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Cooperative Empires: Provincial Initiatives in Imperial Austria[1]

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The title "Cooperative Empires" may seem contradictory—or even provocative—to many historians of empire. It is widely believed that one of the defining characteristics of an empire is the presence of little or no cooperation among its individual provinces. More than that: there is a deliberate separation between the provinces that can go so far as to become a prohibition against cooperation. In theory, at least, each province must communicate with the imperial center, but not with other provinces. This contradiction between empire and cooperation is neatly illustrated by a true family story. The story is set in the 1970s in Prague, on the western edge of that space that historians today describe as the Soviet Empire. My mother, an East German from East Berlin, was then working as an interpreter in Prague. She was sitting on the tram on the way to visit some Czech friends who shared her love of jazz music. A queasy feeling began to come over her as she recalled that she was in fact forbidden to visit Czech friends, precisely because she was working in the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) embassy in Prague. It suited both the Soviet Union and the GDR that their foreign workers should not come into private contact with other nationalities, even if they belonged to allied fraternal countries. This was a sort of socialist version of the "divide and rule" principle as it was practiced in the nineteenth century.

The imperial relevance of this anecdote will become clear when one considers that the motivation for this prohibition of contact was not, however, ideologically motivated. It was not a strategy to isolate politically problematic groups. What made this prohibitive rule imperial in nature was that it sought to regulate communications occurring between the subjects of socialism across the frontiers of two socialist "peripheries" of empire—the fraternal allies of Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Communicative relationships in empires are supposed to run radially between the center and the provinces, not among those provinces.[2] Similar prohibitions on communication between particular groups of people and between particular institutions within the imperial body come up

[1]For their profound critique, helpful comments, and great support I wish to thank Pieter Judson, Katja Naumann, Thomas Osterkamp, Taku Shinohara, and the anonymous reader for the *AHY*. I also proffer my thanks to translator, Jaime Hyland.

[2]Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2010), 614, 664.

repeatedly in the history of empires. Cooperative governmental practices among the provinces, as opposed to between provinces and the metropolitan core—for instance, the unhindered flow of information and exchange of political ideas, not to speak of bureaucratic cooperation and harmonization of decision-making policies—are considered atypical in most descriptions of imperial politics.

Do these prohibitions on communication and cooperation actually reflect real practice in nineteenth-century empires? Such cooperation may have a traditional vertical axis, that is, it may involve communication flows between the center and the periphery; and it may also have a horizontal axis, that is, it may involve networking among the various provinces. The search for traces of such cooperation is motivated by an empirical case that suggests that the tasks of dominion undertaken by the empires of the nineteenth century could be realized only along cooperative lines. The tasks of the state in the nineteenth century, which were becoming ever more pressing as states moved into modern times, due to increasing international and global complexity—particularly in such fields as infrastructure, mass education, social policy, and financial planning—could be tackled only, on the one hand, through the joint efforts of the imperial center and the provinces and, on the other, by the mutual consent of provinces with each other.

The importance of this model, which I have named the "cooperative empire," should not be underestimated with regard to the modern history of empires. Discussing the issue of cooperation offers a way out of the imagined dichotomy between empire and nation-state, a dichotomy that remains a leading factor for far too many research questions in the history of empire. Instead, the changeover from empire to nonimperial state is a fluid one. Asymmetrically formed empires may become symmetrically oriented states: they may slowly turn into federations, for example. Conversely, extensive nation-states can also be reappropriated into an imperial habitus.[3]

What Should We Regard as an Empire?

Heretofore, historiographical views of empires have consistently overlooked the need to examine cooperative phenomena. This is not least due to standard definitions of an empire, and to those features that contribute to the characterization of this concept. So what kind of state is generally regarded as an empire,[4] and why does the idea of cooperation genuinely contradict any such definition?

Large size. Empires are described as "large-scale states" whose sovereignty extends to overseas territories or whose continental realm covers large land areas. In geopolitics and political cultural history, the difference between overseas and continental empires has sometimes been expressed in terms of a deep contradiction in their respective political

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[3]Alexander J. Motyl, "Thinking about Empire," in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building; The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (Boulder, 1997), 19–29.

[4]See the following overviews: Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010); Philippa Levine, series ed., *The Rise and Fall of Modern Empires*, 4 vols. (Farnham, 2013); Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York, 2001); Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, 1986); Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*; Michael Gehler and Robert Rollinger, "Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte: Epochenübergreifende und globalhistorische Vergleiche," in *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte: Epochenübergreifende und globalhistorische Vergleiche*, ed. Gehler and Rollinger, vol. 1, *Imperien des Altertums, mittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Imperien* (Wiesbaden, 2014), 1–32.

cultures of governance. However, one shared institutional element is seen in the organization of power at a range of different levels and through intermediate political authorities, because the large territory must be developed not only from an infrastructural point of view[5] but also from a political one. Although the vast extensions of imperial territories required the introduction of various gradations of power, debates about multilevel governance today show convincingly that neither large size nor multitier political systems are exclusive features of empires; rather, they may apply to nation-states and even to supranational political orders as well.

Great power. A characteristic closely related to the large size of empires is the imperial aspiration to become or remain a great power. The prohibition on communication and cooperation between provinces forms part of that policy: in power structures that extend over substantial territories, a considerable effort is clearly needed to attain and maintain the claim to imperial sovereignty. The role of the military and bureaucracy and the control of financial flows are therefore seen as being of singular importance for the consolidation of territorial power.[6] However, the thinking of great imperial powers first and foremost implies international "hard power." Empires aspire to be decisive—or at least extremely important—leaders on the international stage. It was only recently, partly as a response to the cultural approach to the history of empires,[7] that questions concerning the "hard power" of imperial powers have regained relevance.[8]

Asymmetry. Empires are also seen as comprising asymmetric power structures. A central distinction in the description of imperial power is that between the so-called core and periphery. The artificial term "periphery" points to the legal, economic, and political dependency of imperial provinces on the center of power. In the history of empires, this political asymmetry often went hand in hand with a narrative of economic or social underdevelopment of the provinces as compared to the core. On many occasions, the practice of economic imperialism accompanied economic dependency.[9] However, this was not necessarily the case: the Bohemian Crownlands within the Habsburg monarchy, or Finland and Poland within the Russian Empire, were in no way either economically or culturally underdeveloped when compared to the center.[10] There is no doubt, however, about their status of political

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[5]See, e.g., the papers by Valeska Huber (37–59), Frithjof Benjamin Schenk (60–77), Marsha Siefert (78–108), and Murat Özyüksel (109–36), in *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century,* ed. Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen (Göttingen, 2012).

[6]Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, eds., *Multiethnic Empires and the Military: Conscription in Europe between Integration and Desintegration* [*sic*], *1860–1918* (Munich, 2007 [*Journal of Modern European History* 5:2]); Martin Zückert, "Imperial War in the Age of Nationalism: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War" in *Comparing Empires*, ed. Leonhard and Hirschhausen, 500–517; Ekaterina A. Pravilova, *Finansy imperii: Den'gi i vlast' v politike Rossii na nacional'nych okrainach, 1801–1917* [Money and homeland in policies of Russia regarding its national borderlands] (Moscow, 2006).

[7]For a cultural approach to imperial history see Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848–1916* (West Lafayette, 2005); Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, 2001); Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy; From Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, 2006).

[8]Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, 2000).

[9]See Sarah Stockwell, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Modern Empires*, vol. 3, *Economics and Politics* (Farnham, 2013); Timothy H. Parsons, *The Rule of Empires: Those Who Built Them, Those Who Endured Them, and Why They Always Fall* (Oxford, 2010).

[10]Andrea Komlosy, *Grenze und ungleiche regionale Entwicklung: Binnenmarkt und Migration in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 2003); Pieter M. Judson, "L'Autriche-Hongrie était-elle un empire?," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63:3 (2008): 563–96; Robert Luft, "Machtansprüche und kulturelle Muster nichtperipherer Regionen: Die Kernlande Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien in der späten Habsburgermonarchie," in

dependency. For this reason, the more neutral term "province" is preferable to "periphery." This decision also accords better with the results of "newer" histories of empire, according to which the relationship between core and peripheries or provinces was characterized by complexity, interconnectedness, and interaction between cultures and identities.[11]

Radially arranged lines of communication. The core–province structure of empires implies a particular arrangement of lines of communication. Jürgen Osterhammel coined the term "radial power structure" (*radiale Herrschaftsordnung*) to describe the special character of this imperial arrangement. According to his account, the provinces are politically, judicially, and economically connected almost exclusively to the core, and remain very loosely associated with each other. In addition, the imperial core "endeavors to channel all information, and decision making flows through the imperial hub."[12] The separation of the various provinces from one another is thus the result of imperial design. It should be possible at any given moment to isolate any insurgencies or liberation movements from each other. Contacts among the individual provinces, according to his account, are seen as marginal and "nondominant."[13] One could object, however, by pointing out that this phenomenon is hardly limited to empires, since highly centralized nation-states may also follow similar patterns of communication.

Authority and force. Closely connected to the asymmetry of power between the core and the provinces is the latent threat of force, violence, and coercion projected by empire, both internally and externally. However, the difference between this situation and that of a nonimperial state is merely one of degree. An additional distinction is therefore sometimes seen in the legitimation of violent expansion: though the nation-state is eager to bring the national ethnic borders that it envisions into line with state *boundaries*, empires seek to achieve their widest possible extension and enlargement of less well-defined *frontiers* using the military and economic capacities available to them. Imperial frontiers are thought to have a dynamic, expansionist component, whereas nation-state boundaries are directed more toward consolidation.[14] Thus, empires are regarded as containing within them a latent disposition toward imperialism. Such an understanding is often combined with ideological assertions, according to which "empire" can be equated with imperialist capitalism.[15] Paradoxically though, empires are not always imperialist in this sense, since they often concentrate on territorial consolidation; moreover, the territorial policies of some nation-states are driven by expansionist claims and cover large regions inhabited by national minorities.

Societal and legal differences. Empires are characterized by a pronounced societal diversity. Historians of empire regularly emphasize the challenges of imperial management of multiethnicity or multinationality.[16] As others have pointed out, multiplicity of religions and

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Habsburg Postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis, ed. Johannes Feichtinger, Moritz Csáky, and Ursula Prutsch (Innsbruck, 2003), 165–87; Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Pravilova, *Finansy imperii*, 165–244, 320–66.

[11]Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge, 2004); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002); Endre Hárs et al., eds. *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn* (Tübingen, 2006).

[12]Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 614.

[13]Ibid., 665.

[14]Alfred J. Rieber, "The Comparative Ecology of Complex Frontiers," in *Imperial Rule*, ed. Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (Budapest and New York, 2004), 177–207, at 178, 199.

[15]Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 2–3, 32.

[16]Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, "Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall: Comparing Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *Comparing Empires*, ed. Leonhard and Hirschhausen, 9–34.

religious denominations has historically played just as important a role.[17] This applies particularly to empires whose legitimation was encoded in religious terms—as was the case of the Russian, Ottoman, or Habsburg Empires. Such societal differences were not irrelevant to imperial legal systems: "The option of one law for all, applied consistently and thoroughly to all subjects and to their relations with each other and the state, was sure to fail. Successful imperial law had to be variegated and adaptable to multiple and changing circumstances." Thus, "being legally pluralistic" was therefore a natural, "unremarkable habit" of empires.[18] Social and legal heterogeneity is therefore often attributed to empires, passing lightly over the fact that there exist a wide variety of highly multicultural, multinational, and multiconfessional federal states—and nation-states as well.

Distinction and networks. Another characteristic of empires was not seen simply as *difference* but rather as *distinction*. One benefit of postcolonial theories is that they direct attention to the fact that the residual consequences of the reciprocal imperial relationship between the core and province still affect many societies today. The culture of political distinction in empires worked its way deeply into mentalities and political attitudes. The postcolonial perspective is primarily directed at explaining and describing the cultural supremacy and hegemony of a metropolitan core over the provinces. At the same time, insights from the colonies have contributed to a reformulation of "domestic discourses of class, ethnic and gender difference" at the core.[19] In this regard, transnational historiography has made an important contribution to describing the complex history of empire beyond simply speaking of bipolar relationships between the formerly colonized regions and the former core.[20] In addition, this "new" history of empires focuses on such topics as empire and knowledge.[21] As research studies on "imperial career[s]," "imperial subjects," and "imperial biographies" have shown the interprovincial movement of political elites, such as the rotation of governors around the provinces, played a prominent role not only in the case of the British Empire, but also in its French, Russian, and Habsburg equivalents, with repercussions for the discourse of governmentality.[22] In order to understand the imperial culture of distinction

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[17]Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford, 2014); Martin Schulze Wessel, "Religion, Politics, and the Limits of Imperial Integration: Comparing the Habsburg Monarchy and the Russian Empire," in *Comparing Empires*, ed. Leonhard and Hirschhausen, 337–58; Karen Barkey, "Political Legitimacy and Islam in the Ottoman Empire: Lessons Learned," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40:4–5 (2014): 469–77.

[18]Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, "Rules of Law, Politics of Empire," in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850*, ed. Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross (New York, 2013), 279–93, at 280.

[19]Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London, 2001), 166.

[20]Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire, and Transnationalism c. 1880–1950* (Basingstoke, 2007); Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, "Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization," *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 1 (2010): 149–70.

[21]Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996); Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion* (Basingstoke, 2009); Saul Dubow, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Modern Empires*, vol. 2, *Colonial Knowledges* (Farnham, 2013). On empire and science, see Jan Surman, "The Circulation of Scientific Knowledge in the Late Habsburg Monarchy: Multicultural Perspectives on Imperial Scholarship," *Austrian History Yearbook* 46 (2015): 163–82.

[22]Martin Aust and Benjamin Frithjof Schenk, eds., *Imperial Subjects: Autobiographische Praxis in den Vielvölkerreichen der Romanovs, Habsburger und Osmanen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 2015); David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006); Christian Windler, *La Diplomatie comme expérience de l'autre: Consuls*

and networks, then, it is necessary to ask whether any real cultural difference between the various regions of a particular empire actually existed. In their contributions on Bohemia and Moravia in the Habsburg Empire, Pieter Judson and Robert Luft have rightly emphasized that no such distancing from the Austrian core territories actually existed in the regions they studied.[23] However—and this *is* something that does amount to an imperial culture of distinction—Bohemia, and especially its Czech population, was treated by German-Austrian politicians and by parts of the Imperial Court in Vienna as if there were a significant cultural distance between them and the region's German inhabitants.[24] The "fine distinctions," to quote Pierre Bourdieu, that were made among the diverse peoples, religious denominations, and social statuses were not necessarily reflected in the legal system. Some empires guaranteed legal equality to all their subjects.[25] Some—such as the Habsburg Empire—went so far as to enshrine the concept of equality among nationalities in their constitution.[26] This should not, however, distract from the fact that normative claims to equality were often not matched by the mental attitudes and stances of key political actors.

Cooperative empires? In the theories listed above, the only exclusive feature imputed to empires, the one that cannot be easily applied to other forms of state power, is their policy of enforcing separation between regions. This feature results from the concern to prevent, insofar as possible, the provinces or estates from networking with each other. The other defining categories used by historians of empire—large expanse, great power, asymmetry and authority, difference and distinction—also apply to nonimperial situations in more than a few cases. Nation-states and federations too can be characterized by the fact that they cover large expanses of territory, have great potential power, show asymmetrical political relationships, display authoritarian tendencies, contain great social diversity, and have a habit of drawing fine distinctions. In fact, the concept of "empire" is less than useful as an analytical tool conceptually reduced to the role of providing a contrast with a number of ideal forms of nation-state. The idea of "empire" should be considered on its own merits, extracting it from the reductionist position as simply the institutional predecessor to other forms of state order. Taken seriously in its own terms, "empire" can be extremely valuable as a typology and a perspective. Thinking in terms of "empire" helps to highlight typical practices, behaviors, and social, economic, national, confessional, and regional asymmetries, as well as—not least—highlighting imperial policies of separation. However, if we are to use the term "empire," we should first carefully examine the categories implied by a classical understanding of the concept.

Like the other features of empire listed above, the appeal to prohibitions against cooperation and communication fails to provide a definitive tool to distinguish empires from "nonempires." In fact, the aspiration to control all decision making and paths of communication through the

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français au Maghreb, 1700–1840 (Geneva, 2002); Tim Buchen and Malte Rolf, eds. *Eliten im Vielvölkerreich: Imperiale Biographien in Russland und Österreich-Ungarn, 1850–1918* (Berlin and Boston, 2015).

[23]Judson, "L'Autriche-Hongrie était-elle un empire?," 565; Luft, "Machtansprüche und kulturelle Muster nichtperipherer Regionen"; and see Solomon Wank, "The Habsburg Empire," in *After Empire*, ed. Barkey and Hagen, 45–58, at 51.

[24]See, e.g., Josef Redlich, *Das österreichische Staats- und Reichsproblem: Geschichtliche Darstellung der inneren Politik der habsburgischen Monarchie von 1848 bis zum Untergang des Reiches* (Leipzig, 1920).

[25]See Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, "Empire, Nation, and Citizenship in a Revolutionary Age," in *Empires in World History*, 219–50; Waltraud Heindl and Edith Saurer, eds., *Grenze und Staat: Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht, und Fremdengesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie, 1750–1867* (Vienna, 2000).

[26]Gerald Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs, 1848–1918* (Vienna, 1985).

imperial core has in political reality been historically thwarted in a number of ways. By invoking the concept of "cooperative federalism," one can give greater weight to the history of cooperation, both horizontally and vertically, among imperial institutions. Thus, the perspective of "cooperative empire" has the potential to broaden the horizons of the historiography of empires.

The Habsburg Monarchy as a Cooperative Empire

The Habsburg monarchy could be taken as an example of a cooperative empire as explained above. However, it is true that during the course of the nineteenth century, the Habsburg monarchy developed an increasingly distrustful policy that regarded political contacts between its various provinces with great suspicion, especially wherever such contacts went beyond the bounds of the cooperation within the Reichsrat that was upheld by the constitution. From 1861, the regional provisions enacted for the Crownlands that made up the empire contained an express prohibition against such communication. For example, the law on regional government in Bohemia contained the following passage, one that is reflected similarly in the regional legal frameworks of the empire's other Crownlands: "The provincial diet [*Landtag*] may not enter into any contact with the regional representative body of any other Crownland."[27] To understand this correctly, one must be aware that in 1861 the regions were not permitted to enact any type of legislation governing regional affairs. Vienna had drafted the rules for the regional provinces centrally and had drawn them up uniformly for all regions.[28] The prohibition against horizontal communication was clearly imposed on the regions by the Viennese government. Even at the end of the neoabsolutist era[29] an attempt was made to inhibit joint meetings of provincial diets. Such regional forums were feared in Vienna as providing the regional elites—and in particular the landowning nobility—with a potential counterweight to the imperial core. The historical experience that provided the horizon for this legal prohibition against communication was the attempts at reform made by opposition elements among the nobility in the Vormärz and during the March Revolution. In the Vormärz, certain important noble estates demanded not just the involvement of bourgeois elements in the regional representative bodies, but also the introduction of some fiscal sovereignty for the estates, and the reinstatement of noble privileges.[30] An initial, yet quickly rescinded concession extracted from the emperor by the nobility in 1848 was his grant to a *Ständischer Zentralausschuss* (Central Committee of the Estates) the right to participate in the—equally quickly retracted—process of constitutionalization of the monarchy.[31] Later attempts in 1848 to celebrate an "all-regional

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[27]See section 41 of the "Landes-Ordnung und Landtags-Wahlordnung für das Königreich Böhmen" of 26 February 1861. Available online at http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rgb&datum=18610004&seite=00000230, accessed 25 February 2016.

[28]Georg Seiderer, *Österreichs Neugestaltung: Verfassungspolitik und Verwaltungsreform im österreichischen Neoabsolutismus unter Alexander Bach, 1849–1859* (Vienna, 2015).

[29]Harm-Hinrich Brandt, ed., *Der österreichische Neoabsolutismus als Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsproblem: Diskussionen über einen strittigen Epochenbegriff* (Vienna, 2014).

[30]For a complete account, see Viktor Bibl, *Die niederösterreichischen Stände im Vormärz: Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der Revolution des Jahres 1848* (Vienna, 1911), 30–57.

[31]Karl Hugelmann, „Der ständische Zentralausschuss in Österreich in April 1848," Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich 12 (1913): 170–260. On the relationship between empire and provinces, see Ignaz Beidtel, *Die politischen Zustände der österreichischen Staaten nach dem Zustande vom 16. April 1848* (Vienna, 1848).

conference" to discuss autonomy for the Crownlands within the Habsburg Empire also ran into resistance from the Viennese government.[32]

Prohibitions and other hindrances to communication and cooperation among the bodies of the empire did not stop at the regional level; they also stretched down to even lower levels of administration. Several decades after the 1861 restrictions, at a hearing of the imperial *Enquete* (inquiry) into possible administrative reform in 1912, experts described the consequences of this arrangement in one particular area of political life. Their reports are instructive. Regional road construction was organized in the provinces along the lines of construction districts. However, these local administrative bodies were not permitted to initiate cooperation with each other. As a result, new road projects repeatedly had to contend with severe obstacles, as road construction districts were not allowed to coordinate their efforts. Both district officials and representatives of industry had declared that it was intolerable for the quality of economically important regional roads to vary drastically from district to district, commune to commune, and Crownland to Crownland.[33] Similar problems affected other infrastructural projects too, as the findings of the *Enquete* were to show impressively. On the basis of these experiences, liberal Josef Redlich noted a general dearth of cooperative attitudes and criticized the fact that urgent issues of common interest were either not addressed at all or not met through the joint effort of all interested parties.[34]

One important obstacle to such cooperation was the empire's political asymmetry. The Habsburg monarchy was essentially an asymmetrical arrangement with a complex core–province structure. The polity was characterized by "marked cultural, economic, social, and political inequality."[35] In addition, the multilayered political system of Austria-Hungary brought with it a number of its own special institutional and legal asymmetries. One such institutional asymmetry was the situation in relation to the "Hungarian Lands"—Hungary, Croatia, and Transylvania—which were conceded extensive executive and legislative autonomy by the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise. This Compromise led to the political hegemony of the Magyars over Croatians, Serbs, Romanians, and other nationalities. Henceforth only defense, finances, and foreign policy would be handled by the Reich.

There was also institutional asymmetry within the non-Hungarian Crownlands. These lands included (among others) Galicia, Bukovina, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Lower and Upper Austria, Styria, Salzburg, the Tirol, Carinthia, and the Austrian Littoral: the half of the empire that came to be known as Cisleithania. A fragmentary constitution—the five fundamental state laws enacted in 1867—provided the cornerstone of the equal rights of all these regions and of the various nationalities inhabiting them.[36] On the one hand, then, this constitution aimed at the enforcement of equal rights, to be put into practice by public

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[32]Karl Hugelmann, "Der Plan einer Länderkonferenz der deutsch-österreichischen Alpenländer im Herbste 1848," *Jahrbuch des Vereines für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich* 19 (1924): 237–70.

[33]*Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des Industrierates,* vol. 20, *Verbesserung der österreichischen Straßenverhältnisse* (Wien, 1908). On this matter the Bohemian point of view was expressed in a memorandum; see "Pamětní spis poradního sboru českých okresů v královstvím českém o dobrozdání rakouské průmyslové rady ze dne 18. prosince 1908, jak zlepšiti silniční poměry v Rakousku" [Memorandum of the Advisory Board of Czech Districts in the Bohemian Lands concerning the report of the Austrian Industry Council, given 18.12.1908 on the issue, how to improve road infrastructure in Austria], 1912, in Archiv Národního muzea v Praze [Archive of the National Museum in Prague], Fond Albín Bráf K. 45, Ministerstvo orby 1911–1912, Z. 45/3628.

[34]*Enquete der Kommission zur Förderung der Verwaltungsreform* (Vienna, 1912), 149.

[35]Cf. Endre Hárs et al., "Zentren peripher: Vorüberlegungen zu einer Denkfigur," in *Zentren, Peripherien*, ed. Hárs et al., 1–15, at 8–9.

[36]Edmund Bernatzik, *Die österreichischen Verfassungsgesetze mit Erläuterungen* (Vienna, 1911).

administration and jurisprudence, and was thus a significant step toward creating a state under the rule of law.[37] On the other hand, however, political practice tended to thwart that basic principle of equal rights. Particular provinces and regions and particular peoples continued to be granted special rights and privileges. One such beneficiary of imperial special treatment was the Crownland of Galicia, which in 1868 managed to negotiate extensive political and, in particular, financial concessions from the core.[38] Before this, Galicia had been one of the most backward regions within the monarchy, not least because contemporaries saw it as "a colonial outpost since time immemorial."[39] Czech nationalists from Bohemia—which economically and politically held a preeminent place among the Crownlands, and which, along with Lower and Upper Austria and Moravia, formed the closely intermeshed economic core of Cisleithania[40]—tried, although ultimately in vain, to appeal on the basis of historical entitlement for special rights and for the privileged status of their Crownland within the state as a whole.[41] In addition, one regional unit was doomed to be left in the position of a colony right up to the end of the empire: the newly annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina was never to enjoy even the most basic rights to participate in the monarchy as a whole.[42]

When one engages in a search for traces of a "cooperative empire" in the Habsburg monarchy, its legal arrangements do not provide a helpful signpost. First, the large-scale institutional division constituted by the dualism within Austria-Hungary[43] cannot be

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[37]Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten*; Judson, "L'Autriche-Hongrie était-elle un empire?"; Stefan Malfér, "Der Konstitutionalismus in der Habsburgermonarchie: Siebzig Jahre Verfassungsdiskussion in 'Cisleithanien,'" in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, vol. 7/1, *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus: Verfassungsrecht, Verfassungswirklichkeit, zentrale Repräsentativkörperschaften* (Vienna, 2000), 11–67; Wolfgang Mantl, "Der österreichische Rechtsstaat zwischen habsburgischer Tradition und europäischer Zukunft," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung* 122.1 (2005): 367–80. On the legal history of the rule of law, see Gábor Máthé, ed., *Die Habsburgermonarchie auf dem Wege zum Rechtsstaat?* (Budapest, 2010).

[38]See Christoph von Bieberstein, *Freiheit in der Unfreiheit: Die nationale Autonomie der Polen in Galizien nach dem österreichisch-ungarischen Ausgleich von 1867; Ein konservativer Aufbruch im mitteleuropäischen Vergleich* (Wiesbaden, 1993); Harald Binder, "'Galizische Autonomie'—ein streitbarer Begriff und seine Karriere," in *Moravské vyrovnání z roku 1905: Možnosti a limity národnostního smíru ve střední Evropě* [The Moravian Compromise of 1905: Possibilities and limitations of a national reconcilement in Central Europe], ed. Lukáš Fasora (Brno, 2006), 239–66.

[39]Quoted by Ferdinand Schmid, *Finanzreform in Österreich* (*Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft,* Erg.-H. 37) (Tübingen, 1911), 55. For Galicia as "Slavic Orient," see Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, 2010).

[40]Komlosy, *Grenze und ungleiche regionale Entwicklung,* 194.

[41]Thomas Kletečka, "Der Ausgleichsversuch des Ministeriums Hohenwart-Schäffle mit Böhmen im Jahre 1871: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des reichsdeutschen Einflusses" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1984); Christian Scharf, *Ausgleichspolitik und Pressekampf in der Ära Hohenwart: Die Fundamentalartikel von 1871 und der deutsch-tschechische Konflikt in Böhmen* (Munich, 1996); Otto Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft, 1848–1918*, trans. Henning Schlegel, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1994).

[42]Ferdinand Schmid, *Bosnien und die Herzegovina unter der Verwaltung Österreich-Ungarns* (Leipzig, 1914); Joseph Maria Baernreither, *Bosnische Eindrücke: Eine politische Studie* (Vienna, 1908).

[43]On Austrian-Hungarian dualism, see Ágnes Déak, *From Habsburg Neo-absolutism to the Compromise, 1849–1867,* trans. Matthew Caples (Highland Lakes, NJ, 2008); András Gerö, *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Revisited,* trans. Thomas J. Dekornfeld and Helen D. Dekornfeld (New York, 2009); Ivan Žolger, *Der staatsrechtliche Ausgleich zwischen Österreich und Ungarn* (Leipzig, 1911); *Der österreichisch-ungarische Ausgleich von 1867: Seine Grundlagen und Auswirkungen* (Munich, 1968); Gerald Stourzh, "Die dualistische Reichsstruktur, Österreichbegriff und Österreichbewusstsein 1867–1918," in *Innere Staatsbildung und gesellschaftliche Modernisierung in Österreich und Deutschland 1867/71–1914*, ed. Helmut Rumpler (Vienna, 1991), 53–68; idem, "Der Dualismus 1867–1918: Zur staatsrechtlichen und völkerrechtlichen Problematik der Doppelmonarchie," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Rumpler and Urbanitsch, 7/1: 1177–1230.

regarded as an order of cooperation; it was merely one of coordination. Paradoxically, the political model that juxtaposed Austria with Hungary did not stem merely from the imperial policy of separation, as one might think, but also reflected the Hungarian political thinking and attitudes of the time. For centuries, Hungarian nobles had successfully distinguished their country from other parts of the monarchy, alluding both to the country's historical rights and to the Hungarian estates' tradition of "constitutionalism." They had thus already managed to construct an "emotional" dualism long before the constitutional dualism achieved through the Compromise of 1867.[44] The political symbolism of the Compromise—which appealed to the concept of coordination rather than cooperation—owed much to the fact that the institution that determined the twin states' shared concerns of defense, finances, and foreign policy was not itself a shared institution. The two bodies responsible for these issues were called the "delegations."[45] There was an Austrian Delegation, to which the Reichsrat's upper house sent one-third and the House of Deputies sent two-thirds of the total of sixty deputies, in accordance with a set proportion for each region. On the other side there was also a Hungarian Delegation, which was effectively a committee of the Hungarian parliament, also consisting of sixty members. The two delegations assembled separately, on occasion at the same time and place, but they never went into joint session together. The political symbolism of the Compromise of 1867 was such that the Hungarian side consistently managed to prevent joint decisions on the issues at hand. However, both delegations comprised high-profile politicians, and joint social events were often organized in the evenings, where members of the two delegations met informally. Nevertheless the modus vivendi between the two halves of the Reich was one of coordination, and genuine cooperation was never part of the equation.

One also cannot see the Habsburg monarchy as a "cooperative empire" in the structure of the constitution that organized its Cisleithanian half. After 1861, the Crownlands possessed a representative body of the regions in the lower house of the Reichsrat. This *Abgeordnetenhaus* (chamber of deputies) was effectively a "general committee" of the various individual provincial diets, which sent representatives to the body. This chamber of deputies, however, was soon to be lost to the regions. Electoral reforms, direct elections introduced in 1873, and finally the universal male suffrage granted in 1907 for the election of Abgeordnetenhaus members converted the "chamber of the provinces" into a general representative body for general interests and the wider public.[46] The Abgeordnetenhaus was to develop into an arena for the various opposing national and social interests within the monarchy. Due to the universal male suffrage granted for elections to the chamber, this was the only place where many concerns and interests could be formulated, whereas the provincial diets were still heavily influenced by the estates system. Another effect of the introduction of universal male suffrage was that nationalist obstruction regularly paralyzed the Abgeordnetenhaus. The absence of a forum in which regional interests could be aired was to prove a structural deficit in subsequent years. However, alternative, nonparliamentary forms were to emerge to provide forums for negotiations between the Reich and its regions.

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[44]See Redlich's excellent analysis, *Das österreichische Staats- und Reichsproblem*; for more detail, see Moritz Csáky, *Von der Aufklärung zum Liberalismus: Studien zum Frühliberalismus in Ungarn* (Vienna, 1981).

[45]On the Compromise, see Žolger, *Der staatsrechtliche Ausgleich zwischen Österreich und Ungarn*; Eva Somogyi, "Die Delegation als Verbindungsinstitution zwischen Cis- und Transleithanien," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Rumpler and Urbanitsch, 7/1: 1107–76.

[46]On the constitutional history of the Habsburg Empire, see Wilhelm Brauneder, "Die Verfassungsentwicklung in Österreich 1848–1918," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Rumpler and Urbanitsch, 7/1: 69–237, at 196–99.

Since the constitutional order of the time says little or nothing on the issue of cooperation, our analysis needs to switch to political practices that reached beyond the letter of the constitution. The most important political field in which evidence can be found of cooperative practices in the Habsburg monarchy was public finance. The financial system was one of the most sensitive areas of the empire.[47] This was especially the case since the imperial core's fiscal system had been a problem child for a long time. The state could not afford the out-of-control empire right up to the very end of the monarchy. Defeats in war during the 1860s and the immense military and infrastructure expenditure during the neoabsolutist period led to serious financial crises, excessive deficits, and even a number of state bankruptcies. It was only in the late 1880s that the finance minister in the Taaffe government, Julian von Dunajewski, finally managed to consolidate the state budget. As John Deak notes, "the financial egg of the nearly bankrupt state of the 1860s had hatched into a fiscal dragon at the turn of the century."[48] The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, threw the state into a new financial crisis. At the same time, and in sharp contrast to this state of affairs, the fiscal stability of the Crownlands in Cisleithania had long been considered secure.[49] Until 1880, the debts of the individual regions had remained within reasonable limits. This happy state of affairs was no mean achievement, though, as the regions had taken on a significant portion of the financial burden that resulted from the compensation of the nobility after the emancipation from serfdom. At the turn of the century, however, the fiscal situation in the Empire and the provinces began to change. As the empire's deficit began to consolidate, the debt burden of the Crownlands began increasing rapidly. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the deficit of the regions was already substantially larger than that of the state.[50] The growth in expenditure of the Crownlands in Cisleithania at the turn of the century is perhaps the clearest and most measurable expression of the fact that the relationship between the imperial core and the provinces had profoundly changed. Simply put, the Crownlands began contracting more debt because they now possessed more political power.

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[47]On finances and empire, see Michael Pammer, "Public Finance in Austria-Hungary, 1820–1913," in *Paying for the Liberal State: The Rise of Public Finance in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. José Luís Cardoso and Pedro Lains (Cambridge, 2010), 132–61; Clemens Jobst and Thomas Scheiber, "Austria-Hungary: From 1863 to 1914," in *South-Eastern European Monetary and Economic Statistics from the Nineteenth Century to World War II* (Athens etc., 2014), 55–100 (available online at http://www.bankofgreece.gr/BogDocumentEn/SEEMHN%20Data%20Volume%202014.pdf, accessed 26 February 2016); Schmid, *Finanzreform in Österreich*; Harm-Hinrich Brandt, *Der österreichische Neoabsolutismus: Staatsfinanzen und Politik 1848–1860*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1978); Josef Wysocki, *Infrastruktur und wachsende Staatsausgaben: Das Fallbeispiel Österreich 1868–1913* (Stuttgart, 1975).

[48]John Deak, *Forging a Multinational State: State Making in Imperial Austria from Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford, 2015), 230.

[49]On finances of the Crownlands, see Ernst Mischler, "Selbstverwaltung, finanzrechtlich: Der Landeshaushalt. IV. Die Einnahmen," in *Österreichisches Staatswörterbuch: Handbuch des gesamten österreichischen öffentlichen Rechtes*, ed. Ernst Mischler and Josef Ulbrich, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Vienna, 1909), 223–63; W[alter]. Loewenfeld, "Die Finanzen der Österreichischen Kronländer," *Finanzarchiv* 25, no. 2 (1908): 176–81; Karl Urban, *Die Finanzen der territorialen Selbstverwaltungskörper in Österreich mit besonderer Berückpsichtigung Böhmens* (Vienna, 1904); Hans Peter Hye, "Strukturen und Probleme der Landeshaushalte," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Rumpler and Urbanitsch, 7/2: *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus: Die regionalen Repräsentativkörperschaften* (Vienna, 2000), 1545–92; idem, "Föderalistische Reformprojekte in der österreichischen Reichshälfte der Habsburgermonarchie: Eine gescheiterte Modernisierung," in *Andere Modernen: Beiträge zu einer Historisierung des Moderne-Begriffs*, ed. Wolfgang Kruse (Bielefeld, 2015), 219–40; Martin P. Schennach, *Vom k.k. Ärar zum Bundesschatz? Das Staatsvermögen der Habsburgermonarchie und die Entstehung des österreichischen Bundesstaates* (Innsbruck, 2015).

[50]Schmid, *Finanzreform in Österreich,* 129, 147.

The reason for this growth in political power among the Crownlands of Cisleithania can be found in a process often referred to as "federalization" (*Verländerung*) within the Habsburg monarchy. The fundamental law of the state of 1867 and the regional statutes of 1861 delegated important administrative powers in key areas of public life to the Crownlands of Cisleithania, with the central government retaining the right to dispense statutory laws.[51] Thus, properly speaking, no constitutional federalization actually took place. However, in the long run—and contrary to the intentions of the imperial core—this strengthening of the regional administrations certainly pointed toward a process of federalization within the Habsburg monarchy. The new distribution of competencies was to change permanently the relationship between the imperial core and the provinces: many of the regions began to use their new administrative powers extensively, and the momentum of economic modernization and political nationalism was enough to do the rest.

As debtors to modernization, the Crownlands built new roads, railways, and power plants, achieved the development of a differentiated primary, vocational, and agricultural school system, set up regional banks and savings banks, employment exchanges, and welfare offices, built regional hospitals, and financed social services and health insurance funds.[52] These modernization projects, ambitious as they already were, were further stoked by the competition between nationalities in the regions, a dynamic that also made them even more expensive. It was precisely in regions of mixed nationality within the monarchy that there emerged a degree of duplication in expenditure. One contemporary finance expert criticized the fact that in Bohemia "every crown that has been granted for German purposes has to be matched by at least a crown for Czech purposes."[53] Fiscal competition for "national purposes" was prone to breaking out within any project, irrespective of whether it was for building schools, infrastructural projects, or hospitals. One of these debtors to the nation and nationalism was the Margraviate of Moravia. It was no coincidence that after the Moravian Compromise of 1905—which created separate political communities (or "polities") for the German and Czech populations and founded a large number of mutually exclusive institutions for the two groups—regional indebtedness shot up to theretofore unknown heights, despite the fact that in years prior to the Compromise (1903–5) Moravian provincial finances had produced surpluses.[54] By 1911 only two-thirds of the ordinary expenditure of Moravia were covered by ordinary revenues.[55] This detail also illustrates an even more serious problem: due to glaring loopholes in legislation there was no effective control to ensure that regional finances were balanced.[56]

In their efforts to deal with their wide-ranging competencies, the Crownlands increasingly had to struggle with bottlenecks. The growth they experienced in political power, which made many Crownlands into pacesetters for modernization, was not matched by similar

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[51]Georg Schmitz, "Organe und Arbeitsweise, Strukturen und Leistungen der Landesvertretungen," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, vol. 7/2, 1353–1544.

[52]Urban, *Finanzen in Österreich,* 31–40; Hye, "Strukturen und Probleme der Landeshaushalte," 1545–92.

[53]Friedrich Kleinwächter, "Die österreichische Enquete über die Landesfinanzen (März 1908)," *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik* 38.3 (1909): 43–63, at 52.

[54]"Überblick über den Stand der Landesfinanzen 1896–1908," in *Minutes of the Moravian Provincial Diet*, no. 220/1907.

[55]Memorandum of the k.k. Governor in Moravia to the *Landesausschuss* of Moravia, 22 June 1910, Moravský zemský archiv [Moravian National Archive], Brno (hereafter MZA), A 9 Zemský výbor [Provincial Committee] K. 2639, Sign. M 1, "Sanování zemských financí" [Reorganization of regional finances].

[56]Paul Kompert, "Die Reform der Budgetierung in den österreichischen Landesfinanzwirtschaften," *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reich* 34 (1910): 139–50.

growth in fiscal power. The regions of Cisleithania were not able to collect their own taxes and had only very restricted ability to increase their revenues, since the power to raise taxes remained with the imperial core. The regions and municipal authorities could certainly levy surcharges on taxes collected by the Reich. These surcharges were far from insignificant and substantially increased the burden of taxpayers. In 1905, the grand total of regional and municipal surcharges had increased by almost 420 percent within the space of four decades. By that time such allowances, taken as a whole, represented as much revenue as the total amount of taxes collected by the central Cisleithanian state.[57] However, regions had no other independent source of income and remained unable to pursue independent fiscal policies of their own, except for their ability to raise some limited taxes on luxuries. The imperial core, due to the Reich's deep indebtedness during the 1860s, had avoided giving the regions any additional sources of income to finance their new responsibilities. What is more, the Reich's very indebtedness was in fact the real reason for which it had granted the regions additional effective powers in the first place. Consequently, the gaping hole between incomes and expenditures of the regions was to grow ever wider. Though it is true that many regions were able to obtain financial aid from the imperial core for particular administrative purposes, others were left with empty pockets.[58] In 1892, the Finance Ministry addressed the problem of regional indebtedness by organizing a financial conference with the Crownlands and conceded them a bigger share of the imperial duty on spirits.[59] Some years later, in 1898, the regions benefited from fiscal transfers from revenues created by a reformed personal income tax system in return for their renunciation of the right to raise surcharges on this tax.[60] However, no long-term solution to the regional financial crisis was ever found. All attempts to separate state finances from regional finances were ultimately doomed to fail. The debtor carousel on which the regions within the Habsburg monarchy found themselves began to spin ever faster as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.

From 1905 on, however, a paradigm shift began to occur. The regional finance crisis provided the motive for a meeting—for the first time in the history of the Habsburg monarchy—of representatives from all the regional legislatures of the Cisleithanian Crownlands for joint consultations, initially without the participation of the Cisleithanian central government.[61] One needs therefore to take a look into the back rooms of the *Landesausschüsse* (provincial executive committees) and the business offices of the regional legislatures of Cisleithania in order to discover the reality of "cooperative empire." The majority of the vast materials accumulated by the interregional conferences (*Länderkonferenzen*) are now stored at the archive of the Moravian Provincial Committee, which initiated the joint meetings and which was addressed as the Crownland responsible for them in the years to follow, right up to

[57]These regional surcharges were split evenly in two, half in allowances for the Crownlands and half for the municipalities; see Erwin Steinitzer, *Die jüngsten Reformen der veranlagten Steuern in Österreich: Eine historisch-kritische Studie* (Leipzig, 1905), 16, 20.

[58]On protests from Moravia against privileges for other provinces, see Memorandum of the Provincial Committee to the Ministry of Finances, 29 April 1909, MZA, A 9 Zemský výbor K. 2639 Sign. M 1, "Sanování zemských financí," fol. 882–89.

[59]In several minutes, the Provincial Committees referred to this event; see, for example, *Landesausschuss* of Bukovina to *Landesausschuss* of Moravia, communication of 3 March 1914, MZA, A 9 Sanování K. 2639, fol. 225.

[60]Steinitzer, *Die jüngsten Reformen der veranlagten Steuern in Österreich,* 198.

[61]Schmitz, "Organe und Arbeitsweise," 1537; Hans Peter Hye, "Die 'Länderkonferenz' (1905–1907): Ein Versuch gemeinsamer politischer Willensfindung der politischen Eliten der Länder," in *Ústřední moc a regionální samospráva* [Central power and regional government], ed. Jan Janák (Brno, 1995), 281–89.

1916.[62] The *Landesausschüsse* that convened the meeting, which were in effect the executive arms of the provincial diets, were very influential because—in contrast to the regional parliaments—they were permanently staffed and responsible for dealing with day-to-day regional issues. The meeting was a conscious breach of the prohibition on cooperation that had been imposed by the core's rules on regional government, which, as we have seen, had actually forbidden such contacts among regional institutions. What emerged from these meetings was a joint approach by all *Landesausschüsse,* which thereafter met at irregular intervals.[63] This joint approach involved a promise from the more prosperous (i.e., Cisleithanian) Crownlands to act more assertively in defending their concerns in relation to the imperial core. The meetings also demonstrated the Crownlands' increased consciousness of their power and influence, attained through the commitment and services they contributed to the modernization of the empire. All participants in the meetings were clear that these public tasks could not have been accomplished with the same effectiveness by the imperial core, which did not possess the necessary means or local knowledge to do so. At the same time, the regional representatives also agreed that they did not want to see the political power they had managed to capture curtailed in any way. As a member of the provincial committee for Lower Austria put it: "We are all autonomists."[64] By their performance of important public tasks, the Crownlands had managed to secure for themselves a strong bargaining position in the generalized dispute over debt. The altered relationship between the imperial core and the provinces also influenced the dynamics of the negotiating process between the state and the Crownlands, ordaining that a formal procedure be defined to provide a mechanism within which the new fiscal allocations for the years to follow could be agreed.

From these interregional conferences emerged another unique initiative in 1907. All newly selected members of the *Abgeordnetenhaus* would be prebriefed by the *Landesausschüsse* through the use of a single standard memorandum. In this way, the negotiations in the Reichsrat opened with talks on a new fiscal allocation for the interior of the empire.[65] Eventually, the emperor himself spoke in favor of financial support for the regions in a speech from the throne in 1907.[66] In March 1908, the government convened a symposium of

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[62]MZA, see A 9 Zemský výbor K. 2639 and 2640 Sign. M 1, "Sanování zemských financí," and A 9 Zemský výbor K. 2772 Sign. M 3/1, "Conf. Úprava zemských financi" [Conference on the reorganization of regional finances]. Other materials, though not as voluminous, can be found via the catchword "Landesfinanzen, Sanierung" at Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, St. Pölten (hereafter NÖLA), LR I/Allgemeine Präsidialangelegenheiten 10 Landesfinanzen, e.g., Rz. 584/1908, 2639/1907, 1138/1907, 173/1906, 1585/1905, as Lower Austria provided its *Landesausschuss* building in Vienna for the conferences.

[63]Minutes, detailed materials, and a rich correspondence that had remained unknown until now is filed at the MZA; see A 9 Zemský výbor K. 2639 and 2640 Sign. M 1, "Sanování zemských financí," and A 9 Zemský výbor K. 2772 Sign. M 3/1, "Conf. Úprava zemských financí." Conference proceedings were published as well; see *Stenographisches Protokoll über die am 16., 17. und 18. Februar 1905 im niederösterreichischen Landhause zu Wien abgehaltene Konferenz der Landesausschüsse der im Reichsrate vertretenen Königreiche und Länder betreffend die Regelung der Landesfinanzen* (Vienna, 1905); *Stenographisches Protokoll über die am 9. Juni 1907 im niederösterreichischen Landhause zu Wien abgehaltene Konferenz der Landesausschüsse der im Reichsrate vertretenen Königreiche und Länder betreffend die Regelung der Landesfinanzen* (Vienna, 1907); *Stenographisches Protokoll über die am 27. Februar 1909 im Herrensaal des niederösterreichischen Landhauses stattgefundene Konferenz der Landesausschüsse in Angelegenheit der Landes-Bierauflage* (Vienna, 1909).

[64]*Stenographisches Protokoll … im niederösterreichischen Landhause zu Wien*, 72.

[65]Resolution of Provincial Representatives, in NÖLA, Regierungsarchiv, Präsidium des Landesauschusses, Sign. Reg. I/10, Stammzahl 1138/1907, "Sanierung der Landesfinanzen"; *Stenographisches Protokoll Abgeordnetenhaus, 18th session*, 3rd meeting, 62–63; 4th meeting, 119–36; and 5th meeting, 275–81.

[66]Speech from the throne by Emperor Franz Josef, 19 June 1907; *Stenographisches Protokoll Abgeordnetenhaus, 18th session*.

regional representatives, ministerial bureaucrats, and experts, including the Social Democrat Karl Renner, that collected rich statistical data and that mirrored differing regional experiences.[67] However, the arguments that were brought forward at length at this official meeting did not differ much from those that had already been discussed at the interregional conferences and in the provincial diets held earlier. The key for determining the allocation for the gradually emerging compromise between the fiscal interests of the various regions was a fundamental issue and entailed taking into account the varying needs of the individual Crownlands. Economically weak regions such as Bukovina and Galicia expected to receive a relatively larger share than other regions and to retain their existing privileges.[68] Both from an external point of view and in the view of the regional representatives themselves, therefore, much emphasis was placed on mutual support among the Crownlands. A contemporary wrote that the financial transfers should contribute to a "feeling of solidarity between the richer and poorer Crownlands."[69] This rhetoric should not, however, obstruct the insight that behind the relative preference given to poor regions also stood the economic interests of the richer regions, as this strengthened the markets in which they sold their produce. Within the Habsburg monarchy, the economically backward areas of Galicia and Bukovina functioned as a sort of interior colony—one that underdeveloped markets beyond the borders of the Habsburg Reich would not have been able to replace.[70]

It is a testament to the initiative of the interregional conferences that they managed to produce model arrangements for restoring the health of the empire's regional finances. It was to take almost ten years of constant lobbying in order to achieve any of the expectations that the regions harbored of the imperial core. In 1914, the *Landesausschuss* of Bukovina summarized the matter as follows: "The united approach of the *Landesausschüsse* was successful inasmuch as the central financial administration—even if after putting up some resistance—initiated an increase to the charge on beer […] and an increase in taxes on spirits."[71] What was more, according to the committee, it was the imperial Reichsrat itself that first decided to grant the transfer of a part of the additional income resulting from these increases from the central state to the regions.[72] A portion of the proceeds of personal income tax also regularly flowed down to the regions.[73] Personal income tax yielded a large amount of revenue and was one of the few dynamically growing types of tax available at the time. The transfer of revenues from personal income tax, therefore, assured the regions of

[67] *Stenographisches Protokoll der Enquete über die Landesfinanzen, 7.–12.03.1908* (Vienna, 1908).

[68] This was intended both by the *Landesausschüsse* and the Ministry of Finance. On internal discussion of fiscal bureaucracy on upholding privileges, see the internal memoranda "Exposé des k.k. Ministerialrates Dr. Reisch in der Frage der Sanierung der Landesfinanzen" and "Skizze eines Protokolls über die am 21.12.1905 und 4.1.1906 im Finanzministerium abgehaltenen Besprechungen über die Sanierung der Landesfinanzen," attachment; Österreichische Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Sign. AT-OeStA/FHKA k.k. Finanzministerium, allgemeine Reihe, Zl. 12854/1906; see also *Stenographisches Protokoll der Enquete über die Landesfinanzen,* 282–83.

[69] Loewenfeld, "Die Finanzen der Österreichischen Kronländer," 180.

[70] Komlosy, *Grenze und ungleiche regionale Entwicklung*, 15. For statistical material on financial compromise and regional differences, see Ryota Watanabe, "Social Differentials between Peoples and Financial System in Early 20th-Century Austria," paper presented 6 August 2015 at ICCEES IX World Congress, Makuhari, Japan.

[71] Law 14/1914 *RGBl.* of 23 January 1914, relating to the new rules on transfers from state funds to regional funds of the kingdoms participating in the Reichsrat and the mitigation of level of royal taxation.

[72] This involved a total of 35 million crowns; see ibid.

[73] *Landesausschuss* of Bukovina to *Landesausschuss* of Moravia, communication of 3 March 1914, Zl. 4291/1914, 6, MZA, A 9 Sanování K. 2639, fol. 225.

increasing income in the long term.[74] Besides this, transfers from consumption taxes on beer and spirits were traditionally among the most important sources of income for the regions.[75] These measures were initially passed as provisional measures, projected to last for a few years; but the provincial committee of Bukovina showed confidence that it would achieve a lasting resolution through an agreement with Hungary, which was needed to put the empire's financial issues definitively on a firm footing.[76] Despite the provisional nature of these tax allocations, they constituted a new method of fund allocation that succeeded in attenuating the debt crisis facing the Crownlands.

In addition, the success of these interregional conferences during the regional financial crisis gave impetus to further efforts at reform. In March 1914 the Bukovina *Landesausschuss* submitted a proposal to the other *Landesausschüsse* to create a joint regional credit institution, collectivize debts, and make all Crownlands jointly and severally liable for their debts. What they intended to do was to "issue a single standard bond, a '*Länderrente*' [regional bond], since such an instrument would substantially increase the creditworthiness of the regions and would have the capacity to attract foreign capital."[77] The Bukovina *Landesausschuss* was emphatic that an agreement of joint and several liability would facilitate the agreement of a "lasting set of rules for the relationship between state and regional finances."[78] The region of Salzburg, which had already made a similar suggestion, responded positively to the proposal.[79] However, this call for a community that shared all regional debt and accepted joint and several liability for the regions was to be drowned out in the noise of World War I.

These conferences mark the historical conversion of the Habsburg monarchy into a "cooperative empire." At the very peak of the regional financial crisis, the representatives of the *Landesausschüsse* had crossed a heretofore inviolable boundary. This action ruptured the prohibition against communication and cooperation contained in the regulations on regional government that were in force in Cisleithania, which in true imperial style forbade all political contacts among the Crownlands. Justifying their conduct on the basis of the urgent unresolved financial problems, the regions saw themselves as entitled to ignore this ban and in the process lent themselves a new level of political self-confidence. The interregional conferences can thus be seen as an expression of horizontal cooperation among the provinces. The imperial core, in the shape of the Finance Ministry, at first responded to this initiative with mistrust, dismissing the *Länderkonferenzen* as no more than a series of "informal political meetings." On these grounds it initially refused even to send a special representative. As public pressure increased over the regional financial crisis, however, the Finance Ministry eventually abandoned its resistance and drew up a legislative proposal for resolution of the financial crisis with the imprimatur of its own department and in cooperation with the regional representatives. That this process was able to benefit from the proposals and supplementary materials already available from the *Länderkonferenzen*

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[74]On earlier fiscal transfers in favor of the Crownlands, see Steinitzer, *Die jüngsten Reformen der veranlagten Steuern in Österreich,* 198.

[75]For more details on fiscal transfers up to 1905, see Hye, "Strukturen und Probleme der Landeshaushalte," 1545–92.

[76]*Landesausschuss* of Bukovina to *Landesausschuss* of Moravia, communicated on 3 March 1914, Zl. 4291/1914, 6, MZA, A 9 Sanování K. 2639, fol. 225.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

[79]*Landesausschuss* of Salzburg to all *Landesausschüsse*, communication on 18 May 1914, Zl. 3324/1914, MZA, A 9 Sanování K. 2639, fol. 198.

indicates that these conferences also constituted an instance of vertical cooperation between the imperial core and the provinces. Surely no new fiscal alignment for Cisleithania could have been achieved without both vertical cooperation between the core and the regions, and horizontal cooperation among the regions themselves.

Conclusion and Outlook

Toward the end of the Habsburg Empire a new pattern of power began to emerge: that of the "cooperative empire." The crisis in public finances, caused by provinces' increasing expenditures to meet the pressing needs of modernity (to provide schooling, infrastructure, and welfare, and to deal with issues of nationality) forced the imperial core and the provinces to cooperate with one another. Whereas the imperial center was interested in motivating the Crownlands to be active in the above-mentioned political fields, the provinces were striving both to defend their autonomy and to wrest from the imperial core the financial subsidies they needed to address their deficits. Interestingly enough, it was not the imperial center that finally established the new forms of "cooperation." In line with common typologies of empire, Vienna maintained for a rather long time a policy of central control over the provinces and strict separation between them. The impetus for imperial cooperation was ultimately a bottom–up initiative that came from the Cisleithanian Crownlands themselves. A prerequisite to this development was agreement among the various provinces on a joint regional strategy, the result of careful negotiations among representatives of the provincial diets during a series of semipublic meetings that were—rather surprisingly—unaffected by the political tensions among the empire's various nationalities at the time. The subsequent success in attaining a preliminary financial compromise between the core and the provinces provides a significant signal that a change had taken place in the underlying power structures of the empire. By ceding financial transfers to the Crownlands, the imperial center was in effect acknowledging both the numerous political activities that were a logical consequence of the Crownlands' autonomy and the legitimacy of the political cooperation among the Crownlands that had been achieved at the *Länderkonferenzen*.

The old radial and vertical arrangement of power structures between core and province, symbolized by the 1861 prohibition on communication among the regions—which gave rise to misgivings among regional forces that their decisions would be difficult to thread through the eye of the imperial needle—became substantially weakened. The way was now open for forms of political negotiation that involved the Crownlands as partners rather than simple subjects. Furthermore, there is much justification in the claim that the aforementioned case of financial transfer was not unique within the political multitiered system of Austria-Hungary. However, more detailed research on other instances of cooperation between the provinces and Vienna is not yet available. In this regard it might be surmised that cooperation between the core and the provinces may also had an effect on the process that created the empire's social security system, or on the collection of statistical information throughout the imperial territories.[80] In addition, at a lower level, and despite substantial institutional hindrances, some cooperation between districts (*Bezirke*), and towns and

[80]On the annual conferences of statistics, see Schmitz, "Organe und Arbeitsweise," 1537; Karl Berthold, "Die Entstehung, Entwicklung und Tätigkeit der Konferenz für Landesstatistik," *Statistische Monatsschrift* NF 14 (1909): 593–613.

municipalities had been going on, despite substantial institutional hindrances, for a long time before the events described in this study.[81]

There is another related field of research that lies beyond the question of cooperation between public institutions. This approach concentrates on the relationship between the institutional cooperation described above and initiatives from private social forces. The role of official advisory boards as an interface between the state and society (e.g., the *Arbeitsbeirat* associated with the Trade Ministry) provides an interesting example of where one might look to find instances of cooperation between the state and private social actors.[82] In addition, one might presume that cooperative practices and behaviors were similarly triggered by the need for cooperation vis-à-vis the pressing challenges of modernity elsewhere in the world as well. It would therefore seem a logical step to take a look at other empires from this point of view.

The notion of a "cooperative empire" enables broader conclusions on the history of empires. The very existence of cooperation between imperial institutions in Austria-Hungary would seem to eliminate the one remaining characteristic that allegedly distinguishes the traditional imperial model of the state from nonimperial arrangements: the prohibition on cooperation among the various regions of an empire, which instead receive decision making and communication only from the imperial core to which they are radially connected (Osterhammel). Thus, it would seem that the concept of "empire" can no longer be attached to a single, definitive characterization, and that we need to reshape our thinking on the phenomenon.

First, "empire" is a typology, and as such it can point to a way out of the imagined analytical dichotomy between empire and nation-state, a dichotomy that remains central to far too many research questions on the history of empire. Taking the model of empire as a typological set seriously—a set that encompasses the factors of large size and great power, of asymmetry and authority, of diversity and difference, but also of prohibited cooperation and communication—one must acknowledge that the process of change from empire to a nonimperial state is fluid, without any clear delineation between the before and the after. Asymmetrically formed empires can become symmetrically oriented states and, vice versa, extensive nation-states can be reappropriated back into an imperial political model. This insight offers a new opportunity for understanding the late history of empires. The comparative terminological back-and-forth between the competing concepts of empire and nation-state—a peculiarity of more than a few historical works on the topic of empire, particularly where the nation-state is seen as the necessary successor to empire—has led to a preoccupation with terminology and issues relating to nationalism. This fixation has hindered the investigation of "empire" as an important historic phenomenon in its own right.

Second, it still meaningful to perceive certain arrangements of political power as "empires." Despite the assumption that the analytical juxtaposition of empires and nation-states—of imperial and nonimperial arrangements of power—has been refuted, typological differences between the two models of power still remain and continue to be of great analytical value. The degree of cooperation within the multitier system of an empire might point either to the possible development of a relationship of equality among provinces and of a more horizontal

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[81]See, e.g., Taku Shinohara, "Communal Autonomy as a Base of Civil Society: Local Autonomy and the Building of National Culture in Bohemia in the 19th Century," *The Construction and Deconstruction of National Histories in Slavic Eurasia*, ed. Tadayuki Hayashi (Sapporo, 2003), 311–30.

[82]Brigitte Pellar, … *mit sozialpolitischen Erwägungen: Staatliche Arbeitsstatistik und Gewerkschaftsmitsprache im Handelsministerium der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 2013).

distribution of power between the core and the provinces (high incidence of cooperative practices) or, at the other end of the scale, to the possible development of even more repressive policies of institutional separation and control (low incidence). A focus on "cooperative empire" can therefore highlight features of an imperial system that have the potential to lead beyond informal cooperation—to a process of federalization, for example—while clarifying which aspects of the political order remain genuinely imperial in nature.

The issues involved in cooperation between the core and the provinces mark one important dimension for tracing the transition between imperial and nonimperial arrangements, the latter considered here in a broader sense. If we decide consciously not to limit ourselves to a strict, almost essentialist juxtaposition between empire on the one hand and nation-state on the other, the history of empire can provide us with a promising broader perspective. The concept of "cooperative empire" thus opens out a new avenue of investigation in the history of empires, one where the fluidity of changeover between empire and nation-state may be profitably extended to transitions from empires to federations (and vice versa), or between empires and international, transnational, and even global orders.

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