

The Habsburg Legacy: Rokkanian Perspectives on East Central European Politics between the Two Wars

Vit Simral¹

Abstract

The work adds to the discussion on the nature of the Habsburg legacy in the politics of East Central Europe. It focuses on the development of the formal constitutional framework and on the development of party systems in Austria-Hungary and its successor states of the interwar period. Drawing on the theoretical concepts of Lipset and Rokkan, the work searches for differences between the timing of democratisation in individual regions of the Habsburg Empire and establishes how these differences affected the formation of socio-political cleavages. Furthermore, it highlights the major features of successor states' party systems that were carried over from the era of the Habsburg Empire.

The Interpretations of Imperial Legacies

In his award-winning conference paper, Herbert Kitschelt (1999) claims that it was particularly the developed professional state apparatus carried over from the Austro-Hungarian era that caused the relative success of the Czech post-communist democratisation. "Because of the remnants of bureaucratic professionalism [that originated in the absolutist polity of the Habsburg Austria], opportunities for the post-communist "privatization" of the state by old party operatives or new tycoons were most limited and public capabilities to advance market liberalization were greatest" (Kitschelt 1999: 25). Other post-communist countries that before 1918 belonged to the Habsburg Empire, such as Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia, Kitschelt classes as a group of countries where "a patrimonial non-professional bureaucracy prevailed into the interwar period" (ibid.).

¹ PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, Masaryk University in Brno, Faculty of Law of the University of Leicester, Historical Sociology Programme at the Charles University in Prague.

Interestingly, even though Kitschelt considers the pre-communist legacy to be the best explanatory variable of the different paths of post-communist transitions (1999: 37-8), he does not go on to define this 'legacy' and does not explain why some parts of the Empire in 1918 inherited a different type of legacy than others.

Many more studies have also found connections between pre-communist political traditions and subsequent political and administrative designs: for example, Ishiyama (1997) convincingly links interwar and post-communist electoral system choices, Meyer-Sahling (2009) does the same for past and current public administration models, while Dimitrova-Grajzl (2007) for the designs of agencies of governmental oversight.

The concept of 'Imperial legacies' has been widely used in different fields of humanities and social sciences. In political science, it usually refers to the political institutions and traditions that had been set up in the geographical area of the empires of the 18th and 19th century and lasted long enough to become the backbone of the political systems of successor states in the post-imperial era. Unfortunately, there exists no wide consensus among scholars, not even roughly, what variables are to be understood under these patterns

Some authors operate with 'legacy' as a synonym to the overall prevailing 'culture' of local politics and outline its shape mostly in historical terms. For instance, Schöpflin (1990) in his work discusses in turns socio-demographic composition, political and administrative institutions, ethnical questions and linguistic and academic heritage. Other authors, on the other hand, talk more specifically about public administration: Kitschelt (1999), as has already been noted, does not explain precisely his concepts but mentions the make-up of bureaucracy and the professionalisation of civil service. In a similar vein, but with much more detail, Mendelski defines 'Ottoman legacy' as the "administrative and institutional patterns prevailing in the last century of the Ottoman Empire" (2007: 3). He distinguishes three dimensions in these patterns (government effectiveness, corruption, rule of law) and constructs a set of indicators to capture them. Yet other authors focus on the electoral side of politics and explain voting differences between post-communist countries by references to pre-communist party systems.

Roper and Fesnic (2003), for example, put forward a convincing argument that 'memory' of past electoral cleavages may take precedence over the current socio-demographic composition of the electorate when the voters' choice is concerned.

If there is indeed to be a consensus established in the future, the general concept of 'legacies' needs to be, unavoidably, dismantled. It is a multi-dimensional concept, covering many different phenomena. As stepping stones towards a universal theory of historical legacies, these phenomena ought to be put under scrutiny one by one and well-researched before general conclusions about the role of history and imperial political traditions may be reached.

This article follows the electoral research tradition and focuses predominantly on national party life in the successor states of the Habsburg Empire. Admittedly, such an approach is relatively narrow; I do not compete with Schöpflin's all-encompassing studies. In this article, I add only one more stepping stone into the research path of the imperial legacies theory. The goal is to connect the discussion on the Habsburg legacy in the East Central European area with research into the West European political history. For the field of study of political parties, the importance of this connection lies, first, in reinforcing the methodological groundwork that many an East European student of political parties found in Western theories, and second, in distinguishing the sets of commonalities and differences that affect the histories of countries in Central Europe. Further research, which goes beyond the scope of the present contribution, ought to focus on finding traces of the Habsburg legacy both before and after the inter-war era and on finding links between East and West European histories in areas other than political parties.

As the analytical framework in this study, I employ the concept of politico-sociological 'cleavage' as put forward in his work by Stein Rokkan, the prominent Norwegian social scientists. Rokkan's concept is a part of his 'grounded' theory on sociological background behind politics based on comparisons of factual historical phenomena that happened in Western Europe. This analytical model has for the last four decades served to the discipline of political science as a full-fledged theoretical framework capturing both sociological as well as political changes in the history of Western Europe.

In a condensed and a simplifying summary, it is "an attempt to integrate crises in state- and nation-building processes with conditions for democratic survival such as the extension of citizenship rights and the establishment of stable political cleavages in parliaments and amongst the voting population" (Aarebrot and Berglund 1995: 211).

As such, it may work considerably well as one of Kitschelt's model "moderately deep explanations with micro-logics that reconstruct a chain of determination among temporally sequential social processes and structures" (1999: 39). As is explained in the next section, the 'cleavage' concept allows tracing of successor political parties based on their social anchoring. Rokkan's theory has been many times successfully used for analyses of the birth of mass politics in the West; in this article, I apply it to the development of politics easterly from its original geographical setting.

In the next section, I discuss the problems of conceptualisation and definition of basic terms; I review shortly the 'cleavage' concept as explained in the volume co-edited by Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan and comment on its presumed geographical embeddedness. Then, I start my analysis by focusing on initial politico-social conditions in the Central European region and code them according to the Lipset – Rokkanmodel. In the penultimate section, I study the transposition of political institutions from the Habsburg Empire into its successor states. Lastly, I consider the transformation of national political parties from their cradle in the Imperial politics to the nation-state political stages and classify them according to the Lipset – Rokkanmodel.

The Rokkanian Agenda

At the centre of Rokkan's framework stands the concept of 'cleavage': a division on issues in the electorate, that provides the voters with a sense of shared identity, is identifiable in the demographics in socio-structural terms, and ultimately leads to the development of an organised effort by enfranchised individuals (Bartolini and Mair 1990:215).

Rokkan himself identified four cleavages in the mass politics of Western Europe (Flora et al 1999, 277-412). Two cleavages cut through the territorial axis of nations and represented, first, the clash between interests of politico-economic-cultural centres of states (i.e., capitals and developed regions of the ethnic majority) against peripheries (i.e., border regions populated by ethnic minorities) and, second, the clash between the agrarian lobby and urban population. The other two cleavages were related to the functional axis of society and comprised, first, the conflict between the Church and the secular government over their mutual relationship, and second, the class division between employees (labour) and employers (business owners).

These cleavages were produced step-by-step during the times of the Reformation (the Church/state conflict), the National Revolution (the centre/periphery conflict), the Industrial Revolution (the urban/agrarian cleavage) and the International Industrial Revolution (the labour/business cleavage). Consequently, European parties developed so as to advocate the interests of the groups featuring in these conflicts and all European party families may be classified according to this scheme (see Table 1).

Table 1: Cleavages of Western Politics	Territorial Dimension	Functional Dimension
Reformation/National Revolution	Centre X Periphery	Church X State
Industrialisation/International Revolution	City X Countryside	Labour X Employers

Source: compiled by author

One important thing ought to be noted: among political scientists today exists a consensus that a cleavage in party politics is effectively created by changes at either of two levels. The first level is a political one, that of institutional structures and constitutional arrangements, both formal and informal, that shape party systems and party organisations. The second level is sociological and comprises all social, economic, and cultural conditions that constitute constraints on the system of political parties. Even though Lipset and Rokkan asserted the sociological background of cleavages and the precedence of social factors, political scientists later emphasised that the political environment also must be suitable and prepared for the creation of new cleavages (Römmele 1999: 4-7) and that only the actual organisation of politics decides whether a cleavage will manifest itself, or will remain latent (Bartolini and Mair 1990: 216).

Indeed, Lipset and Rokkan's conceptualisation of cleavage has been frequently challenged because of its disregard to the role of political organising. 'Action-focused' researchers of party politics like Douglas Rae and Michael Taylor (1970) felt a lack of short-term dynamics in the original model and argued that the difference between a 'latent' and 'manifest' cleavage equals the difference between a mere 'social' and 'political' cleavage.

Progressively, political scientists lay more and more emphasis on the behavioural element, manifested by certain activities such as voting or joining a political organisation. The present study focuses primarily on the short-term political micro-structure, i.e., patterns of party competition. However, I also acknowledge that further studies should explore the ethnic, religious and class anchoring of parties so as not to forget the sociological macro-level, i.e., social groups. In my understanding not only that there must be a political action, but it must be directly associated with the empirical element of a cleavage. In other words, cleavages are defined as:

- 1) having their origin explicable by long-term historical reasons;
- 2) longer existing, not only temporary phenomena in the configuration of a party system;
- 3) not artificially created by parties on the programmatic level.

In the present study, I still exhaust neither the cleavage concept's full analytical potential, i.e., its sociological depth in proposed causal chains, nor its full temporal scope, i.e., the causal chain's longevity spanning several centuries. Instead, I use a 'shallow' form of the concept: with the goal to trace the 'Habsburg legacy' phenomenon: I discuss only political history and voting behaviour in the region and merely over the course of few decades: between the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century. I focus primarily on the cleavage structure behind political development in the constitutional era. The Lipset – Rokkan framework, nevertheless, offers more and deserves to be used again, in a larger, more ambitious research project dealing with the East Central European region.

The Application of Rokkan in the Post-Communist Europe

An important message hidden in Stein Rokkan's grounded theory about the development of political power in the West is that in order to explain structural variations in individual national political entities in Europe, a comparison of the highest possible number of cases is inherently inseparable from the actual theory-building.

The original model however contains a significant bias: Rokkan himself confessed that he based his theory exclusively on the experience of Western Europe and stopped short from including the development behind what was in the 1970s the Iron Curtain (Rokkan 1975: 579).

Even in its most evolved form, his map of historical development of European states in the 16th to 18th centuries covers only the territories of the two most eastern Catholic kingdoms established in the High Middle Ages, i.e., Poland and Hungary. Both the Balkans and the Muslim/Orthodox Eastern Europe, during the Early Modern era regions of, respectively, Ottoman and Russian dominance are in Rokkan's original draft omitted. Rokkan did this consciously: focusing exclusively "on the Celtic, the Latin, and the Germanic people", he defined Europe as comprising at the most the nation-states of the "Roman Catholic Church part of Europe after the Schism of 1054" (Flora 1999: 86). Moreover, in his statements, he gives the impression that a full consideration of Eastern Europe and the Balkans would complicate his model-building, mainly because of the different cultural basis of Eastern nation-states and their problematic experience with external empires.

However, if the central idea of Rokkan's work, i.e., to base an explanatory theory about political development on a large-scale comparison of cases and subsequent induction, is valid, why not to try to transcend beyond the theory's original boundaries? Is it not a major task of social sciences to make their models travel and to produce open, not spatial-specific theories? The latter sections of this article show that East Central Europe is distinct from Western Europe but these two regions feature commonality, arguably sufficient enough to avoid the danger of a severe 'conceptual stretching' (Sartori 1970) that must, no doubt, accompany the process of leaving the geographical embedment of Rokkan's original drafts.

Indeed, in spite of Rokkan's own reluctance to go beyond the boundaries Western Europe, since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989/90, students of post-communist politics have made many attempts to apply Rokkan's concepts to the newly democratised countries eastward of the developed European 'city-belt' of Early Modern era. The concept of cleavages proved to be the most prolific part of Rokkanian agenda applied to post-1989 party politics in post-communist countries. This is by no means surprising, as especially East Central Europe shares a common cultural and historical heritage, where patterns of political behaviour resemble strongly 'the West' (see e.g., Kitschelt et al. 1999; Lawson et al. 1999; Lewis 2001).

Poland was the recipient of many studies on the post-1989 evolution of territorial cleavage structures in the Polish party politics (e.g., Wade et al. 1995; Zarycki and Nowak 2000), functional cleavages (Gibson and Cielecka 1995; Shabad and Słomczyński 1999) and even the (re-)formulation of parties' ideological stances and their original strategies vis-à-vis Polish voters (Jasiewicz 1993; Szczerbiak 1999). Other countries of the 'Visegrad Group' also attracted much attention by scholars, mainly using qualitative comparisons or producing single-case studies of the Czech Republic (Matějů et al. 1999), Hungary (Evans and Whitefield 1995) or Slovakia (Markowski 1997). More extensive comparative studies went even further to the East and assessed the development of cleavages in Bulgaria (e.g., Kitschelt et al. 1999; Evans and Whitefield 2000), the Baltics (Evans 1998; Evans and Lipsmeyer 2001), or Ukraine (Birch 1995; Birch and Wilson 1999; Kubicek 2000) and Moldova (Evans and Need 2002).

By and large, these studies only showed that post-communist party politics features cleavages different from those that had been previously found in the electorates of old Western European democracies (von Beyme 1994; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Hloušek and Kopeček 2010; Tiemann 2012). Many authors recognised that specific cleavage structures were crystallising, especially in the countries of East Central Europe, and that certain modifications in research methods or a change in approach might lead to reconciliation of the Rokkanian agenda with the new experiences of the European post-communism (Antoszewski and Herbut 1998; Sitter 2001; Lewis 2001; Hloušek and Kopeček 2008; Cabada et al. 2014).

One of the possible changes is to focus on the pre-communist historical development of parties in the region. Mario Cotta already in 1994 hinted towards such an approach (Cotta 1994) and György Márkus (1994; 1996) discussed the importance of long-time socio-political cleavages for the direction of the Hungarian transformation. Tworzecki did the same for Poland (1996) and touched upon this theme in his comparative analysis of the Visegrad group (2002). Rivera (1996), Lindström (2001), Sitter (2001) or Zieliński (2002) particularly developed cross-country comparisons of pre- and post-communist party systems using the Lipset – Rokkan model. Also many an influential comparative volume employed this theoretical framework (Mair 1997; Lewis 2000; Kostelecký 2002).

However, all of the above listed works ignored the very birth of pre-communist party systems: the constitutional period of the Habsburg monarchy, from which most of the today's East Central European mass politics originated.

Only Toole (2003; 2007) connects the interwar politics with pre-1918 history but he focuses on the forming of cleavages how they appeared in the society, not in party systems. I intend to fill in the gap in the following sections by a comprehensive comparison of the development of party systems in Austria-Hungary and its successor states. Even though I discuss also constitutional development, the main issue is the history of parties, their differences and commonalities and their shared legacy of the Imperial cradle.

The Habsburg Empire in the 19th Century

Even though Herbert Kitschelt (1999) associates the Habsburg legacy only with the Czech land, the Habsburg Empire before its downfall, ruled a much larger area from the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic Sea to Galicia behind the Western Carpathian Mountains. Discounting short war-time changes, the core of the Empire, i.e., the Austrian and Czech territory and Slovakia, remained stable from 1526 onwards. Its outer parts were added to the Monarchy during the 17th (Hungary) and the 18th century (Galicia, Dalmatia). Within the scope of this article therefore falls today's Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia; all these countries were subsumed into the Empire at the latest after the Vienna Congress in 1815 and their first era of national mass politics was anchored in the centralised administrative system of the Habsburg Empire. If there indeed is a common Habsburg legacy traceable in the politics of the region, these countries should be its prominent bearers.

Firstly, to adhere to the research procedure of the Rokkanian agenda, initial situation of the different parts of the Empire ought to be explored, even though it is not to be further much elaborated on. As was stated before, mass politics, after all, is at its birth predominantly shaped by socio-demographic conditions. In the mid-19th century, these conditions were far from uniform: in economic terms, the most developed was the North-West, i.e., the Czech lands and Lower Austria, and also the coastal parts of Slovenia. These territories were the nearest to the 'city belt' of central Germany (Flora 1999: 142) and contrasted markedly with the rural Great Plains in Hungary and underdeveloped mountainous parts of Austria, Galicia or Croatia (Good 1984).

Urban centres of the Empire followed a similar geographical pattern but the overall level of urbanisation was still much lower than the one of Western Europe; apart from Vienna, the oversized capital, only six cities in Austria, Bohemia and Moravia had more than one hundred thousand inhabitants; in the Hungarian part, there was only Budapest (Pammer 2010: 135). Industrialisation was also much more rapid in the north-western quarter of the Empire: the local share of agricultural population started at around 75 per cent in the 1840s and was nearing 30 per cent at the turn of the century (Komlos 1983). In comparison, in the 1910s, agriculture was still the livelihood of almost 70 per cent of the working population in the Hungarian kingdom (Mason 1997: 28).

Turning to religious issues, the Empire's past was remarkably colourful: the Czech lands were the home of Utraquism in Central Europe in the 15th century and it was in Bohemia, where the Reformation struggles escalated in 1618 and started the Thirty Years' War. On the South-Eastern Border, the fight against the Muslim Turks dictated the shape of the region's history for centuries. In the Austrian part of the Empire, a massive counter-reformation programme resulted after two hundred years in an almost absolute dominance of the Catholic Church. The Hungarian religious profile was more heterogeneous: Debrecen was an important centre of Calvinism, Eastern Orthodoxy dominated Bukovina and southern regions, where it mixed with Uniatism and Islam. However, religious divisions had played a much more important role in the Empire's past; in the 19th century, they were eclipsed by a more important issue: nationality. The national-linguistic question was much more complicated and it contributed largely to the subsequent downfall of the Empire.

Only in Austria and border regions of the Czech lands, German was the most common language. During the Enlightenment era, urban centres of the Magyars (Budapest), Czechs (Prague), Slovenes (Ljubljana), Croats (Zagreb), Romanians (Cluj), Italians (Trento) or Poles (Kraków) started to form counter-cultural strongholds challenging a united Austrian-German culture. Moreover, the emancipation of some nationalities had sometimes negative repercussions on other nationalities (e.g., the Magyarisation of the Slovaks), who formed peripheral counter-centres against larger counter-centres. In Rokkanian terms, for the last century of its existence, Austria-Hungary was plagued by a serious problem of centre/periphery struggle. This problem was reflected, but not resolved, in the step that the Monarchy took in the year 1848: the constitutionalisation of its political order.

The year 1848 was a critical event for the House of Habsburgs who faced five interrelated national revolutions in their realms: the Austrians rose up in Vienna, the Czechs in Prague, the Magyars in Budapest, the Croats in Agram and the Italians in Milan and Venice. Prince Metternich's conservative regime fell and over the Habsburg hereditary domains (i.e., excluding Italian and Hungarian lands), a written ('Pillersdorf's) constitution was imposed, introducing a bicameral legislative system with indirect elections and franchise limited to land-owners. However, the bourgeoisie did not accept well this move and after a popular uprising in Vienna, this constitution was soon revoked. In the Moravian city of Kroměříž, a constitutional assembly was hurriedly set up, only to be a few months later, with the population placated and rebels crushed by military interventions, in a similar hurry dissolved on the points of bayonets. A new constitution was 'octroyed' in March 1849, but none of its provisions would ever come into being and until 1859, the Monarchy was ruled by bureaucrats in an 'organic', neo-absolutist regime. Leadership rested on the three pillars of bureaucracy, the Army and the Catholic Church. Even the local Estates were stripped off of political influence in their lands and politics returned back from assemblies into ballrooms and public houses.

This state of affairs did not last long: even though the centralised, absolutist regime managed to boost the Empire's economy and to dispose of some of the most cumbersome semi-feudal relics that hindered production and industrial progress, it was, paradoxically, the regime's failures in foreign policy that gradually brought it down in the 1860s. The defeat in the war against the French – Piedmontese alliance in 1859 was reflected in domestic politics by a change in the government, enlargement of the Imperial Council and surrender of some Emperor's legislative powers to the Council. A series of unworkable constitutional laws was issued in subsequent years, but the real reform had not come until the Empire experienced another military disaster, this time against Prussia in 1866. Under the threat of yet another Magyar revolution, Franz Joseph I agreed to dualism in the Monarchy and the Austro-Hungarian Compromise was reached in March 1867 (Kann 1974: 326-80).

This agreement forms a second critical event in the political development of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19th century. If 1848 was the show-case of national awakening in the Empire and can be understood as reaching the Rokkanian threshold of legitimisation of national politics, 1867 meant the definite crossing of this threshold.

Domestic politics changed from a simple exchange between the centralised government and the wall of suppressed aspirations of national elites to a multi-directional interplay between the central government and national delegations. Indeed, thanks to the now also constitutionally privileged positions of the Germans and the Magyars, the situation in ethnic politics became even more complicated. The Slovaks, Romanians and the Serbs were the victims of the Compromise in Hungary, while in the 'Cisleithanian' dominions, the Czechs, who hoped for a settlement similar to the Magyars, were the most disappointed. The Croats formed their own parliament and were satisfied with a partial autonomy from Hungary, while the Slovenians played a tit-for-tat game with Vienna in their petty wars against the Italian, Serbian and Croatian minorities. The Poles in Galicia retained a large measure of self-government and could not expect more (Seton-Watson and Seton-Watson 1981: 24-5).

The Imperial Council became the centre of domestic politics of the Cisleithanian part of the Empire, while the Hungarian kingdom had its own National Assembly. Both legislatures were bicameral with nobility forming the upper chambers. In 1873 and 1874, electoral laws were passed for the lower chambers that were to provide for the representation of non-privileged masses. However, that was true only for the Imperial Council and only from 1907, when universal, equal male suffrage was introduced for the Council's lower chamber, the House of Deputies. In Hungary, "probably the most illiberal electoral franchise in Europe" led to the parliamentary representation of only 6 per cent of the kingdom's population and the lower chamber in reality only reinforced the political position of the noble magnates (Seton-Watson 1909, 250-1). Before the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, in none of the Monarchy's constitutive lands, national politics overcame all four Rokkanian thresholds of democratisation: in Cisleithania, the thresholds of incorporation and representation were passed by the successive electoral reforms of 1896, which introduced universal male suffrage, and of 1907, which revoked the system of voting curiae and equalised all casted votes. As neither Austrian nor Hungarian governments were ever responsible to their respective parliaments, it remained for the politics of the Empire's successor states to cross the threshold of executive power.

The Habsburg Successors in the Interwar Era

The dissolution of Austria-Hungary in October/November 1918 gave birth to the successor states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and a large portion of land was also ceded to Poland.

Between the two World Wars, these states experienced two decades of turbulent political development, when boundaries of democratic and authoritarian politics were largely ignored. Nevertheless, the states still featured some institutional arrangements that were carried over from the late Habsburg Monarchy.

In both Austria and Czechoslovakia, new republican constitutions were adopted in 1920. Both provided for the legislative model of asymmetric bicameralism, universal direct suffrage and proportional representations formulae for general elections. Constitutional Courts were introduced together with independent judiciary, but their role in political decision-making was minimal. In both cases, the executive power of the President was weak and all provisions essentially catered for the domination of political parties. While Austria was set up as a federal state, with the upper chamber of the Parliament filled indirectly by provincial assemblies, Czechoslovak politicians feared that a decentralised structure would favour national irredentism of the Germans. However, also in Austria, provinces had relatively weak legislative and executive powers and politics was centred in Vienna, where it was usually carried out through informal meetings of party leaders; quite the same style of politics was adopted in Prague.

Austria and Czechoslovakia were the quickest to adapt their constitutional order adequately; other successor states were not so successful. Hungary experienced three years of military clashes between the pro-Habsburg reactionists, the conservative Right and the Bolshevik Left, only to re-establish the monarchy in the form of Regency in 1922. After the Trianon Treaty, the country focused mainly on foreign policy of restoring its pre-war boundaries and turned autocratic with only male, non-secret elections that continually secured the majority for the governing party. Sentiment after the former Great Kingdom of Hungary was reflected also in the re-introduction of the upper chamber into the Parliament in 1926. The chamber was filled by hereditary members of the Habsburg house, ex-officio members from the executive and the judiciary as well as with members appointed by corporations.

Autocratic were also Poland and Yugoslavia. While the former re-instated its sovereignty after more than 120 years of partition between Germany, Austria and Russia, the latter was created when the Slovenes and the Croats decided after the war to join the Kingdom of Serbia in a unified state of South Slavs.

In Poland, a new republican constitution was passed in 1921, which provided for a system in many instances similar to those of Austria and Czechoslovakia. A bicameral National Assembly was elected in a complicated model of proportional representation that resulted in a fragmented party system. The situation resembled the Third French Republic, with low-profile Presidents and irresponsible party leaders. In 1926, a military coup was staged by the general Pilsudski, a national hero from the War for Independence, who ruled after that in an authoritarian fashion from the position of the minister of war. Constitutionally, this change was approved only in 1935, when the office of President was substantially strengthened to accommodate Pilsudski. The Polish national leader however died a few months later and the Polish domestic politics remained in the hands of technocrats for the last three years before the Nazi occupation. Yugoslavia was at the start only an enlargement of the original Serbian monarchy, a centralised state ruled by old Serbian bureaucratic elites. The 1921 Vidovdan constitution provided for an only-male suffrage and a system of proportional representation for a unicameral Parliament. The king approved laws but was not given the power of veto. De iure sovereign legislature was politically deadlocked by constant changes in the party systems and clashes not only between the three major nationalities, but also between them and ethnic minorities from Macedonia and Montenegro, who had virtually no political representation. In 1929, King Alexander dissolved the crippled Assembly and assumed dictatorial powers. A new constitution was passed in 1931, establishing the Senate as an upper chamber filled by royal appointees and local councils. The king, who served as the bond between disunited ethnics, was assassinated in 1934 and the country gradually succumbed to a pro-Nazi, authoritarian rule.

Party Politics from the Imperial to the Interwar Era

Party politics in the successor states was quite understandably more turbulent and party systems changed many times more than did constitutional orders. Still, many political parties were carried over the war period into the era of national states and many political personae of Austria-Hungary played important roles also after the war. To this contributed two distinctive elements of politics in the late-Habsburg Empire: the 'lager' system of mass parties, similar to the 'verzuiling' of politics in Low Countries (Lijphart 1966), and the existence of separated party systems in individual Imperial lands, that were created along national lines and not competing across national divides.

Austrian Party System

The earliest era of party politics in the Cisleithanian part of the Empire was exclusively German. Between 1867 and the last years of 1870s, liberal German parties fully dominated domestic politics. Two reasons were behind this: first, electoral system was greatly advantageous for large land-owners, coming in most cases from the highest echelons of German nobility, and for the richest bourgeoisie, again, almost exclusively German. Even in Bohemia, Moravia, or Slovenia, lands with predominantly non-German general population, German parties achieved best electoral results. The second reason was a derivative of the first: as a form of protest against the unfair electoral laws and oppressive language rules, many non-German parties decided to boycott the Imperial Council ("Reichsrat") and withhold their representation in the House (Mason 1997: 33-5). These circumstances gave German parties enough space to form their policy lines, set up first auxiliary mass organisations and shape their electoral profiles. Three party 'lagers' emerged in the 1870s and dominated the German (later Austrian) politics for the next five decades: Christian-conservative, socialist, and national-liberal (Strmiska et al. 2005: 310).

Until 1878, the German-speaking Liberal Party in Austria led all Imperial cabinets, fighting off a possible federalisation of the state, maintaining status quo in language and electoral laws and in essence protracting the neo-absolutist, bureaucratic model. Clash of the Liberals with the Emperor Franz Joseph on the issue of occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina ended however in the resignation of the Liberal Prime Minister Auersperg and in the appointment of Count Taaffe, a man attentive to the aspirations of the Czechs and the Poles. Czech and Polish parties send their deputies to the new Reichsrat and a wide, multi-ethnic coalition ruled the Empire until the mid-1890s. More benevolent language laws were passed together with a new franchise reform that gave votes also to the lower middle class and richer peasantry. Broader enfranchisement helped particularly the Social Democrats (SDP), who first entered the Reichsrat in 1897 and became the strongest party at the start of the 20th century. Their campaign for the extension of the franchise kept the SDP together until the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy. Austrian liberals, by contrast, began to disintegrate already in the 1870s, with factions divided mainly on the issue of the role of the Church in the state.

While many of the liberal bourgeoisie were leaning towards the 'Los von Rom' movement, loyal Catholics formed the new Christian Social Party (CSP) which gradually rose to the position of the second largest party in the Reichsrat (Berchtold 1967: 70-83). The third movement to disrupt the unity of Austrian liberalism was the extreme, anti-Semitic, Pan-German Party led by Georg von Schönerer. In the 1890s, they managed to secure a few seats in the Reichsrat but never managed to become an important element in the Imperial politics, apart from the contribution to fragmentising the liberal 'lager'.

After the war, the SDP and the CSP retained the status of the first and the second largest party, respectively. The post-war economic crisis and a general decline in welfare drove a segment of the electorate towards more extreme, non-democratic movements in politics and towards radical parties. Liberal parties merged into a new, unified, Pan-German National Party and together with the agrarian Landbund and the Christian Socialists formed a 'bourgeois' coalition (MacDonald 1946: 5). In the 1920s, the system continued to be still essentially bi-polar, with the SDP and CSP together gathering over 90 per cent of all votes. Politics, however, came to be gradually more and more radicalised, with frequent clashes of paramilitary auxiliary organisations and violent attacks against partisans on the streets. In 1933, the regime turned authoritarian under the chancellorship of the Christian Social Engelbert Dollfuss. The National Socialist, the Communist, and even the Social Democratic Party were banned and party system monopolised by the corporatist Patriotic Front, which ruled Austria until the 1938 Anschluss by Germany (Zöllner 1984: 502-510).

Hungary

Mass politics in the 19th century Hungarian Kingdom was largely restricted due to the constitutional provisions of the Dual Monarchy and the highly exclusive electoral law. The Hungarian political nation was comprised solely of land-owning nobility. No real party system emerged under the Habsburg rule: political parties did not develop strict ideological profiles and they did not represent specific strata in the society. Until the 1870s, the only division in the Hungarian Parliament ("Országgyűlés") was between proponents of pro-Western modernisation of the state and advocates of conservative nationalism. In 1873, the so far cohesive party of loyalists under the leadership of Ferenc Deák split and the Liberal Party was fathered by the economist, and later Prime Minister, Kálmán Tisza. Tisza managed to save the faltering economy of the Kingdom and led the Liberals to the position of the largest party in the Parliament.

During his 15 years of rule, Hungary underwent a series of successful modernising reforms that consolidated the state and the domination of the Magyars in the Kingdom. The Liberals remained ruling and united until the turn of the century, when larger break-away parties (Independence Party, Civic Democratic Party) managed to gain sufficient electoral support to oust Tisza's successors from the government (Jászi 1961: 318-30). Their success was very short-lived, however, and until the First World War, the Liberals, under the new name of the National Party of Work, remained in the governmental office, securing over 70 per cent of all votes. The second largest, the Independence Party, gathered around 10 to 15 per cent, while the rest was divided, but not projected into representation in the Parliament, between agrarians (large land-owners), conservative Catholics and social democrats (Roszkowski 1995: 20-1).

The war profoundly changed the distribution of political power. Left-wing parties won the day and the first post-war government was already formed in coalition with social democrats, under the majority of the Independence Party. This government, led by Count Karolyi, however, succumbed to the pressure of the Communists and the Hungarian Soviet Republic was established in 1919. It lasted only for six months. After the Communists' defeat in a war with the Czechs over Slovakia, they lost their position and right-wing parties managed to restore the Monarchy under the regency of Admiral Miklós Horthy. Conservative Catholics, agrarians and the Independence Party merged into the new Party of Unity, which constituted the basis of the new regime. Liberals and social democrats (Socialists) were tolerated as a weak opposition in the Parliament, while parties of small land-owners virtually disappeared (Kontler 2006: 345).

In 1930, a new peasants' party was created and achieved some electoral success, but because of the exclusive electoral law, popular support was not translated into parliamentary representation. In the 1920s and at the start of the 1930s, the Party of Unity seized regularly over two thirds of all mandates; from 1932 onwards, more radical, fascist parties began however to attract more and more voters, which resulted in the re-modeling of the governing party along fascist arguments. The new, anti-Semitic National United Party controlled the government until 1939, when it was renamed once again, this time as the Movement of Magyar Life. Social democrats and small-holders were constantly losing votes to the radically fascist Arrow Cross Party, led by FerencSzálasi.

The Arrow Cross also formed the last government in 1944 before the country was invaded and occupied by the Soviets at the end of the Second World War (Roszkowski 1995: 206).

In summary, despite their origin in a common state, the Hungarian politics differed in many ways from the politics in Austria. The contrasting constitutional orders determined that while in the Cisleithanian part of the Monarchy, mass politics reached a developed stage even before the First World War, limited electoral franchise and strict ethnic laws did not allow the same progress also in Hungary. After the war, Hungarian parties did not have much to continue on: they had to develop policies, ideological stances, mass organisations and other links to the electorate that were not present there in the era of the Dual Monarchy. Even though they picked up the names of old parties, a new party system needed to be established. The early arrival of the authoritarian regime of Admiral Horthy however precluded this process and democratic mass politics before the Second World War in Hungary arguably never even started.

Czechoslovakia

At the beginning of the constitutional era in Austria-Hungary, the Czech political nation was relatively better off than the Slovaks. While the Hungarian Kingdom never really gave non-Magyar ethnics the space to develop their own political agenda and raise political representation, the Czechs orchestrated their own little revolution in 1848 and even though they were defeated, politics continued to flourish in Prague. In protest against the dualisation of the Monarchy, the Czechs did not send their representation to the first Reichsrat but continued to lobby at the central government for more favourable language laws and larger autonomy. When this lobbying tactics failed, a splinter group of Czechs decided to join the Reichsrat after all, creating thus the first party division between the 'Old' (non-represented) and the 'Young' Czech Party. After the 1882 enfranchisement of middle classes, mass parties quickly came to the forefront of Czech politics: the largest were social democrats, followed by Christian conservatives, national socialists and agrarians. In 1907, when the first general elections with universal male franchise were held, the Czech political system was already divided into five 'lagers' with a spectrum similar to the one in Austria: social democrats, agrarians, national socialists, Christian (Catholics) conservatives, and national democrats (as the successors of the bourgeois Young Czechs).

In comparison, the Slovak political scene still featured only the one united National Party, despite several break-away attempts of Catholic and agrarian factions inside the party (Holzer et al. 2007: 37-40).

After the war, when Czechoslovakia was created, the two party systems still remained largely divided, even though some originally Czech parties (the Agrarians and later also the Communists) managed to attract votes also from Slovakia. The electoral formula of almost absolutely proportional representation led to the fragmentation of the system, where the first five parties – representatives of the five different party lagers – attracted each between eight to fifteen per cent of votes, while the rest was won either by their affiliated partner parties or extremist movements. The only exception were the first post-war elections, when the Social Democrats won with 25 per cent of all votes; their government however did not last long as the Communist faction broke away from the Social Democrats in 1921 and formed a new, independent party that split the vote share for following elections exactly half-and-half. The Slovak politics at that time became dominated by the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, whose principal policy was larger autonomy from the central government in Prague.

Ethnic divisions, not only between the Czechs and the Slovaks, but also between the two state-building nations and large ethnic minorities, were a hallmark of the interwar Czechoslovak politics. Even though the initial centralisation efforts from Prague were soon abandoned, the majority of Germans and Magyars living in Czechoslovakia never embraced the new state and formed their own parties that ran parallelly to their ideologically like-minded, larger Czech and Slovak counterparts. The model of separate party systems from Austria-Hungary was in effect re-lived in Czechoslovakia. That resulted in a specific process of government-formation, where the largest parties were forced into coalition against radicals on both sides of the political spectrum. With the exception of the bourgeois coalition cabinet of 1926-1929, Czechoslovakia was ruled by wide coalitions of Czech, Slovak and German, both left- and right-wing, parties. The Agrarians, thanks to their control over the Ministry of Agriculture and in consequence also over the land reform, became the backbone of the government but without close cooperation with other parties could not secure majority in the parliament.

Arguably, in such a situation, the actual results of general elections became meaningless, but this incentive for cooperation among politicians may have contributed to the ultimate survival of the Czechoslovak democracy until the country's invasion by the Nazi Germany in 1939 (Klátil 1992: 6-90).

Hitler's rise to power however affected however Czechoslovak politics already before the Munich Dictate in 1938 and the later invasion. Already in the 1935 general elections, the German minority united under the banner of the pro-Nazi Sudeten German Party and only the model of wide coalitions secured the continuation of democracy until 1938. After Munich, the party system was manipulated from above and simplified into two competing blocs, one based on the agrarian-Catholic coalition, the other on former social democrats. This experiment nevertheless did not last longer than six months and was not re-introduced into the Czechoslovak politics after the Second World War.

Yugoslavia

The post-First World War Yugoslav state was a truly unique political entity in Europe. Unlike Czechoslovakia, it did not emerge in its entirety from the deceased Habsburg Empire; unlike Romania, it was actually an enlargement of a pre-war core kingdom; unlike Poland, it was not a restored but an altogether new state; unlike Hungary, it lacked ethnic homogeneity. Every pre-war national group carried over to the new state their own political parties. The Serbian Radical Party was the dominating party of the original Kingdom of Serbia and remained near the top for the first decade of Yugoslavia's existence. Similarly to the Czech Agrarian Party, it originated from peasantry, but soon aggregated also the interests of big business and civil service. After the war, their electoral base remained in Serbia, with the only exception of a successful merger with like-minded parties from Vojvodina. The other prominent pre-war Serbian party, the Democrats, in reality proponents of left-wing socialism, continued to be entrenched in the Serbian electorate, but did manage to expand after 1918 also to other regions. The Agrarian Party, a new post-war party originating in Serbia, was even more successful in capturing votes also in Slovenia, Bosnia and Dalmatia, building on the appeal that the old, pre-war parties betrayed their original peasantry constituency and were dominated by the interests of large land-owners and bureaucracy (Pirjevec 2000: 20-25).

The Slovenes and the Croats contributed to the interwar Yugoslav politics mainly by two large, ethnic-based parties: the Slovenian People's Party and the Croatian Peasant Party, respectively. Even though especially in the Slovenian case, pre-war politics was also divided into political 'lagers' – social democrats, Catholic conservatives and liberals – in the post-war situation, the defence of ethnic interests in the multi-national state prevailed. The Slovene People's Party originated at the start of the 20th century from a Christian-socialist wing in the Slovenian part of the Cisleithanian politics and during the Imperial era were close to the Austrian Christian Socialists. Between 1905 and 1920, they merged gradually with Catholic conservative movements. Liberals, on the other hand, remained fragmented and independent until 1918 when they joined the Serbian Democratic Party (Fink-Hafner 2001: 92-111). The Croatian Peasant Party led by Stepan Radić functioned both under the Imperial yolk as well as in the Yugoslav state as the 'true', almost messianist representative of the Croatian small land-holders. Opposing first the Hungarian and Austrian centralisation, after the war, Radić quickly turned his boycott strategy against the Serbians and enjoyed the position of the righteous, anti-systemic outsider (Lampe 2000: 110).

In the early and mid-1920s, the Democratic Party, led by Ljubomir Davidović, formed a coalition government with the Radicals and almost mimicked the similar situation in Czechoslovakia, where democratic parties, representatives of centralisation, defended the state institutions against anti-systemic groups. From 1921, the anti-regime opposition in Yugoslavia featured not only the Croatian Peasant Party but also the Communists, who broke away from the Slovenian Social Democrats. While the Slovene People's Party and also other minority parties, such as the Bosniak Muslims, cooperated with the ruling Serbian coalition, the clash between Radić's Croats and Serbs proved to be ultimately fatal for democracy in Yugoslavia. In 1928, a deputy for the Radicals shot Radić and five colleagues on the floor of the parliament, which resulted in a constitutional crisis and the establishment of the personal dictatorship of King Alexander. Under the new 1931 'Alexandrine' constitution, multi-party politics was seriously derogated and limited by stringent regulations on the nomination of candidates and also by direct interferences of the King in party politics. Several leaders of the Croat Peasant Party were imprisoned and the continuing crisis escalated in 1934, when King Alexander himself was assassinated.

From that point, it was becoming clear that the coexistence of Croats and Serbs in one democratic state was unfeasible and both sides came up with plans for the federalisation of the country. Regent Prince Paul sanctioned the autonomy of the Croatian Banate in 1939 and the creation of a separate Croatian Parliament. Further demands by unsatisfied Croats were silenced promptly in 1941, when the country was invaded by their previous ally, the Nazi Germany (Pirjevec 2000: 75-115).

In Yugoslavia, the democratic experiment did not ultimately succeed because of the complex ethnic question inside the multinational state. Political parties based on divides other than centre/periphery did not survive from the Imperial era either in Slovenia or in Croatia and Serbia. As such, the party system of Yugoslavia, thanks to the dominant clash between Croats and Serbs, did not feature many similarities to the one of the Habsburg Empire.

Poland

The birth of the Polish party system was a process complicated by the partition of Poland between three pre-war Empires: Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary. Early ideology of Polish parties reflected their entrenchment in three politically very different countries, with the exception of the common desire to restore independent Poland. In the German part, the strongest Polish movement was the National Democrats, who combined the fight for independence with conservative Catholic and also anti-Semitic values. In the Russian part, the Polish Socialist Party gained the upper hand under the leadership of Jozef Pilsudski. The Polish Socialists soon split into two factions, one with Pilsudski arguing the crucial importance of national independence, the other formed by Marxist internationalists. Galicia, a Polish region inside Cisleithania, was dominated by the Polish People's Party, an agrarian formation articulating the interests of the peasantry. In 1913, also the People's Party split into the centre-right People's Party – Piast and the left-wing People's Party – Left (Hloušek and Kopeček 2004: 159-62).

After the unification in 1918, ideologically similar parties from different regions started to unify as well. The united National Democrats became the centre-bloc of the new state, followed by the Socialists. Fragmented remained the agrarian bloc, with the strongest Piast cooperating with both right-wing national democrats and socialists. Similarly, Catholic conservative parties did not manage to find a united platform until 1937, when the Work Party (sic) was created.

The second largest political bloc in the country (after the National Democrats) represented a coalition of ethnic minorities, which only added to other political problems in the country. Forming a government proved to be an unsolvable problem that even resulted in the assassination of the first Polish President, Gabriel Narutowicz in 1922. The assassin was a member of the largest party, a National Democrat. After these events, left-wingers were paradoxically those who at first welcomed the most the authoritarian coup d'état of General Piłsudski in 1926 (Zieliński 1985: 144-5). The coup did not change much in the constitutional order of Poland, but transformed profoundly the national party system. In the next general elections, the majority was won by the pro-regime Bloc for Cooperation with the Government, a mixture of ex-legionaries, technocracy, opportunistic socialists, Catholics, National Democrats and even ethnic minorities.

The common theme was the desire to create an omnipotent executive – a step that Piłsudski managed however to postpone almost until his very death in 1935. Instead, the National Democrats, the strongest opposition bloc in the country, were being persecuted on individual level. The situation remained stable until the mid-1930s, when the economic depression hit Poland in its full power. The radical worsening of living conditions led to an escalation in the political arena, when Piłsudski conceded to the enactment of the new presidential constitution of 1935. In order to partially legitimise the official ban of the anti-regime coalition of centre-left parties, the Bloc for Cooperation with the Government was also dissolved and parliamentary politics de facto ceased to exist; in such an institutional framework, Piłsudski's death brought a deep blow to the system and the subsequent vacuum in the leader's death remained unfilled until the German invasion in 1939 (Topolski 1994: 268-73).

Similarly to the Yugoslav case, the Polish party system did not effectively exist in the interwar era. The first seven or eight years of democratic parliamentary politics were tainted by anti-systemic tendencies of the largest party, the renamed National Democrats. Ethnic minorities achieved considerable success in coming second in the elections, but their electoral support did not at the end translate into much real power. The immaturity of Polish political parties demonstrated itself in the early decay towards authoritarian regime and the continuing instability of the entire political system.

The Legacy of the Imperial Politics

When comparing closely politics in the successor states of Austria-Hungary, there is a striking similarity between some cases. Austria and Czechoslovakia adopted largely identical constitutional orders and the presence of political 'lagers' was most prominent in these two countries. Secularisation and the extent of power of the Catholic Church were important issues. In both countries was also strong the social democratic movement with its more radical Communist variant.

However, Czechoslovakia's multi-ethnic character resembled more that of Yugoslavia than the ethnic composition of Austria. Indeed, the Yugoslav party system behaved until 1928 very similarly to the Czechoslovak model of wide coalitions that stood against the threat of anti-system parties. Minorities challenged the legitimacy of the new states and calls for more decentralised regimes were heard in both countries. Czechoslovak authorities proceeded more benevolently than Serbian politicians and that might have contributed to the survival of the Czechoslovak democracy until 1938. However, the sharp rise of anti-regime sentiment among Czechoslovak Germans in the late-1930s may signal that the republic would have disintegrated in some way even without the Munich Dictate. Also in that instance, structural pre-conditions would have prevailed over the effect of formal democratic institutions.

Hungary and Austria were countries founded on nations that were previously the core of the Dual Monarchy. In spite of that, they took different directions both in the Imperial as well as in the interwar era. Austrian politics was based from the 1880s on a wide franchise and on the power of middle classes. In Hungary, on the other hand, the political nation was comprised mainly of nobility and large land-owners. Universal electoral franchise was not introduced until 1918. The Austrian party system had developed already before the stand-alone successor state was created. Hungarian parties had not have this chance and later had to form a new system virtually from the scratch. Still, both countries eventually turned authoritarian. Austrian voters, despite their longer education, succumbed to the attraction of strong-hand politics and, with the contribution of the unresolved question of their national identity, did not contain the Nazi threat. Similarly, the Magyars did not become reconciled with the loss of their pre-war territory and the need to turn towards the future, instead of lingering on the past.

The Polish case stands wider apart from the previous, which is understandable given its relative distance from the politics of Austria-Hungary. The core of the interwar Polish politics lay outside of the former Habsburg domain and the relationship between individual Polish regions was a crucial political issue. Similarly to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, also Poland faced the problems of a multi-ethnic state. Unlike those two countries, democracy was not however defended by a coalition of strongest parties. Quite the opposite, the National Democrats followed a largely anti-regime policy line directed against non-Polish minorities. When this situation was complicated by economic depression and newly flared up conflicts over the land reform, democracy in the country was doomed to fail.

The summary of cleavages and their representations in respective party systems is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Cleavages and Party Systems in East Central Europe				
	Centre/Periphery	Church/State	City/Countryside	Labour/Employers
Austria Christian Socialists Social Democrats Pan-Germans Landbund National Socialists Communists	pro-Austrian pro-Austrian pro-German pro-German pro-German	Catholic secular secular secular secular	agrarian urban urban agrarian urban urban	employers labour employers labour
Hungary Party of Unity Social Democrats Small Holders The Arrow Cross	anti-Trianon anti-Trianon anti-Trianon	Christian state Christian	agrarian urban agrarian	employers labour
Czechoslovakia Czech Catholics Agrarians Communists Social Democrats National Democrats National Socialists German parties Magyar parties Hlinka's Populists	centralist centralist flexible centralist centralist centralist autonomist autonomist autonomist	Catholic secular + Evangelic secular secular secular secular lager system parallel to Czech parties Evangelic Catholic	agrarian agrarian urban urban urban urban agrarian agrarian	 radical labour labour employers labour
Yugoslavia Serbian Democrats Serbian Radicals Agrarians Slovenian Populists Croatian Peasants Communists Bosniak Muslims	centralist centralist centralist autonomist autonomist centralist autonomist	 Catholic Catholic secular	urban agrarian agrarian agrarian agrarian urban	labour radical labour
Poland National Democrats Socialists Piast Left Communists Work Party Ethnic minorities	centralist centralist centralist centralist centralist centralist autonomist	Catholic secular Catholic secular secular Catholic	 urban agrarian agrarian	labour radical labour

Source: compiled by author

Evidently, the Imperial Habsburg politics pre-conditioned in many ways politics in the successor states. In Austria, three original party 'lagers' were translated almost in the exact form into the interwar era. In Czechoslovakia, a new state comprised of parts from the pre-war Cisleithania as well as Transleithania, old Czech and Slovak parties survived the shock of the First World War and continued undisturbed in attracting voters and providing them with socio-political identity. The right-wing of the political spectrum in Hungary also picked up the threads of pre-war conservative and agrarian parties, even if only in name. Slovene and Croat parties in the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on the other hand, lost much of their former ideological diversity and focused from 1918 onwards more on the advocacy of their minority interests. Still, these parties would not have achieved any considerable electoral success without the organisational and material resources left over from the Imperial era. In the Polish Galicia, the electorate remained faithful to the Polish People's Party and even passed on to the new state the conflict between the centralist 'Piast' and the party's original left wing.

The interwar East Central European politics was indeed a child of the mass politics of the Dual Monarchy. Constitutional laws, institutional models and political parties were transposed from the Imperial cradle into successor states; I list these transpositions in Table 3.

Table 3: The Habsburg Legacy in Interwar Politics			
Pre-1918		Post-1918	
<u>Austria-Hungary</u>		<u>Austria-Hungary</u>	
Archduchy	Republic	Christian Socialists	Christian Socialists
Asymmetric bicameralism	Asymmetric bicameralism	Catholic People's Party	
Strong Emperor	Weak President	Liberal Party in Austria	Pan-Germans
Confederation	Federation	Pan-Germans	Landbund
Weak Parties	Strong Parties	National Union	National Socialists
Majority voting	Proportional system	Social Democrats	Social Democrats
	Constitutional Court		Communists
<u>Hungary</u>		<u>Hungary</u>	
Kingdom	Kingdom	Catholic People's Party	Christian Socialists
Asymmetric bicameralism	Asymmetric bicameralism	Independence Party	Party of Unity
Weak Emperor	Strong Regent	Small Holders	Independent Small Holders
Centralised	Centralised		National United Party
Majority voting	Majority voting	Social Democrats	Socialists
<u>Czechoslovakia</u>		<u>Czechoslovakia</u>	
Kingdom, Margraviate	Republic	Czech Catholics	Czech Catholics
Asymmetric bicameralism	Asymmetric bicameralism	Agrarians	Agrarians
Strong Emperor	Strong President	Social Democrats	Communists
Confederation	Centralised	Young Czechs	Social Democrats
Weak Parties	Strong Parties		National Socialists
Majority voting	Proportional system		National Democrats
	Constitutional Court		German parties
			Magyar parties
		National Party	Hlinka's Populists
<u>Yugoslavia</u>		<u>Yugoslavia</u>	
Kingdom, Duchy	Kingdom	Liberals	Serbian Democrats
Asymmetric bicameralism	Unicamer, Bicameralism	Serbian Radicals	Serbian Radicals
Strong King	Weak, Strong King	Agrarians	Agrarians
Divided	Centralised, Confeder	Slovene Christian Socialists	Slovenian Populists
Weak Parties	Strong, Weak Parties	Small Holders	Croatian Peasants
Majority voting	Proportional system		Communists
			Bosniak Muslims
<u>Poland</u>		<u>Poland</u>	
Kingdoms	Republic	People's Party - Piast	Piast
Asymmetric bicameralism	Asymmetric bicameralism	People's Party - Left	Left
Strong Emperors	Weak, Strong President	Socialist Party	Communists
Divided	Centralised	National Democrats	Socialists
Weak Parties	Strong, Weak Parties		National Democrats
Majority voting	Proportional system		Work Party
			Ethnic minorities

Source: compiled by author

The major findings of the present study are summarised as follows:

First, while in formal political institutions, the Empire's heirs varied widely and chose very diverging paths, there existed a striking continuity in their respective party systems: despite changes in the institutional framework, political parties carried on after the war, particularly in the former Cisleithanian lands, business as usual. The subsequent undemocratic turns, that politics in most of the successor states took, may not therefore be explained either by disruptions in party systems, or by a general pattern of incorrectly chosen formal political institutions.

Second, the variety of these institutions does not point to a specific direction that ought to be good or bad for the survival of democracy. Indeed, it seems that in this regard, the only difference is the timing of crossing the thresholds of democracy and the longer semi-democratic experience of Cisleithania, where the constitution provided for a wider political representation.

Third, political parties and parliamentary history, the continuity of both, form a significant part of the Habsburg legacy and is one of the most important marks that Austria-Hungary left on the face of the 20th century Europe. In interpretation of Central European history as well as in future academic research, this fact ought to be always remembered.

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