburger. Dynastie und Kaiserreiche* (Munich, 2001); Henry Bogdan, *Histoire des Habsbourg. Dès origines à nos jours* (Paris, 2005); Lothar Höbelt, *Die Habsburger. Aufstieg und Glanz einer europäischen Dynastie* (Stuttgart, 2009); Karl Vocelka, *Die Familien Habsburg und Habsburg-Lothringen*.

Third and lastly, several important syntheses on particular periods of Habsburg history have been published, largely with the express aim of distilling the new research developing since the 1980s. Charles Ingrao's volume on the Habsburg monarchy in the "long eighteenth century" (1683–1815) was a significant early contribution in this regard. Ingrao emphasized how "the monarchy emerged stronger and more secure" from each of the challenges facing it from the start of the Thirty Years War until the Wars of Coalition, before commencing on what he called "its century-long 'decline'" after 1815.⁶ Likewise focusing on the early modern period, Arno Strohmeyer's 2011 textbook concentrated on the core period from 1555 to 1740, placing the territories of the "Habsburg empires" (Austrian and Spanish) within a global context, while the ever-productive Paula Sutter Fichtner's 2003 overview straddled two epochs, ranging from the late medieval period to the mid-nineteenth century.⁷ Among works focusing on modern Habsburg history (variably understood as the period from 1740 or 1780 down to 1918), Alan Sked's discussion of the decline and fall of the Habsburg monarchy had a resounding impact after its publication in 1989. Published, as it was, on the cusp of the changes in central and east-central Europe, Sked called into question many previous assumptions about the Habsburg monarchy (a point to which we can return below).⁸

Where Sked focused on the period 1815–1918, several other authors have proffered syntheses of varying slices of modern Habsburg history. The late Helmut Rumpler's tome on Austrian history between 1804 and 1914 depicted the Habsburg monarchy as providing an "opportunity for central Europe," in a way that was much more positive about the dynastic state as a forum for the unfolding of "bourgeois emancipation" than previous German-language histories (while not being blind to "reactionary" features of the state).⁹ Robin Okey's 2001 textbook concentrated on the period from around 1765 through to 1918, but struck a more cautious note than other post-1989 works. (Okey's survey dovetails with a long-standing British tradition, based on radical and liberal critiques of the Habsburgs.¹⁰) Finally, Marco Bellabarba's 2014 synthesis is worthy of mention for being a rare overview of the Habsburg monarchy published by an Italian scholar. It provides a highly effective summary of recent historiography and stresses the "intertwining patterns of opportunism and loyalty, interests and affections that deeply permeated the imperial system."¹¹

In sum, there have been plenty of new publications on Habsburg history, but until now none that has announced itself as a "new history." The very title of Pieter Judson's ambitious volume thus constitutes a clear statement of intent and immediately raises questions as to the author's objectives, how his book relates to previous historiography, and its intended audience. It goes without saying that anyone writing a history of the Habsburg monarchy faces a highly challenging task and Judson deserves many plaudits for producing a landmark book that

Politik—Kultur—Mentalität (Vienna, 2010); Benjamin Curtis, *The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2013).

⁶Charles Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618–1815* (Cambridge, 1994), 22 and 241.

⁷Arno Strohmeyer, *Die Habsburger Reiche 1555–1740. Herrschaft, Gesellschaft, Politik* (Darmstadt, 2012); Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1490–1848* (Basingstoke, 2003).

⁸Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815–1918* (London, 1989).

⁹Helmut Rumpler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa: Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie. Österreichische Geschichte 1804–1914* (Vienna, 1997). For a similar verdict on the monarchy's viability and "positive evolution" prior to 1914, see Jean Bérenger, *L'Autriche-Hongrie 1815–1918* (Paris, 1994). Compare also Thomas Winkelbauer, ed., *Geschichte Österreichs* (Stuttgart, 2015).

¹⁰Robin Okey, *The Habsburg Monarchy, c. 1765–1918* (Basingstoke, 2001).

¹¹Marco Bellabarba, *L'impero asburgico* (Bologna, 2014), 12. Regarding other publications not in English or German (I do not read Hungarian), it is worth signaling the recent appearance of Judit Pál, *A Habsburg Monarchia története, 1526–1848* (Cluj-Napoca, 2014).

confirms his position as one of the most innovative thinkers in the field. Both timely and necessary, the volume is a tremendous read and provocative in the best sense of the word, namely the desire to bring forth response and debate. This trait characterizes all Judson's work to date and it is the reason why his latest contribution will be compulsory reading for all scholars in the field. Judson builds authoritatively on recent historiography to provide an impressive synthesis of the scholarship that has flourished over the last few decades. Yet, he offers much more than an overview. He presents a bold interpretation of "how countless local societies across central Europe engaged with the Habsburg dynasty's efforts to build a unified and unifying imperial state from the eighteenth century until the First World War" (4).

Herein lies the book's major achievement, as Judson weaves together local and regional perspectives on the Habsburg polity into a sustained narrative in a way that no other scholar has done up until now. How does he do this? And what points of debate emerge from this narrative? In this discussion, I begin by outlining the author's main arguments. I then look in greater depth at particular issues regarding the main questions Judson concentrates on: empire, nation, and the relationship between the two.

The Case for Empire

In this work, Pieter Judson argues for the Habsburg Empire as a viable, dynamic, and creative modern state, one that "cannot simply be written off as a doomed anachronism in Europe. The existence of nationalist movements and nationalist conflicts in Austro-Hungarian politics did not weaken the state fatally, and they certainly did not cause its downfall in 1918" (381). At the same time, Judson rejects conceptions of nation and empire as "binary opposites" (10), positing a dependent relationship between the two by treating "nationalism in Habsburg central Europe as a product of imperial structures and regional traditions, not as *sui generis* expressions of transhistorical ethnic groups the way that nineteenth century activists argued" (9). The author concedes that historians "long ago rejected such explanations," but maintains that "they have been less successful in developing explanations that relate the concepts of nationhood and empire in a productive fashion" (9). Consequently, he contends that "concepts of nationhood and empire depended on each other for their coherence" and developed "in dialogue with each other" (9–10). In a similar fashion to his monograph on national activism on "the language frontiers,"¹² Judson reassesses nationalism's centrality to politics and society, asserting that "nationalist movements did not always influence the concerns and rhythms of everyday life in more than a passing manner" (10). By contrast, he moves beyond his previous work by placing empire in the foreground, in the shape of Habsburg "efforts to forge a unified empire with a unified purpose" (6). The strategies employed in this enterprise and society's engagement with imperial state-building provide Judson with his main narrative thread.

At this point, specialists in the field might be tempted to ask where the "newness" in Judson's history lies. After all, Leo Valiani stated in his rather neglected classic study from 1966: "[B]efore the imperial government of Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, very few were thinking about the dissolution of the Danubian Monarchy."¹³ As modifications to earlier

¹²Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

¹³Leo Valiani, *La dissoluzione dell'Austria-Ungheria* (Milan, 1966), 10. (English version: *The End of Austria-Hungary* [London, 1973]).

views gained apace from the 1980s onward, Alan Sked's previously mentioned book provided the most forthright revisionist statement up until that time. Somewhat belying his book's title, he stated that "the fact that the monarchy *fell* does not logically have to imply any *decline* at all ... What happened was that in 1848 the Monarchy almost fell apart but thereafter recovered and in many ways *rose* rather than declined *before* 1914. It can even be argued that there was no domestic or foreign threat to its integrity until 1918."¹⁴ In particular, Sked maintained that the monarchy was not brought to the point of dissolution due to the treatment of the nationalities in the Hungarian half of the state.¹⁵ Nor was there "internal pressure" toward collapse, and here Sked cited the work of—among others—István Diószegi and Barbara Jelavich, who had argued, respectively, that national groups saw the monarchy as the appropriate arena for the fulfilment of their national aims and that no major leader or party called for the destruction of the state before 1914.¹⁶

If it seems like Judson is pushing at an open door in arguing for the viability of the Habsburg state prior to 1914, the author implicitly acknowledges as much at the outset (10–15). The key point is thus somewhat different. The novelty in Judson's work derives from the route he takes to arguing for the Habsburg state's viability; his different approach to nationalism compared to earlier "revisionists"; and above all, the fluent presentation of new scholarship to a wider audience. Indeed, an equally appropriate subtitle for this book could be "the new historiography" of the Habsburg Empire, for the author is both a sure guide to, and sophisticated ambassador for, it. In providing a "broad narrative [framework] in which to place usefully" all the "diverse new research" (545), Judson suggests that we need "large-scale alternative stories" rather than "a single narrative" of the Habsburg monarchy (15).

The story told here essentially begins with the reign of Maria Theresa (preceding eras are only sketched in briefly). In this respect, some dates in the book's title would not have gone amiss, for Judson's book in effect falls into the third category of general histories outlined in the preceding text.¹⁷ This is not a comprehensive chronological overview of the Habsburg Empire. Instead, it concentrates on the modern period, particularly the years between 1848 and 1918, which take up a good two-thirds of the volume. The author follows "a fairly conventional periodization," defined by "well-known" landmarks (6). Chapter one surveys the administrative and institutional changes of the eighteenth-century reform era down to 1780, looking at the interactions between state policy and local society. Focusing on the establishment of central institutions, Judson understands the reform of society as a top-down process, but one with which the general population engaged. For example, he presents the complaints voiced by peasants toward military assessors in the 1770s as more than just the invocation of royal authority as a counterweight to noble power: "Although in institutional terms, [the central] state barely existed as yet at the local level, it clearly held great symbolic meaning to peasants who aggressively asserted their desires to military representatives" (38). Highlighting the development of notions of citizenship and appeals to patriotism by the likes of Joseph von Sonnenfels, Judson suggests that "increasing numbers of groups in society" now "projected their own visions and desires" onto the state (50).

Chapter two examines the period 1780–1815, emphasizing the reconceptualization of subjects as citizens, who "as individual men and women" possessed "common legal rights

¹⁴Sked, *Decline and Fall*, 6 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵Ibid., 218, 231.

¹⁶Ibid., 231.

¹⁷Interestingly, the German translation makes good this omission: Pieter M. Judson, *Habsburg. Geschichte eines Imperiums 1740–1918* (Munich, 2017).

and obligations anchored in their unmediated relationship to a central state” (51). Joseph II’s attempted acceleration of state centralization provides the initial focus, before Judson turns to the change in emphasis after 1792 under Francis II/I, who—despite his “very limited imagination”—remained a “devoted servant both of the state and the law” (89). Continued centralization, the tribulations of war and revolution in Europe, and the proclamation of the new imperial title in 1804 led to a sense of “common empire,” and celebrations at the end of the Napoleonic Wars revealed the sentiments of a “pro-empire public” (102). Yet, the ruler’s conservative inclinations meant that the dynamic between state and society changed post-1815: “[F]or the first time, it was society as such that promoted the advancement of a common imperial project whose popular potential the emperor himself feared” (102). Chapter three then pursues the development of the contradictory empire ensuing from this altered dynamic: a state “strong” in terms of the extension of bureaucratic centralization, but “weak” in terms of promoting economic growth, education, and social reform. Modern economic growth nevertheless occurred, while the reformist slack was taken up by civil society; national movements added to the criticism of the regime by developing alternative visions of the state, as well as seeking to reassert traditional powers in areas such as Hungary, where the noble elite predominated. For Judson, therefore, “[T]he concept of empire as it should be became articulated more fully in society and less and less by the state itself” (154).

Consequently, when the 1848/49 revolutions broke out across Europe, “activists in Austria risked persecution and blood to realize their visions of a renewed empire” (155). With the narrative quickening its stride from chapter four onward, Judson delineates three strands to the “many revolutions” in the Habsburg lands. Firstly, “[N]oble elites tried to expand their local power against the state by demanding political autonomy within the empire, or even by establishing their full independence from Austria”; secondly, in the cities and towns, citizens “sought to subject the imperial bureaucracy to the will of society by creating a constitutional empire to oversee it”; and finally, “a third and often violent revolution swept away the vestiges of agrarian feudalism in the countryside” (155–56). Although the uprisings were eventually crushed and representative assemblies prorogued, the postrevolutionary regime “tacitly accepted the revolutions in values asserted by the revolutionaries of 1848.” Hence, “[M]ore than ever before, the empire of the Habsburgs demanded society’s engagement; it had to be understood as society’s empire” (217). Certain achievements of the revolution (above all, peasant emancipation), the role played by former liberals in government and administration, and reform policies in areas such as the economy and the education system form the basis for the author’s postulation of a modernizing “liberal empire” in the 1850s–60s.

Chapter five expounds this thesis by pointing to the renewal of dynastic self-representation, as the Habsburg court “sought new ways to increase its popularity among its recently rebellious peoples” (233). At the same time, new visions of empire were articulated by ardent promoter of capitalist development Ernst von Schwarzer; oriental scholar Joseph Hammer-Purgstall, who celebrated Austria’s multilingualism but “never questioned the privileged use of the German language in Austria’s interregional civil service or in the military” (241); and Karl von Czörnig, who mapped imperial territory ethnographically. Following Austria’s military defeats in 1859 and 1866, the return of constitutional government and the 1867 settlement with Hungary meant that, despite “the confident proclamation of imperial dictatorship in 1851,” within the space of a decade and a half, “the various practitioners of liberal politics had managed successfully to assert their vision of liberal empire against the activist absolutist politics of their Habsburg emperor, who himself had adopted several liberal tenets to his program” (268).

Chapter six explores the social and political arena opened up by these changes, as “activists of all stripes in Austro-Hungarian society increasingly invoked the authority of what they called *culture* to assert their visions of empire, to build political and social movements to sharpen their differences with opponents and to discredit competing visions” (269; author’s emphasis). Judson first pays attention to the *Kulturkampf* in Cisleithania, noting the interplay between ideological clashes and competing federalist and centralist visions of the Austrian state. More particularly, he outlines the role that “new forms of political nationalism” (269) played in Austria-Hungary after 1867. Emphasizing the distinctiveness of his approach compared to other syntheses, Judson distances himself from historians who “have posited implicitly or explicitly a causal relationship between the existence of deep cultural differences in society, on the one hand, and the political conflicts these differences allegedly produced on the other” (270). Instead, he approaches “such struggles in Austria-Hungary as primarily political in nature rather than as natural products of the multilingual character of this society” (270–71). He thus prefers the term “nationalist conflicts” to “nationalities conflicts,” because this enables a better understanding of “what appears to be a paradox in Austro-Hungarian society in the second half of the nineteenth century—namely, the critical importance of nationalism in many public situations and its irrelevance in others” (271). In other words, nationalism dominated public discourse and much of civil society (associations and the public sphere), but not situations of daily life. Imperial administrators sought to arbitrate political conflicts and “to tie local nationalism to imperial loyalty” (332) through negotiation and the provision of public institutions and services.

Surveying subsequent developments in chapters six and seven, the author reprises points made in his previous work, suggesting that national activists viewed the “struggle to create nations” as “partially successful” at best (331). At the same time, he expands upon his earlier arguments, in asserting that “ideologies of nationalism and of empire increasingly depended on each other for coherence” and made “use of similar language and similar ideas” (331). State officials used national categories in their propaganda and administrative practice (especially in the census exercises), while “nationalists forced the state to come to terms with them in terms of imperial political structures and reforms” (332). In the decades prior to 1914, Judson sees the symbiosis intensifying as “Austro-Hungarians engaged more intimately and intensely than ever before with empire in their everyday lives” (333), be it through schools, military service, traveling on the expanding railway network, or casting a vote at election time. In short, it was “institutions of empire that constituted the focus of political activity and emotional loyalties” (382). Over time, the author concludes, nationalist politics became normalized by 1914 and the government found creative solutions to conflictual situations (e.g., through the “compromises” in Moravia, Bukovina, and Galicia).

When Austria-Hungary’s citizens “suddenly found themselves at war in 1914,” the author suggests at the start of chapter eight, “many groups in society quickly recognized that war offered them opportunities to reshape empire according to their particular visions” (385). Many accepted the necessity of conflict, but wartime conditions also created “new avenues for local people ... to assert their own desires for radical social and political change” (386). Yet, the longer the war continued and the more social and economic conditions deteriorated, so did the state’s ability to meet expectations and to maintain legitimacy dramatically recede. Nonetheless, Judson is clear that “the war was not the proverbial final straw that broke a failing empire’s back. It did not accelerate an inevitable collapse.” Rather, it created “heretofore unimaginable new conditions in Austria-Hungary that in just a few years’ time made collapse not only possible but also likely” (387). Concentrating entirely on the home front, the author identifies the “extra-legal military dictatorship” in Austria during the first two-and-a-half years of war as fundamentally altering the relationship between citizens and

the state. The exigencies of war created space for civil society to engage in patriotic activities and for national politicians to influence state welfare institutions, yet such actions became increasingly concentrated toward one's own nation. The war thus eroded "any sense of mutual obligation between people and state; popular and dynastic patriotism withered away, calling into question the very *raison d'être* of the empire" (441). Nevertheless, the renunciation of the empire by nationalist politicians was accompanied by continuity in terms of administrative and legal structures. With the successor states also being multinational in composition, imperial structures and ways of thinking (such as expectations of provincial autonomy) lived on after 1918, while "each of these self-styled nation states in fact acted like a small empire" by seeking to acquire additional territories with populations that "could not be integrated into the state on specifically national terms" (448).

By way of conclusion, Judson reiterates his aim to "prevent nation-state ideologies from influencing the ways we think about empire" and to assess "the Habsburg Empire's distinctiveness as a state and society on its own terms." This distinctiveness did not consist of "an *inability* or *failure* to unify diverse populations," but rather in "the positive ways that empire sought to negotiate the cultural differences that became a key factor in political life and ultimately in the ways it sought to make political and social institutions organized around such differences function effectively" (451–52; author's emphasis).

The Question of Empire

In presenting his argument, Judson deftly brings together historians' findings on issues such as the relationship between people and state, the nature and role of nationalism, and the development of civil society. He moves nimbly across different territories, taking particular care to bring in geographical peripheries such as Dalmatia, Bukovina, Tyrol, and Galicia (his work profits greatly from the wealth of new studies on the latter region). In the English-language historiography, there is a well-established tradition of histories that look at the entirety of the Habsburg monarchy (in the sense of *Gesamtstaatsgeschichte*), but this is manifestly not a history written from the center. Judson decisively furthers the conversation through his incorporation of perspectives from outside the metropole (the word "local" is one of the most used in the text). At the same time, his emphasis on society's input into shaping the state and policies of reform carries echoes—whether conscious or not—of Ernst Wangermann's approach to eighteenth-century Habsburg history.¹⁸

The author constructs his narrative with admirable verve and pursues the argument tenaciously, delivering a stylish synthesis that is far more than a panorama of where the field of modern Habsburg history stands now. It is also a stimulating challenge to scholars to reexamine their own understandings of modern central European history and of nationhood and empire as historical phenomena. In identifying areas where Judson's book offers material for further discussion, the first of these has to do with the nature of the Habsburg polity and how best to comprehend it.

Judson rightly questions the need to break down rigid dichotomies between "empires" and "nation-states" when analyzing modern European history, yet he does so without being

¹⁸Ernst Wangermann, *The Austrian Achievement 1700–1800* (London, 1973). See now also the collected essays: Ernst Wangermann, *Aufklärung und Josephinismus: Studien zu Ursprung und Nachwirkungen der Reformen Josephs II.* (Bochum, 2016).

sufficiently explicit about what he means by “empire.” Compared to other recent works, the author is noticeably insistent on the use of the term and it features prominently in most chapter titles and some subtitles. (We even have “Sex and the Empire” for a chapter subsection [22–27], which deals, not with the history of sexuality, but the problems of dynastic succession in the first half of the eighteenth century.) Clearly, it is necessary to distinguish between different meanings of empire, beyond its serving as a simple way of referring to all the territories under Habsburg rule. Yet, in place of a working definition of empire *as empire*—with all that is entailed by an imperial system of rule—the author only offers a brief description of the *state*: “Here I understand the state as far more than a discretely defined realm of politics, or a set of formal institutions separated from society. Instead, the state I discuss refers to a broad range of diverse cultural, religious, and social practices while society constitutes an equally important site where politics functions” (5).

This lack of precision regarding the term “empire” is puzzling and disappointing: puzzling, because one of the key strengths of Judson’s previous work has been his eloquence in persuading historians to be more careful in their use of the word “nation” and relevant cognate terms (national identification, nationhood, and so on), and disappointing, because there is something of a missed opportunity here with regard to examining the Habsburg case in closer relation to the recent literature on the “the new imperial history.”¹⁹ To be clear, Judson most definitely *does* place the Habsburg Empire within a broader context. Importantly, he pleads for an understanding of the Habsburg state as a “normal” part of a broader European pattern, rather than some kind of deviation or exception to it, and this is a point on which increasing numbers of historians seem to agree. Martyn Rady likewise sees the variegated, multinational nature of Habsburg society as being “extreme in its ordinariness,” in the sense that it was only the number and diversity of its ethnic groups that made it a somewhat extreme example of “a commonplace condition” in early-twentieth-century Europe.²⁰ Nevertheless, Judson’s new book eschews the opportunity to approach the question of “empire” more systematically and to explore what it meant in terms of structures of rule and hierarchies of power. After all, if Judson argues for the creation of citizenship and the rule of law as part of a process of state-building and centralization, who then were the “subalterns” in this empire? A more thorough examination of such questions and the usefulness of the label “empire”—as opposed to the less loaded term “monarchy” that other authors have used—is an issue to which historians can fruitfully return.²¹

Raising this issue immediately leads to a second area for discussion. As indicated in the preceding text, the author postulates a consistent engagement with empire among different sections of society under Habsburg rule. However, this sometimes appears to be more a matter of extrapolation than induction, particularly for the period from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. In discussing the prelude to the 1848/49 revolutions, for example, the author provides an excellent discussion of the “Galician massacres” and cites a peasant who refused to join the noble-led Polish national uprising on the following grounds: “[A]s my grandfather told me,” in the time of the [Polish] Commonwealth, lords were

¹⁹For discussion: Ulrike von Hirschhausen, “A New Imperial History? Programm, Potenzial, Perspektiven,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41 (2015), 718–57. See further: Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, *Empires und Nationalstaaten im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2008); Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, eds., *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Göttingen, 2011).

²⁰Rady, *The Habsburg Empire*, 106–7.

²¹Judson touches briefly on some of these theoretical issues in an article prefiguring arguments in his book: Pieter M. Judson, “L’Autriche-Hongrie: était-elle un empire?,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63 (2008): 563–96.

allowed to beat the peasants. There was no one to whom the peasant could complain ... If you could expel the Emperor from the land, then each of you would want to play the King, and you would beat the peasants" (158). As with earlier examples of serfs complaining to military officials in the 1770s about landlord exactions (36–39), this example indicates how the monarch became an important reference point for peasants in their struggle to assert what rights they possessed and to gain freedom from feudal obligations. Hence, one can readily agree with the first part of Judson's conclusion, that "no broad feelings of national solidarity impelled Galician society to follow its nobility into battle against the Habsburg state" and that the form of Polish nationalism propagated by the elite had "narrow social appeal" in mid-nineteenth-century Galicia (158). However, does this episode really illustrate "the degree to which peasants rendered the idea of the Habsburg Empire instrumental to their own ends" (158)? In practice, it is debatable how something that "barely existed as yet at the local level"—the state—could have "clearly held great symbolic meaning to peasants" (38). What such encounters seem to demonstrate is how peasants invoked—or instrumentalized—the *figure of the monarch*, and not an *idea of empire*. In effect, therefore, the author elides expressions of dynastic loyalty (allegiance to the figure of the monarch, which might be characterized as a more "traditional," vertical tie) with the idea of empire (consciousness of, and feeling of belonging to, a wider community, in which individuals also feel bound by horizontal ties to fellow members of that community).

A further crucial aspect of the author's use of the descriptor "empire" is how applicable it may be to dominions that long maintained aspects of "composite statehood" (Benjamin Curtis even suggests that the Habsburg state "was always a multiply [*sic*] composite monarchy").²² When discussing opposition to reforms in the late eighteenth century, Judson carefully parses out the different connotations that the term "nation" possessed at that time (85–89), but does not match this with a similarly effective exposition of meanings of "empire." This issue relates most directly to Hungary and the author obviously recognizes the potential problem of how far "empire" incorporated the Hungarian Kingdom. When discussing citizenship around 1800, for example, he indicates that "the notion of a common citizenship and loyalty worked least well" in "Royal Hungary" (78). Yet, despite extensive coverage of Hungary's role in 1848/49, the stand-off in the 1850s, and a—rather brief—discussion of the 1867 settlement, Judson still implies that a common sense of empire was being consolidated, such as in the already cited claim that "Austro-Hungarians engaged more intimately and intensely than ever before with empire" prior to 1914 (333).

While *de facto* a "common monarchy" existed in law after the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713 was gradually accepted by the various estates in the Habsburg territories, this formally amounted to a monarchical union.²³ There are both legal and cultural-political aspects to this issue. Judson points to the role of the civil law code (*Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) of 1811, with whose publication "the empire" succeeded "in translating the varied legal statuses of its subjects into a form of legal citizenship whose promised equality breached traditional norms of class and culture" (103). Yet, as the author points out in the accompanying endnote, this code "applied to the Hereditary Lands" only, even if the regime may indeed "have originally planned to apply it to the rest of the empire" (473). In practice,

²²Curtis, *The Habsburgs*, 274. Also relevant here is the recently published study: William D. Godsey, *The Sinews of Habsburg Power: Lower Austria in a Fiscal-Military State 1650–1820* (Oxford, 2018).

²³László Péter, "Die Verfassungsentwicklung in Ungarn," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918. Band VII. Verfassung und Parlamentarismus. 1. Teilband: Verfassungsrecht, Verfassungswirklichkeit, zentrale Repräsentativkörperschaften*, eds. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna, 2000), 239–540.

it was only extended to Hungary for an eight-year period, starting in the neoabsolutist era (1853–61). At the same time, Judson’s cautious use of the term “promised equality” reminds us of the limited rights of women under the civil code, of peasants before the emancipation legislation of 1848, and of non-Catholics before 1867 (in the areas to which the code applied). Judson is fully aware of all these intricacies, and he thus argues that the attempts by underprivileged groups to gain equal civil rights led to political demands and social action. This is a valid point, yet these participatory aspirations were not expressed within a unified imperial framework before 1848, and only for a brief period thereafter.

Regarding political culture, the notion of empire anchored in wider society also looks overstretched. As Judson implicitly recognizes, most of the Magyar elite focused primarily on the idea of the Hungarian nation, but he does not draw out explicitly the import of this situation. Hungarian nobles might have acknowledged in practice the benefits to be gained from the common monarchy, yet they continued to reject the notion that the Kingdom of Hungary was part of a wider “empire.” This was not just a matter of legal pedantry, but—above all, after 1848—of great symbolic significance. Particularly for the period after 1867, Judson’s use of “empire” as a tool for framing political, social, and economic developments and visions of the state lacks conviction, the more so given that separate Austrian and Hungarian citizenships were established. Meanwhile, Francis Joseph strictly adhered to constitutional separation, famously refusing in 1892 the memorandum by Romanian national leaders for overstepping the boundaries between his position as emperor in Austria and king in Hungary. Even if the latter appeal again shows how the monarch formed a key reference point for political action, more research is still needed regarding how “empire” resonated within Transleithanian political discourse (including how far the Magyar elite may have thought in terms of a “Hungarian empire,” not a common Austro-Hungarian one).²⁴

As well as the Hungarian dimension, there is also the issue of “imperial continuity” in central Europe around 1800. Here, Judson again appears too ready to subsume several developments into a narrative of “empire.” For example, he discusses some of the patriotic literature from the Napoleonic Wars, the invocation of images of the militiaman (such as by Johann Peter Krafft), and the fascinating memorial album by civil servant Joseph Rossi about celebrations in 1814 for peace and the emperor’s return from France. Assessing the period 1780–1815, he suggests: “If a specifically Austrian empire had emerged only recently in the shadow of Napoleonic conquest, it nevertheless appears to have successfully engaged the imaginations of a good many of its citizens” (103). However, this is something of an interpretive leap without fuller examination of, firstly, the transition from the more universalist conceptions of empire associated with the Holy Roman Empire to a territorial definition of “empire”; secondly, the “refounding”—in theory, at least, for in practice little changed—of the Habsburg state through Francis II/I’s assumption of the title Austrian Emperor in 1804; and, thirdly, the legacy of the Holy Roman Empire for understandings of national belonging during the nineteenth century among different communities under Habsburg rule (German nationalists readily drew on the discourse of empire, Czech nationalists disputed historical claims about Bohemia’s place in the old Empire, and so on).²⁵

²⁴Bálint Varga, *The Monumental Nation: Magyar Nationalism and Symbolic Politics in Fin-de-siècle Hungary* (New York, 2016) provides a fascinating analysis of how far the national discourse created by the political elites resonated—or did not resonate—among the wider population.

²⁵For discussion, see the contributions in: Marco Bellabarba et al., eds., *Gli imperi dopo l’Impero nell’Europa del XIX secolo* (Bologna, 2008); Matthias Asche, Thomas Nicklas, and Matthias Stickler, eds., *Was vom Alten Reich blieb ...*

How far the sense of a “specifically Austrian empire” emerged around this time is open to question given the current state of research. For political reasons, Francis only assumed the title of “Emperor of Austria,” rather than proclaiming an “Austrian Empire” because of the potential implications for Hungary. The term *Österreichisches Kaisertum* came into informal use reasonably soon, but the government was cautious about its formal application in fundamental laws prior to the proclamation of the constitution for the Austrian Empire in 1848 (the Hungarian Kingdom was excluded from its provisions, unlike the imperial constitution of March 1849, whose promulgation promptly provided the Hungarian political elite with the legal grounds for the declaration of independence). Equally, the lines between an “Austrian” and a “German” patriotism (oriented partly toward the old empire) were in any case still blurred in the decades after 1800. Many of the 1814 celebrations drew on a traditional framework of celebratory masses and processions for the announcement of peace, including thanks to the emperor and prayers for the salvation of the pope. In short, while there were genuine expressions of sympathy with the monarch, the celebrations were also a propaganda exercise.²⁶ Certainly, historians now have a much better understanding of the potential symbiosis between national and “imperial” spheres of identification (at least in a dynastic-imperial sense, if not necessarily in the sense of the state and what Oscar Jászi referred to as “civic education”),²⁷ yet much of this work concentrates on the post-1867 period and more empirical work is needed to ascertain how far the “Habsburg Empire” was perceived as a common fatherland in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Empire and Nation

At this juncture, it may be opportune to reflect on a potential danger for all Habsburg scholars who seek to push back against “methodological nationalism.” There are two aspects to this problem. On the one hand, most of the examples Judson cites derive from the German-speaking educated classes (mainly, the Austro-German bourgeoisie) and state officials. This is true of Joseph von Sonnenfels cited in chapter one (49), or the previously mentioned visualizers of empire from the 1850s (Schwartzner, Hammer-Purgstall, and Czörnig) in chapter five. How far the visions expressed by such individuals can be projected beyond their specific milieu is a matter for further research. On the other hand, Judson suggests that nationalism was less effective than activists hoped at the time and historians often supposed subsequently. In doing so, he is perhaps less insistent on the notion of “national indifference” than in his previous book, while still pointing to the “testimonies of some frustrated nationalists,” who indicated that “people often simply ignored nationalist demands for their loyalty” (271). “Claimed cultural differences” were not “necessarily experienced as such in local society,” but gained “more meaning” when they became “the basis for political agendas” (272). Judson thus sees national activists’ complaints as indicative of the difficulties of national elites in mobilizing popular support; conflicts between mass parties and local elites are thus interpreted as “electoral engagement with empire” rather than with nationalist politics (1–4; 350–55). Without revisiting discussions about the concept of “national

Deutungen, Institutionen und Bilder des frühneuzeitlichen Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Munich, 2011),

²⁶Werner Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich. Die Habsburger und ihre Geschichte in den bildenden Künsten* (Vienna, 2006), 156–58.

²⁷Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago, 1929), 439–50.

indifference,” it must suffice to say that there are limits to what can be inferred from nationalist sources. Nationalist complaints about other individuals failing to meet their expectations need corroboration from other sources; national belonging need not be expressed in a nationalist political program; above all, “national indifference” is a category drawn from contemporary discourse, so—like the term “nation”—is not value free as a tool of analysis either.²⁸

For Judson, cultural differences became politicized through the work of national activists and the state’s role in “the construction of ideas of nationhood” through legal and institutional structures and through the study and promotion of national cultures as part “of the empire’s many forms of cultural diversity” (274–75). However, there is an element of artificiality in his separating out the everyday from “event-driven” or “situational” nationalism (274). The importance Judson attaches to political events and processes ends up—once the different framing of the problem is stripped away—looking not too dissimilar to well-established approaches to nationalism (such as that of John Breuilly, with his emphasis on nationalism as a form of politics).²⁹ Moreover, the fact that nationalist activism may be particularly intense and resonate most at times of crisis and acute political competition or conflict does not imply that a lesser expression of national commitment on a daily basis is automatically a sign of ambivalence or indifference toward the nation. For certain individuals, this may well hold true, but as Jakub Beneš’s new study on workers, social democracy, and nationalism suggests: “[T]he impact of moments of broad politicization cautions against characterizing the working classes as persistently indifferent to politics, national or otherwise. It is as misleading to project upon masses of ordinary people in the past a stable mentality of political indifference as it is to perceive a constant state of political commitment. Contingent events crystallize political convictions and galvanize mobilization among the popular classes.”³⁰ In this respect, there is a potential contradiction in Judson’s suggestion that many ordinary citizens of Austria-Hungary did not engage with the nation on a daily base, but that there was such a thing as “everyday empire” (to refer to part of the title for chapter seven). It remains unclear why “empire” might penetrate the everyday, but the “nation” does not, when both the state and nationalist activists are creating a discourse of national categorization.

Furthermore, in striving to provide an alternative narrative, Judson’s argument at times takes on a degree of circularity, whereby all processes are read as affirming the validity of “empire.” Thus, electoral violence in the Galician town of Drohobych/Drohobycz in June 1911 is glossed at the start of the book as “diverse groups of people asserting their voices ... to construct the

²⁸For discussion, compare: A proposito di “Guardians of the nation” di Pieter M. Judson: Laurence Cole, “Alla ricerca della frontiera linguistica: nazionalismo e identità nazionale nell’Austria imperiale,” and Peter Thaler, “Una nazione non è fatta solo di nazionalisti,” *Quaderni Storici* 43 (2008): 501–26; Tara Zahra, “Imagined Non-Communities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69 (2010): 93–119; Gerald Stourzh, “The Ethnicizing of Politics and ‘National Indifference’ in Late Imperial Austria,” in *Der Umfang der österreichischen Geschichte. Ausgewählte Studien 1990–2010* (Vienna, 2011), 283–323; Laurence Cole, “Differentiation or Indifference? Changing Perspectives on National Identification in the Austrian Half of the Habsburg Monarchy,” in *Nationhood from Below: Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Maarten van Ginderachter and Marnix Beyen (Basingstoke, 2012), 96–119; Gábor Egry, “Between Past and Present: The Notion of Everyday Ethnicity and National Indifference in Historical Research. A Case Study from Interwar Transylvania,” in *The Historian’s Atelier: Sources, Methods, Interpretations*, eds. Sorin Şipoş, Gabriel Moisa, Mircea Brieg, Florin Sfrengu, and Ion Gumenăi (Cluj-Napoca, 2012), 156–67.

²⁹John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1993).

³⁰Jakub S. Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890–1918* (Oxford, 2016), 242–43. Sabine Rutar’s important study on Trieste also sees national identities becoming increasingly embedded in daily practices, even as social democracy remained a consciously multinational movement: Sabine Rutar, *Kultur-Nation-Milieu. Sozialdemokratie in Triest vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen, 2004).

future of their empire” (4). Many historians would agree with the author’s contention that regional, linguistic, religious, or ethnic differences “did not determine politics in Habsburg central Europe in easily predictable ways”; yet, arguably, he is overly reductive in describing the struggle “as a populist one that pitted the people against local bosses” who engaged in electoral malpractice and deprived people of their right to vote (5). Undoubtedly, this social dynamic was a vital factor, but the antielitist alliance dominated by the Ruthenian peasant party and the local Zionist movement was also making common cause against an elite that was seen as serving Polish national interests.³¹ Judson proposes that “people did not interpret their political differences primarily in conventional ethnic or national—Jews versus Ruthenes versus Poles—terms” (5). The point about the *primacy* of national motivations is a valid one, but the prevailing socioethnic structure in the region nonetheless meant that populist agendas frequently possessed a national dimension. In this instance, it was a case of Zionist Jews (per se forming an overtly nationalist movement) *and* Ruthenes versus Poles (who also included assimilated Jews within the Polish Club, aiming to protect “traditional” Jewish interests). As Judson suggests, the situation is multilayered, but the struggle between “the people” and “the bosses” also possessed clear national connotations, not least because the populist challenge was also about leadership of the national community.

Such an example is highly pertinent because it returns us to the issue of “national indifference.” As previous literature has suggested, the nonprimary role of “national-cultural” issues was a recognizable characteristic of peasant movements and parties. Miroslav Hroch argued that it was not until a later phase of political mobilization—what he called phase C—that peasants became involved in national movements, aided by the spread of primary education and the expansion of economic markets: “[O]nly in phase C did the peasantry start to assert itself more actively in the national movement, and when it did come forward, eventually, it was predominantly in defence of its own specific social interests.”³² To be sure, Judson—drawing especially on Rogers Brubaker—works with a different understanding of the nation to Hroch, yet the latter’s argument is still relevant to explanations of how peasants saw the “national question” as a dimension of the social question. The national dimension may not have resonated with all, for “some small farmers remained uninterested in or unmotivated by national ideas,” as Keely Stauter-Halsted has contended for Galicia.³³ Yet, the process of political mobilization was generally bound up with nation-forming in the Galician countryside; peasant distancing from socially conservative aristocrats and church leaders prominent in the Polish national movement was less a question of indifference, than a “constant process of social stratification as new divisions and fresh alliances formed and reformed” regarding a reformist national agenda.³⁴

Wherever historians stand on this issue, Judson’s sustained focus on the interplay between nation and empire will surely encourage further exploration of the mechanisms of what—mainly for the Austrian half of the Habsburg monarchy—could be termed “banal imperialism” (in the sense of Michael Billig’s approach to nationalism).³⁵ Sharper differentiation is also needed regarding allegiance to nation and dynasty/state/empire. Judson

³¹Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (Cambridge, 2012).

³²Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge, 1985), 152.

³³Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland 1848–1918* (Ithaca, 2001), 244–45.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 246. See also: Kai Struve, *Bauern und Nation in Galizien. Über Zugehörigkeit und sozialer Emanzipation im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2005).

³⁵Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995).

draws on recent work showing how institutions such as schools and the army had integrative effects for large numbers of individuals across imperial Austria (the situation is much less clear for Hungary). Nonetheless, he places less emphasis on the ambivalences of such processes, although the literature has pointed to the *limits* of loyalty and the markedly polarizing effects that, say, the army had in political debates or at highpoints of political agitation (especially electoral campaigns).³⁶ In other words, allegiance to the state and dynasty was also situational and there was perhaps more ambiguity than Judson suggests.

Another of the author's examples is revealing in this respect, when he points to the Czech Women's Aid Committee sporting the flags of Bohemia and Prague—but not the imperial colors—outside its headquarters during World War I as a sign of how patriotic action (war relief) was becoming focused increasingly around one's own nation (405). However, this was a process already evident before 1914. In the absence of Francis Joseph's coronation as Bohemian King, for example, the symbol of the Bohemian crown increasingly came to stand for an abstract sense of the Czech nation, expressing the disappointment among Czech patriots that the king repeatedly failed to fulfil the obligation to be crowned in Prague.³⁷ Alex Watson's fine study of the Central Powers in World War I elaborates on this point, by arguing that there was never really an "imperial" war against Austria-Hungary's enemies, but from the beginning a series of "national wars" fought against the "enemies" of specific nationalities. Watson maintains that national motivations combined to maintain the overall effort on different fronts for a very considerable time, but once the "national wars" had run their course, nobody fought any more in defense of the "empire" as such (there was no repeat of 1848/49).³⁸ Even if Watson's analysis underplays the different sociopolitical dynamics on the eastern and southwestern fronts, he nevertheless suggests a different weighting to national and imperial allegiances.

The Nature of the Habsburg Polity and the Question of Statecraft

One of the many virtues of Judson's study is his emphasis on the rule of law and constitutional provisions (especially those of 1867), and he offers some brilliant insights along the way, such as his telling characterization of the question of administrative reform and the funding of public services as one of "the July crises" of 1914 (389–91). Nonetheless, Judson's thesis derives from a series of choices and assumptions that are worth debating, given that the book works less well as a general history. One wonders how nonspecialists—including students, one of the target audiences—will deal with some of the gaps in the narrative. To be sure, Judson recognizes the risks involved: "[A]s the author, I am keenly aware of significant gaps in the text, of left-out events—some critical, and some which could perhaps modify the arguments of the book—and of the tendency to simplify when writing a synthetic work" (12). Nevertheless, while

³⁶Christa Hämmerle, "Die k. (u.) k. Armee als 'schule des Volkes'? Zur Geschichte der Allgemeinen Wehrpflicht in der multinationalen Habsburgermonarchie (1866 bis 1914/18)," in *Der Bürger als Soldat. Die Militarisierung europäischer Gesellschaften im langen 19. Jahrhundert. Ein internationaler Vergleich*, ed. Christian Jansen (Essen, 2004), 175–213; Christa Hämmerle, "Ein gescheitertes Experiment? Die Allgemeine Wehrpflicht in der multiethnischen Armee der Habsburgermonarchie," *Journal of Modern European History* 5 (2007): 222–43; Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford, 2014), 287–307.

³⁷Hugh LeCaine Agnew, "The Flyspecks on Palivec's Portrait: Francis Joseph, the Symbols of Monarchy, and Czech Popular Loyalty," in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, eds. Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky (New York, 2007), 86–112.

³⁸Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914–1918* (London, 2014).

“lacunae are inevitable in a book driven by revisionist arguments” (12), this book—given its size and scope—still needs to be assessed as a general history (it cannot simply be treated as an “extended essay” in the way that Sked characterized his book).³⁹ Leaving aside the book’s relative neglect of subjects such as economic development or “high culture,” two substantive points are relevant, to do with the nature of the Habsburg polity and the international dimension of national politics.

While providing an important corrective to stale depictions of the Habsburg monarchy in general histories of Europe, the author’s tilt toward the notion of “liberal empire” rather underestimates the authoritarian prerogatives and instruments available to the government, as well as downplaying the changing social nexus around which the “Dual Monarchy” had been consolidated by the turn of the century. For the period between 1848/49 and 1867, for example, Judson mirrors arguments made by Jonathan Sperber and other scholars about how the short-term “failure” of the revolutions should not obscure their “successful” long-term legacy.⁴⁰ Yet, this important point does not obviate the politically and socially conservative nature of the “Greater Austrian” project in the 1850s. Nor should it diminish the significance of the fact that the construction of *empire* as a unitary state conclusively *failed* with the formal establishment of dualism.

Austria and Hungary were both confirmed as constitutional states after 1867, yet the development and observance of the provisions of liberal legislation were more evident in the former than the latter when it came to “national rights” (while the reverse was true in other areas, such as divorce law). This consideration raises at a general level the validity of Judson’s depiction of a “liberal empire.” For example, in foregrounding the previously mentioned events of June 1911 in Drohobych/Drohobycz as a sign of political engagement with empire, Judson lays down a narrative thread that is taken up in his discussion of the “Badeni crisis” of 1897 (following the Austrian prime minister’s issuance of language ordinances for Bohemia giving equality to the German and Czech languages in internal civil service communication). Rather than seeing the crisis as “a failure of Austria’s institutions,” Judson sees it as “demonstrating the degree to which far more people were successfully mobilized into the Austrian political process,” which in turn obliged the government subsequently to seek “negotiated solutions to diffuse the mobilizing power of political nationalism” (314–15).

In citing provincial compromises as evidence of this trend, Judson justly highlights developments downplayed or virtually ignored by earlier generations of scholarship. Nonetheless, while many compromises were subsequently agreed, there is equally no doubting the increase in political violence after 1897. For example, there is no mention here of the infamous incident at Csernova/Černová in 1907 (when several Slovaks protesting in support of a nationalist politician were shot by gendarmes). Nor is there a word about the assassination of Galician governor Andrzej Potocki in 1908, which was “aimed at the very existence of Galicia itself.” Indeed, for historian Larry Wolff, “the assassination of Potocki in Lviv in 1908 anticipated, in notable ways, the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, which ultimately proved to be fatal to the Habsburg monarchy. Both assassinations expressed the violent rejection of the politics of Habsburg rule, in Galicia and in Bosnia, respectively, and both reflected the nationalist tensions that rendered Habsburg rule ultimately untenable.”⁴¹

³⁹Sked, *Decline and Fall*, 6.

⁴⁰Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851* (Cambridge, 1994).

⁴¹Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, 2010), 331–32.

Given the later Galician compromise of 1914, the 1908 shooting might still fit into a framework of violence provoking “creative solutions.” Yet, this agreement never came into effect (because Austria-Hungary chose to go to war) and Wolff’s argument implicitly raises the question of the Habsburg polity’s longer-term viability. Moreover, the incident highlights areas of Habsburg history that Judson’s narrative really needed to engage with more directly. The high-profile 1908 assassination was part of a broader pattern of radical agitation; two years later, Bogdan Žerajić failed to kill the governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while in 1912 and 1913, other nationalist youths attempted to assassinate the Ban of Croatia (respectively, Baron Slavko Cuvaj and Baron Ivan Skerlec). Clashes between political or nationalist protestors and executive organs of the state led to deaths in Trieste in 1902 and in Innsbruck in 1904, in ways not dissimilar to—if less dramatic than—what happened in Drohobych/Drohobycz. In short, these instances of conflict indicate two important points that Judson’s narrative rather marginalizes. Firstly, despite the liberal constitutional framework, social reality often still looked “illiberal” on the ground, especially in areas where the nobility long held sway in local government (most obviously, in Galicia and Hungary). There was frequently a difference between the terms of the law and its implementation on the ground, especially in Transleithania. Secondly, to deal with the various “nationalist conflicts” or political protests by other social movements (notably the socialists), the state was prepared to use “illiberal” measures in the sense of circumventing normal constitutional channels, whether through rule by decree, suspension of provincial legislatures, restriction of municipal autonomy in towns such as Trieste and Pola/Pula, or—in Hungary—infringing the rights of the Croatian parliament. Even if such actions were legally circumscribed and intended as temporary measures, the government made increasing recourse to them. Though negotiations also continued behind the scenes, the provisional often turned into the ongoing (e.g., the Istrian Diet was prorogued in 1910 and never reconvened, nor did the Bohemian Diet after 1913; meetings of the Austrian *Reichsrat* were suspended in March 1914).

In sum, alongside Judson’s story of a creative, “liberal empire,” there is also a narrative of conservative dominance in society and anticonstitutional tendencies in government and the state. The overall picture is more variegated than Judson paints and sociopolitical unrest in Austria-Hungary frequently threatened to get out of hand. This is not to suggest that Austria-Hungary’s situation was anything unusual in Europe around 1900, because—to take just two obvious examples—Russia and Italy were more volatile still. In this regard, Judson might have pushed more explicitly the comparative aspect of his argument. For example, the case of Imperial Germany shows how an “exceedingly dynamic and mobile society” developed within the framework of a “newly-formed authoritarian national state.”⁴² Helmut Walser Smith has suggested that, while based on the rule of law and introducing universal manhood suffrage well ahead of most European countries, the authoritarian features of the state need to be considered in any overall assessment of German society before 1914. Here, Smith points to the repression of national minorities, especially in East Prussia; use of antisocialist legislation; the dominance of the Prussian nobility at the head of the government apparatus; and the government’s identification of “enemy parties” (Catholics, Socialists, and representatives of national minorities). As Smith acknowledges, despite these repressive policies, the “enemy parties” nevertheless gained a majority of the popular vote by the end of the 1890s and a majority in the *Reichstag* by 1912. Nonetheless, even if these “outsider” parties gained ground and the liberal bourgeoisie had more power and influence

⁴²Helmut Walser Smith, “Authoritarian State, Dynamic Society, Failed Imperialist Power, 1878–1914,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford, 2011), 307–35.

than previously supposed, they still “lacked the power to decide matters of state” (partly due to the problem liberal parties found in forging meaningful alliances with mass parties).⁴³

There were, of course, numerous differences between Imperial Germany and post-1867 Austria-Hungary, but Smith’s argument is instructive about the relationship between government and society in central Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century. It reminds us that a decisive role in the settlements of 1867–68 was played by the Hungarian and Polish nobility, which—not unlike in Prussia—continued to play a dominant role in politics and administration at the county or district level. If parliament enjoyed a greater role in government in Transleithania, the executive power of the monarch was more evident in Cisleithania, the more so after 1900 with the appointment of “bureaucratic” governments. Moreover, after 1879, government in the Austrian half of the state was, in social terms, reoriented around a predominantly Catholic-conservative nexus (with support from other “orthodox” religious parties). New, more populist political forces gained ground from the 1890s onward, but—even with the electoral success of the socialists after 1907—they were unable to break the parliamentary mold. In the final analysis, therefore, here too, the dynamic elements of civil society were unable to “decide matters of state.”

There is a clear logic to Judson in effect sidestepping more familiar parts of modern Habsburg history, given his overriding aim to present a “new history.” Yet, narrative coherence places demands on the interpretive balance. This is particularly the case with the Habsburg monarchy’s place in the European state system and the issue boils down to a simple initial question. Why, after one of its own citizens, a nationalist conspirator from Bosnia-Herzegovina, murdered the heir to the throne, did Austria-Hungary declare war on another state in July 1914? Whatever authorial choices are made, any general Habsburg history needs to engage fully with this fundamental question. Indeed, the stronger the case for the viability of the Habsburg monarchy prior to 1914—and no one is more forceful than Judson in making it—the more pressing the question becomes as to why key members of the governing elite consciously jeopardized the state’s political future by going to war, when economic development, political stability, and international peace were prerequisites for the continuance of the Austro-Hungarian experiment in the management of a multinational society. Of course, Habsburg history should not be “written backward” from the collapse of 1918. Nor do all roads lead to the July crisis of 1914. Nevertheless, *some* roads *do* lead there, and Judson rather passes them by through leaving foreign policy and international affairs out of the story (items such as “Königgrätz” or “Gavrilo Princip” do not appear in the index).

In particular, readers and students may wonder why Austria-Hungary’s citizens “suddenly found themselves at war” in 1914 (385). It is not necessary to go back to A. J. P. Taylor’s old adage, that “the Habsburg Monarchy, more than most great powers, was an organization for conducting foreign policy; and its fate was determined quite as much by foreign affairs as by the behaviour of its peoples,”⁴⁴ to see that a failure to address the buildup to war more directly leaves not just a major gap in the narrative, but also undervalues an important area of historiography.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, Judson does not elaborate more precisely on the reasons for his choice, although time and space constraints will doubtless have played a role. Either way, the result clearly sets Judson’s work apart from other syntheses. Charles Ingrao, for example, refrained from describing military campaigns in detail, but nevertheless paid considerable attention to the political and diplomatic actions of the monarchy’s leaders,

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809–1918* (London, 1948), 9.

⁴⁵For further references, see Cole, *Military Culture*; Watson, *Ring of Steel*.

because, “given the highly artificial nature of their state and society, Habsburg statecraft played the most decisive and the unifying role in determining all aspects of its history, including its social and cultural evolution.”⁴⁶

“Habsburg statecraft” is barely present as a ghost at Judson’s otherwise nourishing banquet. Despite acknowledging Maria Theresa’s aim “to strengthen her military” (28) as one of the key motivations for the subsequent reform process, the interplay between foreign and domestic political agendas is only touched on in the subsequent narrative in minimalist fashion. This not only means that a major thread of government activity—and a fundamental aspect of “empire building”—is barely present for the period before 1867, but one of the potentially binding “common interests” thereafter. Both for the period 1792–1815 and the years 1848–66, the scant treatment of international affairs means that a crucial dimension of politics is missing, along with their ramifications for questions of German, Italian, and Polish nationhood. A distinguishing feature of the Habsburg state lay not so much in its multinational character per se, but in that national political issues were pertinent across almost every border the Habsburg state possessed. This is not a question of “old” against “new” history because transnational approaches have been productive in exploring the implications of cross-border contacts and transregional entanglements. Nationalist actors and national movements—phenomena of central importance in Judson’s analysis—transcended state borders in nineteenth-century Europe. Ipso facto, their actions had political implications at the international level. What is more, certain key internal developments—such as the 1910 compromise in Bukovina or the 1914 agreement in Galicia—were firmly influenced by international political pressures, reflecting the government’s desire to minimize the danger of internal nationalist agitation becoming a source of external political conflict.⁴⁷

Somewhat ironically, then, the neglect of international affairs ends up making Judson’s history look surprisingly insular. Despite his aim to place the Habsburg case within a broader European framework, the author’s discussion of the move to war in 1914 is all too cursory. This is not to measure Judson’s narrative by some “conventional” yardstick to which all Habsburg histories must adhere. Rather, his own focus on nationalist politics demands an explanation for the willingness of a new generation of activists to embark on more radical steps (even if there were clear debts to older Mazzinian-style conspiratorial groups in the circles in which Princip moved). For individual members of the post-1880 generation, certain turning points reduced their faith in the possibility of achieving national goals within the framework of the Habsburg monarchy. For the Trentine socialist, Cesare Battisti, for example, it was the German-national violence surrounding the attempt to establish an Italian law faculty in Innsbruck in 1904 that led him to break with the official party line on the nationalities.⁴⁸ For South Slav nationalist politicians, the Friedjung trial of 1909—following the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina the previous year—was a similar watershed. Judson picks up on the latter as “another type of state attempt to manage nationalist politics, one that was a notable failure in every way” (382). The exposure of the prosecution case as a fraud meant that government policy did indeed fail, but the significant point is twofold. Firstly, as Judson recognizes, it showed how, here too, the government was prepared when necessary to violate “the strictures of the *Rechtsstaat*” and that “within the higher bureaucracy a struggle for democratization was taking place” (382). Secondly, the trial

⁴⁶Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, xii. In his account, Sked likewise sees statecraft as a crucial issue.

⁴⁷Klaus Bachmann, “Ein Herd der Feindschaft gegen Rußland.” *Galizien als Krisenherd in den Beziehungen der Donaumonarchie mit Rußland (1907–1914)* (Vienna, 2001).

⁴⁸Stefano Biguzzi, *Cesare Battisti* (Turin, 2008), 137–68.

encouraged or confirmed the alienation from the state of some nationalist radicals. As Mark Cornwall has recently argued, the

discourse about “treason” presents us with a Hungarian or Habsburg regime crisis in the years before the Great War. The regime showed itself to be particularly careless in arbitrarily branding political opponents as anti-dynastic and in equating this characterization with treason. [...] The impact was disastrous for the Rauch regime in the short term, but was also to prove calamitous in the long term for both the Hungarian government and indeed the Habsburg dynasty, whose legitimacy and credibility was severely weakened. It is true that by 1914, when Budapest reintroduced constitutional rule, the political atmosphere in Croatia seemed more tranquil. Yet as the First World War began, the discourse on loyalty and treachery was to resurface immediately, in the first instance targeting Serbs, but also challenging any tendency to insubordination on the part of Croats.⁴⁹

Ultimately, therefore, Judson does not draw out the implications of these “illiberal” developments in government policy, even though it is precisely the continuities before and after 1914 that are vital for understanding wartime developments. The “dictatorship” in Austria did not come out of nowhere but was derived from the way in which nationalist politics had created decisive polarities in the minds of key policy makers. Although the majority of Austria-Hungary’s population accepted the status quo and many embraced it warmly, this does not obviate the fact that some sections of the nationalist constituencies were detaching themselves emotionally from the Habsburg state and focusing on building their own national society. Therefore, a minority of (extreme) nationalist activists possessed greater *causational* significance for political developments than the moderate mainstream (or the unquantifiable proportion of the population that showed little or no interest in nationalism as a form of politics). More importantly, key parts of the state apparatus (especially the military high command) saw nationalist politics as a threat and sought to combat them in a more authoritarian way (even as other state actors continued to favor a policy of negotiation for managing cultural difference). It was this delicate balance that was decisively altered by the war, and it was the monarch, his close advisors, and the political elite that took the risks involved, both to preserve Austria-Hungary’s power political position and to reassert control over the political process.

Conclusion

If all these issues constitute areas of Judson’s new work that seem likely to form the subject for further debate, this overall discussion has hopefully made two crucial points clear. Firstly, Judson has produced a major statement on Habsburg history, and fellow historians will be grateful for his skilled advocacy of their chosen field. His bold thesis constitutes a decisive contribution to the scholarship on modern European history; it demands and deserves close attention, not just by specialists, but by all historians working on modern European history and comparative imperial history. Secondly, Judson has taken worthwhile risks in presenting an alternative narrative. Even if some historians will feel he leans too far toward the “positive ways” of empire (452), it is important to consider the energizing impact that this work can have as the centenary of Austria-Hungary’s collapse in 1918 unfolds, particularly in view of

⁴⁹Mark Cornwall, “Loyalty and Treason in Late Habsburg Croatia: A Violent Political Discourse before the First World War,” in *Exploring Loyalty*, eds. Jana Osterkamp and Martin Schulze Wessel (Munich, 2017), 120.

the long-term legacy of post-1918 historiography in central European countries currently experiencing nationalist revivals. Astutely recognizing the need for a fresh synthesis, Judson offers a new platform to launch further discussion and research. At the same time, it testifies to the array of qualities that shine through all Pieter Judson's work as an historian: the willingness to push an argument as far as possible and to challenge existing narratives; the insistence on what the history of the Habsburg monarchy has to say about European history as a whole; the soaring enthusiasm for his subject; and not least, his great generosity toward other scholars.

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