

Identity Construction in the Balkan Region. Austrian Interests and Involvements in a Historical Perspective

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The historical cut of 1991 is the starting point of our discourse. Since the dissolution of Yugoslavia provoked new geopolitical, social, and national orientations of different communities and regions within the European order the question also was put culturally: new identities were looked for and discovered. This "identity building" followed internal and external logics and pressures, all of them underlined by historical reasoning trying to prove the truthfulness of a single ethnic, national identity, which was a novelty in a surrounding used to define identity in religious terms.

The process of dissolution and destruction of Yugoslavia was driven by local elites looking for a means to escape the consequences of an economic breakdown. These internal forces were present in virtually all six Yugoslav republics. Some of them were supported by external interests and thereby accelerated the crisis towards a catastrophe. The more and stronger a united Germany (backed by Austria) supported the catholic and - later - the Muslim secessionist movements in the respective republics, the more the - economic and geopolitical - logic of this external force entered into the inner processes of "identity building" within Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia The term "nation building" as it was (re-)invented at the beginning of the 1990s following historical traces of the second half of the 19th century, already explains the direction into which the planned cultural foundation of the respective societies was heading to: national identity based on ethnic definitions was asked instead of social identification. In this respect the nationalist movements in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Muslim-Bosnia, Macedonia, Albanian-Kosovo and - later - even Montenegro followed once again the model of "identity building" as it was constitutive for the bourgeois societies since the French and the German revolutions, copied by national liberation movements on the Balkans in the second half of the 19th century.

Space and naming of the region

The geography of the region we deal with is defined by the circumstances mentioned above. Historically this space can be roughly described in an ethnic and language sense as South-Slavic, at least what the majority of the people concerns. Beside this South-Slavic majority the region is (respectively was) populated by Albanians, Germans, Italians, Magyars, Turks, let aside some smaller minorities.

The naming of the region we deal with resembles in itself a political confession. "Yugoslavia" is no more existing as a statehood and therefore the use of the term would be politically nostalgic and is no more practical. "South Eastern Europe" is a nowadays frequently used term for the region, which was invented in the 19th century to replace the term "European Turkey" (Geier 1986). Today it is again implemented by Western political scientists and predominantly used by the West European political class and its allies in the region. This term should serve to make forget the ethnic, national, and religious wars on distribution and deployment of economic means in the 1990s.

"South Eastern Europe" tries to implement an external perception of a construction of the post-war region into internal reality. This is perfidious in a historical perspective, because it was German and Austrian politics in the 1990ies arguing with the concept of "national self-

determination" to support the North-Western, richer republics in their fight for secession and self-reliance. The shift from the term "national self-determination" towards "South Eastern Europe" tells quite a lot about foreign interests in the region: To destroy the multi-ethnic, South-Slavic construction of "Yugoslavia", self-determination was defined as "national" by the local elites and their German and Austrian supporters. After the new "nation building" was completed the term "national" got a negative image. To name the region, now a geographic construction - "South Eastern Europe" - is (re)invented, which nowadays connects the peripheral states in the South-East to the project of the "European Union". Its enlargement 1995 (Austria, Finland, Sweden), 2004 (Slovenia, Poland, Czech and Slovak republics, Hungary, the three Baltic states, (Greek) Cyprus and Malta) and 2007 (Romania, Bulgaria) led to a monopolization of the term "Europe", defining Europe as part or future part of the "European Union". So we find many reasons to reject this heavy ideologized term.

"Balkan" is a fuzzy word with a strong historic burden and a geographically clearly defined chain of mountains. As the roots of the term are Turkish and include the words "blood" (kan) and "honey" (bal), "Balkan" reminds of Ottoman interests in the region with some but weak potential to recover nowadays. What foremost stands against the use of this term is the lacking of the "Bulgarian question", which is excluded from our debate on the one hand and the fact that Slovenia and Croatia neither geographically nor historically were parts of the "Balkan region" except in the 20th century when both regions took part in the Yugoslav state projects on the other hand. This fact alone shows the importance of what cultural scientists call "mental mapping", showing that identity is always related to historic, social, economic and geopolitical context.

What convinces us never the less to use the term "Balkan" to describe the space we deal with is the historic continuity of external influence and interference throughout the centuries. Ottoman Empire and Habsburg Empire (not to speak of Russian and British interests in the region) both fought for centuries for influence in the Balkans, by incorporating the regions into their empires. The second argument for using the term "Balkan" is precisely its fuzzyness in a period of time, where territorialities and identities are not settled and new identities and territorialities are searched for. Therefore we decided to use "Balkan" as a flexible term with its advantage of being a historical expression and an actual counter-position against legitimating new involvements in the region.

Questions to be answered

Looking on foreign, namely Austrian interests and involvements in the Balkan in a historical perspective in connection with the question of identity construction, it is clear that cultural identity is never constructed once and for all, but always reflects concrete historical elements and spheres of interest. Identity changes along the relations of power.

As socio-economic processes form the basis and interact with political and cultural relations, they have to be included into our analysis of identity construction.

Manifestations of cultural identities can be identified in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion; dynastic understanding based on multi-cultural diversity or aiming at cultural homogenization; social or national definitions of identity, to be realized by reform or by revolutionary change.

Feeling European, requires a special geopolitical environment, such as feeling socialist or feeling Muslim. Some cultural feelings of identity are compatible, others contradict with each other. But all of them are in a constant movement, eventually changing eruptively.

We will try to include into our considerations inhabitants of the region as well as (foreign) rulers, distinguishing between self-identifications from below as well as identity constructions from above. We are also looking on perceptions and constructions from outside, namely from the Austrian side. Direct foreign involvement necessarily creates a dependent administrative body and class building its own advance on the respective foreign interest. But more than that, it may lead to a shift of cultural identity within the (colonial) administrators and/or large parts of the society. In this case the consequence is a split society, as we face it since centuries in the Balkans.

Social and national expressions of identity sometimes overlap; in other cases they stand against each other. In the case of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, we face the ethnization of social and economic problems. This ethnization took place within the region, and it was instrumentalized by foreign interests accelerating the process of disintegration. Social tensions resulting from economic crisis and uneven distribution were translated into ethnic conflicts, propagating inclusion and exclusion on ethnic terms as a solution for social problems.

New imperial setting after the Austro-Hungarian "Compromise": 1878 / 1881

The years 1878 and 1881 stand for a cultural shift of the Austro-Hungarian advance in the Balkans. The Berlin Congress of 1878 was convened by the European great powers to correct the Treaty of San Stefano, where the Russian sphere of influence after the Russian-Turkish war had become unacceptably strong for Vienna and London. The Berlin Congress functioned as a European reset after the defeat and withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from big parts of South Eastern Europe. It acknowledged the independence of those states, which had seceded from the Ottoman Empire (Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria). Conversely, other regions and nations were exempted from state-building, and Ottoman domination was replaced by Western European ones in order to prevent the new nation states to become too strong and Russia which was confirmed as a protective power for orthodox believers to get too influential. In this situation the Habsburg Empire was guaranteed the occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina, whereas Great Britain took Cyprus and the Russian Tsar faced territorial gains in Bessarabia. By the way: 130 years after the congress, there is again no stability in all these three regions.

The year 1881 marks the end of a period which lasted 350 years starting with the "Acta confinis" as the beginning of the Habsburg military border towards the Ottoman Empire. This "Vojna Krajina" was institutionalized in 1535 by King Ferdinand I., extended under the "Statuta Valachorum" by Emperor Ferdinand II. in 1630, and reached its biggest extension in 1700, when 1,2 million inhabitants lived on almost 50.000 square-kilometres. From the Adriatic Sea along the Danube to Transsilvania and the Carpat mountains a stripe of 1800 kilometres length followed the rules of the "Konfin"/ Vojna Krajina. This territory was directly administered from the Imperial Military Council (first in Graz, then in Vienna) without interference from local landlords, who lacked feudal authority over the population. "Vojna Krajina" mostly was populated by orthodox, pravo-slavic emigrants, who had fled the Ottoman Empire during the centuries of Ottoman advance. They were entitled to live as "free peasants" and in exchange had to serve as soldiers not only against the Ottomans in the South but also in the Silesian and other wars. Their religious believe was tolerated by the authority

and the Vienna administration waived its endeavours to unification with Rome as it was done in other cases. In 1691, when a big group of Serbian emigrants settled in southern Hungary, a first pravo-slavic metropoly in Karlovac was established, representing the beginning of religious tolerance in the catholic empire. Inner social and political contradictions quickly arose, when catholic Croatian landlords and the Catholic Church tried to oppose the settlement of an orthodox, Serbian population in the middle of its traditional sphere of influence. But the Viennese court rejected all these petitions and continued to privilege and at the same time to instrumentalize the Serbian "peasant-soldiers" also to minimize the influence of the local nobility ... till 1881, when the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 caused the abolition of the "Vojna Krajina" and its submission under Hungarian authorities. It lasted another 114 years, till the descendants of the "free Serbian peasant-soldiers" were expelled from the Knin region and Slavonia. In historical times, the identity of the peasant-soldiers primarily was a religious, orthodox one. A Serbian national identity started to develop only in the 19th century, when Austrian authorities sympathized with the Serbian national awakening, including the codification of the language, as a means of interfering into the destabilization process of the Ottoman Empire and into the self-understanding and self-definition of Serbian nationalism. Retrospectively, in the light of the inter-ethnic contradictions in Yugoslavia, the Austrian Military Border was interpreted from a national perspective, which overshadowed and determined conflicts between central and provincial authorities as well as between national identities of Serbs and Croats. In other words: Old differences were redefined along actual lines of conflict.

The second half of the 19th century was defined by multiple ethnic and language identities in the region, showing various combinations with religion, class, national identity and political loyalty:

*) In the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire (Carniola, Görz-Gradisca, Littoral with Istria and Trieste, Dalmatia, Military Border/Vojna Krajina until 1881): German Austrians and other representatives and administrators of the dynasty and the Viennese government, Slovenes, Italians, Magyars, Croats, Serbs, Romanians.

*) In the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire: Magyars, Croats, Serbs, Germans, Moslems; since 1867 Hungarian representatives and administrators of the dynasty and the Budapest government.

*) In Bosnia after 1878: Serbs, Moslems, Croats; representatives/administrators of the occupants.

*) In Serbia: Serbs, Moslems.

*) In Montenegro: Serbs

*) In the Ottoman Empire (with diminishing extension): representatives/administrators of the Ottoman dynasty and the Stambul authorities, Serbs, Albanians, Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Bulgarians

For Austrian politics the caesura of 1878 / 1881 had two implications: Occupation, conquest, pacification and administration of Bosnia and Hercegovina to a certain extent symbolized strength and geopolitical gains. This strength relied on the chance offered by the western powers to take over the rule over Bosnia, while formally Ottoman sovereignty was maintained (until annexation in 1908). Austrian occupation faced severe resistance by the provincial Muslim elites, who involved the Habsburg troops in a heavy, colonial war, leading to subordination. After a short period Habsburg colonial administration was able to present itself – at least at home and vis-à-vis the international community – as a civilizing and modernizing force, gaining the support of Muslim elites not only by respecting their religion, but also by acknowledging their specific Bosniac nationality, combining Slavic language with Muslim belief. While Bosnia seemed to be a success story, the Compromise of 1867 with the

Hungarian elites, who insisted on political autonomy for the Lands of the Hungarian Crown, realized by the construction of the Double k. and k. - Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, was a sign of internal weakness. After the Dual Settlement, the Hungarian government was free to pursue independent nationality policies within its sub-empire, which contradicted the Austrian ones. While Austria relied on the multi-ethnic character of dynastic rule, Hungary aimed at national homogenization by Magyarization. In Croatia-Slavonia Hungarian centralization met Croatian resistance, opening the path to the Croatian Compromise (1868), which meant a strengthening of the Croatian elites.

The geopolitical strength with its expansion into Bosnia soon turned into a trap in an economic and political sense. Expensive infrastructural projects did not pay socially and politically. The Serbian population in Bosnia could not be integrated into a consensus, which was defined as a dynastic one under Habsburg rule. Already the Compromise with Hungary, which had to be re-negotiated every ten years, as well as German-Czech tensions in Bohemia and Moravia, which were fuelled by the Czech disappointment about being denied regional autonomy for the Lands of the Bohemian Crown, showed that Vienna was not able to solve the national questions within the dynastic concept. So the year 1878 can also be seen as the year of birth of a national Serbian resistance movement against Austria-Hungary.

1914-1918: From “Sarajevo” to the collapse of the Habsburg Empire and the rise of the SHS-state

1914

The name of Gavrilo Princip for generations was used as the shortest version to take position towards the involvement of Austrian interests in the Balkan region. It needed 70 years after the attempt of the Habsburg heir that the memory of Princip symbolically had turned from hero into murderer in Sarajevo. Collective identity had changed and again took the ideological and historic parameters of the official Austrian position in the early 1990s.

The attack on the crown-prince Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, and its effects on the Austrian perception of Balkan nationalities, cannot be understood without its pre-history, the occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina (1878) and its formal annexation in 1908. In spite of its doubtful economic benefit, Bosnia and Hercegovina were important regions to perform the multicultural character of Habsburg rule, including the ranking of ethnic and religious groups with regard to their cultural proximity and political loyalty to the dynasty, to state-unity and state-identity. German as well as Magyar liberal circles were opposed to the Bosnian extension not only because of the costs, but because it strengthened the Slavic character of the Monarchy. Muslim Bosniacs were a product of Habsburg administration, which directly and indirectly contributed to define a Muslim Bosniac nationality, different from the catholic Croats and the orthodox Serbs in Bosnia and Hercegovina, whose national identities were backed by the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia and the Serbian state. Acknowledging Bosniacs not only as a religious, but a national identity, was helpful in integrating their elites into the imperial administration of the province; initial resistance against occupation turned into a more or less loyal cooperation. Croat and Serb national identities, inseparably interrelated with different Christian traditions, were out of question; while the catholic Croats were considered part of the leading imperial catholic culture, with a strong commitment to the House of Habsburg, orthodox Serbs became alienated. They had represented reliable allies of the catholic dynasty in those parts of the Monarchy bordering the Ottoman Empire, and were compensated for their loyalty by receiving religious freedom long before “tolerance” was introduced at the end of the 18th century. When Serbs successfully escaped Ottoman

domination and built a state, former collaborators turned into neighbours. With the help of some liberal intellectual Habsburg Serbs Austria-Hungary was able to influence politics and identity construction in the early years of the Serbian state. Bosnia was to become “Austro-Hungarian” in order not to allow Serbia to expand. Nevertheless Austria-Hungary and Serbia, which was squeezed between Ottoman, Russian, Austrian and western interests, became political allies, and the young Serbian state was held in an economic dependence from Austria, symbolized by the Trade Agreement of 1881, which opened the Serbian market for Austrian industrial in exchange for Serbian agrarian exports. 87 % of Serbian exports were directed to Austria-Hungary, which made up for 67 % of Serbia’s imports in these years (Hösch 1993: 177). As soon as Habsburg aspirations on the Balkan became opposed to Serb ones, who were aiming at the diversification of trade and industry, a neighbour turned into a – potential - enemy. The so called Pig War of 1906-1909 - an Austro-Hungarian embargo against Serbian exports, answered by a high taxation as well as a substitution of Austrian imports - symbolized the economic side of Austro-Serbian competition, World War I the political-military one. The Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 aggravated the antagonism.

German literature under Habsburg administration shifted between portraying Bosnia-Herzegovina as a backward, miserable or a wild, colourful and exotic province, usually amalgamating both perceptions in an orientalizing discourse. While Bosniacs faced orientalizing and Croats were seen as part of “us”, Serbs first of all faced neglect. Drawing attention to Serbian culture in Bosnia, would have supported Serbian aspirations for Bosnian independence or the unification with the Kingdom of Serbia. In order to undermine Serbian national aspirations, the topos of the *Antemuralis Christianitas*, the defence of Christianity, was replaced by Serb nationalism representing a danger for Bosnian unity, which symbolized Habsburg multi-cultural unity.

So Bosnian Serbs and Serbs from the Serbian state had many reasons to oppose Habsburg rule in Bosnia. Serbian nationalist organisations strove for liberation and unification with Serbia. Visiting Sarajevo on June 28, Vidovdan, the day which had become the symbol for the Serbs’ strive for independence, Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the throne, committed a big provocation. The provocation was understood, it was answered, and the imperial reaction was war. That this war would turn into a World War, might not have been calculated at the beginning; however, the European system of alliances implied, that Austria-Hungary would be backed by Germany, and that Russia and the Western sea powers would oppose Austro-German ambitions, on the Balkan and elsewhere.

Serbs were interpreted to have caused war, and they became a symbol for the enemy in Austria-Hungary. The famous writer Karl Kraus devoted many scenes of his anti-war epos “*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*” to the Austrian hatred culminating in the collective condemnation of the Serbs. This attitude also influenced the position vis-à-vis the Serbian citizens within the Habsburg Monarchy. Instead of loyal citizens they were perceived as fifth column, sympathizing with the enemy. Similar to Ukrainians in Galicia, Italians in the southern provinces, Habsburg Serbs fell victim of emergency laws, which easily allowed their internment. Whoever was suspicious of national aspirations was arrested in internment camps, the most prominent one in the South of Austria located in Graz-Thalerhof (Hautmann 1986). During World War I Serbs were split in three groups, the first fighting for the Kingdom of Serbia, the second fighting for Austria-Hungary, and a third one, imprisoned as internal enemy. It would be worth looking at the Serbian attitude in war supporting activities as well as in anti-war movements, which became stronger at the end of the war. When royal Serbs fell into the hands of the Austro-Hungarian Army, they were imprisoned as external enemies.

Sources show, how Austrian and German invaders of Serbia and other Balkan states, were extremely cruel vis-à-vis their military adversaries, who faced execution rather than imprisonment, but also vis-à-vis the civil population. Conversely, Croats symbolized loyalty and were not accused of undermining the empire. So the war, meant to support the cohesion and stability of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in fact heightened ethnic difference, hence undermining the multi-cultural construction of Austro-Hungarian identity.

1918

Defeat, capitulation, and falling apart of the Habsburg Empire put border drawing on top of the peace conferences and negotiations. German-Austria's ambitions strongly differed from the results settled in the Peace Treaty of Saint Germain in September 1919, which the new Republic of Austria had to accept. The idea of forming a South-Slavic state, composed of the three state-building nations of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, reached back into the 19th century and took shape, the more the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire became evident at the end of the war. This is not the place to document the single steps, which led to the building of the SHS-state. From an Austrian perspective, borders were crucial (Haas/Stuhlpfarrer 1977).

Differently from Czechoslovakia, where Austria claimed the Bohemian and Moravian regions with German-speaking majorities to become part of German-Austria, in the case of the SHS-state Austria insisted on maintaining the provincial (crown land) borders of Carinthia and Styria. Carinthia and Styria showed Slovene minorities, which represented majorities in the southern parts of the provinces. Slavic populations did not fit into the self-understanding of German-Austria as the German speaking rest of the Monarchy, striving for unification with Germany. Slovene inhabitants were not considered an obstacle to German-Austria, however. Their culture and identity was considered a rural, traditional one, which would be assimilated to the German one in the process of modernization, eventually surviving on a folklore level.

The SHS-state, referring to the right of (ethnic) self-determination, one of US-president Wilson's principle for a European post-war order, laid claim on Carniola and Görz-Gradisca, Istria and the Triest region as well as to the Slovene speaking regions of Styria and Carinthia to form the future Slovenia. In the case of Görz-Gradisca, Istria and Triest the border dispute with Italy was settled in favour of Italy, which also incorporated Rijeka/Fiume into the Italian state. Carniola was adjudged to the SHS-state in Saint Germain. Styria was divided into a northern part staying with Austria and a southern part adjudged to Slovenia (and the small region of Prekmurje became Hungarian). Carinthia was heavily disputed between Slovenia and Austria, as well as Italy, which also obtained some Carinthian regions (e.g. Kanaltal). Finally a plebiscite in southern Carinthia decided the region to stay part of Austria. As a result, Slovenes represented a minority in Austria, opening the question of assimilation versus Slovene minority rights, not settled until today. In SHS-Yugoslavia, a German minority survived the new borders.

The attitude towards Slovenes was characterized by passive assimilation, not questioning Slovene culture in the villages and in the Church, but insisting on German as language of administration and social ascent. The link between Germanization and social ascent was accepted by many Slovenes, when they lost their rural traditions; they were called "Windische" by the German Carinthians, on the one hand underlining the success of assimilation, on the other hand maintaining the ethnic difference in spite of lingual assimilation. Ethnic diversity was no longer seen as an asset, but as a problem, with assimilation to German as the best solution. "Our" Croats, apart from a minority in the Burgenland, a former Hungarian province, which was attributed to Austria, and "our" Serbs did not pose a problem, because their residential regions did not belong to Austria any more.

While neglecting minority rights in Austria, Austria's interest was dedicated to German-Austrian minorities abroad, in this case in SHS-Yugoslavia, where the Slavic character of state was a threat to those minorities, which did not belong to the state-building nationalities. Rather belonging to the upper social strata, Germans suffered from losing their former social privileges and counted on Austria for protection.

The dissolution of the Habsburg Empire was realized by the non-German speaking nations, establishing independent nation states. The German speaking crownlands involuntarily became the "rest", which – in front of the failure of a socialist alternative – developed a German-national self-understanding. German-Austria declared its independence as part of the German Republic. Unification ("Anschluss"), supported by all political parties except the small Communist Party, was denied by the Saint Germain Peace Treaty, however. "German-Austria" was to become "Austria". The idea of unification survived and was realized in the shadow of the social and economic crisis and the rise of the NSDAP in Germany in 1938. In the inter-war period relations to SHS-Yugoslavia concentrated on the border question and the German speaking minorities, the loss of which was seen as a violation of the right of self-determination. The same principle of self-determination was not applied for the Austrian Slovenes, whose social carrier depended on their willingness to germanize. Austrian towns and villages on the border developed a feeling of border-defence, aiming at the preservation of their German character vis-à-vis a Slavic threat. The multi-ethnic character of the Austrian Empire was replaced by an ethnic understanding of self-determination. This attitude prevented official Austria from acknowledging the new type of multi-ethnic empire, which was formed in the SHS-state; Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were perceived along the old lines of friends and foes, their unification in a state seen as an artificial tie, which was not supposed to last forever.

The attempts of consolidating the new state by supporting the build-up of national industries, privileging Slavic against German and Magyar population, was seen as a danger from the Austrian side. Regional economic ties were interrupted by new borders and protectionist measurements. After a short period of disintegration, economic cooperations were taken up and Yugoslavia became an important trading partner again, making up for 5,5 % percent of Austria's imports and 8 % of Austria's exports in 1930 (Hofbauer 1992: 26). The commodity composition followed the old pattern, Austria exporting industrial goods, while Yugoslavia delivered agricultural goods and raw materials (Teichova 1988).

1938-1945: From German "Grossraum" to socialist Yugoslavia

1938

The annexation ("Anschluss", March 12, 1938) turned Austria, later Ostmark or Donau- und Alpengaue, into a constitutive part of the German Reich, sharing success and failure. Being part of Great Germany, also allowed to realize regional interests, e.g. the annexation of border regions against the results of Saint Germain and Trianon. Territorial expansion into neighbour countries took place in the case of South Bohemia and South Moravia, which became Ostmark-Austrian after Munich 1938. The Austrian hope to get back South Tyrol failed because of the cooperation with Mussolini, who agreed to the transfer of the German speaking population to Germany, however. In the course of the German invasion of Yugoslavia, the formerly Austrian parts of Slovenia, Carniola, and Lower Styria were annexed by the German Reich in 1941.

The idea was to increase and at the same time to homogenize the newly annexed regions and to integrate them into the division of labour of an (expanding) German "Grossraum" according to German interests. The new ethnic mapping allowed solving the Slovenian question in South Carinthia, where Slovenes were pushed to assimilate; those who resisted, first of all the national elites, were imprisoned or deported to pure German speaking regions. The same happened in the Slovenian regions, annexed to the Reich.

German, Italian and Hungarian expansionism exercised great pressure on the unity of Yugoslavia, thus intervening into the ethnic conflict within the state. SHS-Yugoslavia turned into peripheral hinterlands of neighbouring states, which annexed regions according to their economic and strategic interests. So Slovenia was partitioned and ceased to exist. The small region of Gottschee/Kojevje, a German speaking "island" in a Slovene neighbourhood, may illustrate the ethnic redistribution, which followed the changing borders. Traditionally, the income of its inhabitants was based on their specialization on peddling trade of Mediterranean commodities in Austria. Situated in a part of Slovenia, which had become Italian in 1941, they were collectively transferred into a Slovenian neighbourhood which had become German, hopefully contributing to the Germanization of this region. After the end of the war, they again faced deportation, losing their regional collective identity.

Croatia took the opportunity to secede from Yugoslavia, annexing Bosnia-Hercegovina and taking over the role of a close ally of Germany in its colonizing plans of the Balkan. Serbia was attacked in 1941 and became a military province of Germany. According to the idea of ethnic homogeneity, Croatian Serbs, mainly living in the regions of the former Austrian Military Border zone (krajina), faced pressure to assimilate or cede; those who resisted, were deported into concentration camps. Multi-ethnic Yugoslavia had failed, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes as well as Bosniacs and Albanians were instrumentalized against each other, fuelling ethnic conflict against multi-ethnic cooperation. While Croatia gained independence under German protection, all other ethnic groups came under direct foreign rule, on the one side facing assimilation, on the other side oppression, imprisonment of elites and transfers of population being a means of breaking resistance and realizing ethnic homogeneity.

1944/45

There was no way of sympathy from the side of official Austria towards the combination of panslawism and socialism, the founding philosophies of socialist Yugoslavia. In spite of Austria's post-war founding myth of the "Anschluss" symbolizing Austria's role as first victim of Nazi, solidarity with Yugoslavia's liberation was not on the agenda. Everybody knew that Austrian soldiers in German uniforms had taken part in the aggression against the SHS-state, not to speak of the older sentiments vis-à-vis Serbs as opposed to Austrians. Austria did not take up the new beginning as a chance to change its attitude towards the Slovene minority. The idea of Germanness had survived, and the minority rights of the Slovene minority were only codified, when this turned out to be a condition to obtain the State Treaty of 1955, which brought full sovereignty and the end of the post war occupation regime. Hence a strong part of the Slovene minority in spite of its catholic rural orientation was pushed in an alliance with Austrian communists, with socialist Yugoslavia as an international protector and guaranteeing power of the State Treaty. Austria, equally, felt responsible for the German minority and blamed Yugoslavia for the expulsion of Germans.

Both states became involved in different projects of reconstruction and integration. Austria, in spite of the Four Power Occupation (1945-1955) and the declaration of neutrality in 1955 was part of the Western project, relying on Marshall-plan aid and embargo against socialist states in Eastern Europe. In order to receive western aid the state had to give up the close

cooperation with other successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy, which was revived in the inter-war-period, including Yugoslavia although it was not a part of the Soviet block. Yugoslavia with its unique model of self-administered socialism was not closed off by an Iron Curtain, so that economic relations could develop more easily than with the COMECON states.

From the 1960s onwards, Austro-Yugoslav economic relations became stronger. They took place in the fields of

- tourism: Austrian tourists spending holidays on the Istrian and Dalmatian seaside, which could be afforded by lower and middle class strata,
- labour migration: Yugoslav migrant labourers, who satisfied Austrian demands for labour,
- trade and industrial cooperation, which grew along with Austrian demands for agricultural and labour-intensive industrial products in exchange for technology and high tech products,

So Yugoslavia obtained a new face. It was no longer perceived in terms of its ethnic and religious differences, but as a new nation:

- a holiday destination with highly estimated landscape, food and a Yugoslav folklore
- a labour-exporting country, whose migrant labourers ranged at the lower end of the social hierarchy, united by their Yugo(slav) origin, called "Yugos" or, in a Viennese slavicism, "Tschuschen" (from the Slavic word for: foreign).
- The same perception developed for products from or "made in Yugoslavia", representing good quality of food or industrial goods at affordable prices both for trading companies and for consumers.

A new perception developed, accepting Yugoslavia as a political nation, characterised by overcoming ethnic and religious divisions of the Yugoslav citizens up to the point, that existing ethno-religious differences within the Yugoslav community were simply ignored. The old perception, based on ethno-religious differences, survived within the Catholic Church, which was aware of the religious divide between catholic Croats and Slovenes, for whom they felt responsible, and Orthodox and Muslims, who were part of another community. The old perception also survived within the Ustasha exile community, which had a strong foothold in Austria: not fitting into the Yugoslav identity, a revisionist nationalist Croat diaspora, in close relation with Austrian conservatives and the Vatican, maintained an ethno-cultural self-definition instead of a socio-political self-definition of national identity. Serbian nationalism, which lacked similar footholds in the Austrian society, more easily could identify with the Yugoslav nation. Both nationalisms challenged the idea of an all-Yugoslav identity, embracing people from all ethnic and religious groups, which gained ground in the Yugoslav diaspora during the 1970s and 1980s. After Tito's death in 1980, which coincided with Yugoslavia's debt crisis, social conflict developed along ethnic lines, which again became dominating Austrians' perception of Yugoslav citizens' identities.

Destroying Yugoslavia: 1990ff.

In the beginning of the 1990s Austrian politics heavily intervened into Yugoslav affairs. It was the time when ethnization of social and economic problems took place, causing brutal eruptions, determining future cultural identity in all six republics. The weakness of the federal structures within Yugoslavia was evident. And Vienna used the chance to deepen this crisis of

the state by supporting the secessionist elites and movements in Croatia and Slovenia respectively later on in Bosnia.

The reasons of these one-sided and therefore destructive involvements were multiple. Economically the strongest regions in the Yugoslav federation were situated in the north: functioning multinational companies like "Gorenje", "Lek" or "Elan" had good international relations not only with Austrian firms. Not to forget the tourist sector, where millions of Austrian visitors came to the Slovene, Croat and Montenegro coasts every year. So foreign investment into these economic fields looked like profitable ones after the civil wars ended middle of the 1990s and also fulfilled these promises in many cases and branches like the banking sector, tourism, energy etc.

Culturally the historic ties from Habsburg times played a certain role especially for the right-conservative wing of the Austrian policy that became stronger at this period of time. Namely the Croat right wing and catholic backed elite was considered as a "natural ally" of Vienna. On the other side you could see a rebirth of historic resentments against "the Serb" who was defined as a "descendant of Gavrilo Princip", both nationalist and seen responsible for the south Slavic type of communism. To communicate this anti-serb and pro-croat sentiment in an easy main-stream way one must know that the Austrian state television ORF for some time employed and gave voice to prominent exiled Ustashi like Stjepan „Stipe“ Tomicic, who changed his name into Alfons Dalma when he started his post-Ustasha-career. Under this name he was redactor in chief for actual political affairs in the most important media of the country between 1967 and 1974 and left pro-Croat sympathies.

Politically it was the time just after the conservative Christian Democrats (ÖVP) took over the foreign ministry with Alois Mock in the key function. Although the coalition government together with the Social Democrats (SPÖ) was led by one of them, foreign politics were in the hands of a radical right-wing conservative wing of the ÖVP. The master-mind behind Alois Mock was a man called Andreas Khol, whose political ideology was strengthened under the secessionist movement in South Tirol/ Alto Adige to fight against the central state of Italy. One member of parliament within the ÖVP-fraction, Felix Ermacora, openly asked Slovenia to become the 10th Austrian federal state, hence using the territorial disintegration of Yugoslavia to expand Austria according to historical patterns. Ljubljana officials were not amused, as one can imagine.

On the side of the parliamentary opposition there was a small green parliamentary group, holding ten seats. Two of them belonged to members of the national minority of Croats within Austria. In 1991 it turned out that one former Austrian green parliamentarian, Karl Smolle from a Christian Slovene minority-organisation, became the first ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia, even when Slovenia was not recognized as a state yet.

Geopolitically the Austrian politics towards Yugoslavia and its breaking apart functioned as a forefield of the German foreign politics. What the German minister for foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, did not dare to do or postulate, Mock expressed it openly. So the Austrian foreign policy flew kites for Germany to check if the United States were accepting the aim of the German-Austrian axis to help dividing Yugoslavia and by this gaining economic and political influence especially in the northern republics.

On the 20st of June 1991 one could clearly see this function of the Austrian foreign policy. Only one day before US-Secretary of State James Baker was in Belgrade to tell all six leaders of the respective republics that the USA would not recognize a Croat and Slovene

independence as it was announced in Zagreb and Ljubljana (and put into practice) for the forthcoming days, Austrian foreign minister Alois Mock went to Berlin to a conference of the CSCE to prepare the expulsion of Belgrade from the international organization. Mock took the Slovene "foreign minister" Dimitrij Rupel as a camouflaged person in the Austrian delegation to Berlin to openly affront Belgrade. Remember: at that time even Slovenia had not declared its independence yet. German Hans-Dietrich Genscher would not have had the diplomatic possibility to go as far as Austrian Mock.

At the real beginning of the Bosnian crisis it was again Alois Mock who this time travelled to George Bush in Washington (the older) to ask for a military intervention against Belgrade. In an interview for the state-TV ORF in July 1992 he announced a possible plan to send Austrian volunteers to fight the "Serb army". The last time this happened, it was Austrians in German uniform like the later UN-secretary Kurt Waldheim doing their "duty" on the Balkans.

The list of Austrian involvements in the process of dissolving Yugoslavia and creating separate national states is too long to name all of the proponents. Only some important historic moments shall be remembered. All these involvements aimed at Belgrade and supported the nationalist elites in Croatia and Bosnia. So it was an Austrian diplomatist, Peter Hohenfellner, who smoothed the path for the UN-embargo against Yugoslavia in 1992. In his function of representing one of the members of the UN-security council, where Austria took part at the time, ambassador Hohenfellner was blamed by other officials to hold back an information for UN-Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali concerning the possible author of a horrible attack on a line of people queuing in front of a bakery in the middle of Sarajevo. This attack took place on the 27th of May 1992, was transmitted by television and left 16 people dead on the street. Bosnian officials immediately accused the Serbian side, which only three days later led to the UN-Resolution 757 setting Belgrade under a crude regime of international embargo, which lasted for almost a whole decade. An UN-report – like other reports – questioned the Serbian responsibility by noting the lack of shell-craters; also the life-TV-transmission on the spot by Bosnian television could have been a part of a planned counter-action by Bosnian Muslim force to provoke an international interference which happened this way. Austrian ambassador Hohenfellner was blamed by some of his colleagues to block this inside-information for the Secretary General. Without any doubt on the Serbian responsibility for the attack, the UN-Resolution could pass quickly.

As the economic and cultural embargo against Belgrade was realized with Austrian help, the military bombing of Yugoslavia five years later also was at least moderated by an Austrian diplomatic. This time his name was Wolfgang Petritsch, delegate for the European Union in the so-called "contact-group" of US, Russia and EU to find a solution in the "Kosovo-question". Between the "activation order" of the 12th of October 1998 and the conference of Rambouillet in February 1999, the war on Yugoslavia was prepared step by step. It then started on the 24th of March 1999. And it was Petritsch who communicated to the public that a treaty was signed in France to put pressure on Belgrade to withdraw its troops from Kosovo and let the NATO-troops cross Yugoslavia. In reality no treaty ever was signed upon these questions, because not only the Serbian side rejected the NATO-plans, but also the Russian delegate Majorski. The result was a NATO-war of 78 days on Yugoslavia. The attempts to put this aggression under UN-umbrella failed.

Petritsch was rewarded for his bellicose support with the post of a "High representative" of Bosnia-Herzegovina in November 1999, which was understood by the Western international community –represented by European Union, United States, International Monetary Fund, NATO – as a colonial type of regime. In this function he intervened innumerable times in

internal Bosnian affairs like dismissing Serbian and Croatian politicians who were elected, by forbidding parties, media, and companies arguing they were too nationalist etc. His masterpiece was the blowing-up of one main bank in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the “Herzegovacka banka”, on the 18th of April 2001. 500 NATO-troops in SFOR-uniforms, 80 armed vehicles and 20 helicopters attacked the bank, which was located in Mostar and confiscated money, securities and treasury. With this action Petritsch broke the financial neck of the HDZ, whose leader Ante Jelavic has been dismissed as one of the three Bosnian representatives in the presidency of the federal state only one month before.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, and later in Kosovo, whose state-hood was based on a protectorate with a colonial-type of administration, interventions like these were on every day’s agenda. The Austrian participation always was strong using historic prototypes like the period of occupation and annexation of Bosnia after 1878/ 1908.

Geopolitically the Austrian involvement since 1991 followed the lines of the main players in the region. During the first half of the decade Germany and its mayor economic investors played a dominant role in the process of ethnization of Yugoslavia, supporting the secessionist movements fighting for national independence, whereas the USA pursued a more defensive politics aiming at the political cohesion of the Balkan region. Only in March 1994, after the bloody events of “Markale I”, when a shell killed 68 people on the Sarajevo market place, the US took over the leadership on the Balkans by forming a Croat-Muslim-Federation in Bosnia. This led to the “Dayton process”, where German politics had virtually no influence on the outcome. Austrian officials always followed the direction of the stronger, not forgetting to save its neutral face, for instance by protesting (without any result) against the overflight of NATO-bombers on their way to Yugoslavia from March to June 1999, which was not backed by any UN-mandate.

Conclusion

In terms of cultural and national identity the relations between Austria and its South-S neighbours followed a typical centre-periphery-model. Nation building as well as heading for cultural identity at the beginning always was an attempt of the respective elite or parts of it to link with the Austrian core. A broadening of national identification followed later, opening the way for a de-linking of the Austrian core.

In the Serbian case identity construction was a means to overcome Ottoman rule (Konfin, Serbian state, Vienna as centre of the Serbian culture), in the Croat case to underline the catholic, dynastic and later national ties with Vienna/Berlin (Jelacic, Church, Ustashi), in the Bosnian case to modernize society (occupation, annexation), and during the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s the reinvention of national identities was a means to define one’s position vis-à-vis the new order in Europe (Croat, Slovene, Bosnian, Kosovo-Albanian elites). Identity construction followed the wish to catch-up with the nearest, the Austrian core and therefore try to form close ties with Vienna. This model failed in all cases and provoked a reaction of de-linking in cultural, political and economic terms (Princip, SHS-state, socialist Yugoslavia).

Also on the Austrian side the Balkan was constitutive for identity construction. As the South-S regions geopolitically formed a contested field of territorial expansion, economically a hopeful space and culturally a field to modernize along the concepts of the core, the Austrian perception of the Balkan served as a means to strengthen Austria’s self-assertion in military,

political and cultural terms – characterizing Austrianness from imperial to constitutional and democratic times. This self-assertion was built on a structural racism towards the peoples in the Balkan area. They were identified with orientaling or balkanizing terms like “wild” or “uncivilized” and Austria’s mission was argued and justified by the necessity to modernize people and regions. The Austrian-Hungarian finance minister Benjamin von Kállay (1882-1903) stated in an interview: “Austria is a great Occidental Empire (...) charged with the mission of carrying civilization to Oriental peoples” (Daily Chronicle). Racist attitudes always accompanied the Austrian approach: from the dictum during World War I (“Serbien muss sterben; Serbia has to die”) to the T-shirts worn by SFOR-soldiers in Bosnia in the middle of the 1990s (“Jeder Tschusch schweigt still, wenn mein starker Arm es will; every tschusch (pejorativ: foreigner) will be silent if my strong arm wants him to be”), there is a historical continuity of expressing chauvinism and superiority towards the Balkan and its people.

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