
UNIT 17 EMPIRES AND NATION-STATES-1: OTTOMAN AND HABSBURG EMPIRES

Structure

17.0 Objectives

17.1 Introduction

17.2 Nationalism and Empires

17.3 Ottoman Empire

17.3.1 Greece

17.3.2 Serbia

17.3.3 Romania

17.3.4 Bulgaria

17.4 Habsburg Monarchy

17.4.1 Contradictions within the Empire

17.4.2 Czechoslovakia

17.4.3 Hungary

17.4.4 Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia - New Multi-national States

17.5 Let Us Sum Up

17.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to learn:

- about the composition of two big multi-ethnic Empires – the Ottoman and the Habsburg;
- about the internal contradictions and tensions within these Empires; and
- how the growth of nationalisms, along with international politics led to decline of these Empires.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

We have explained in the earlier Unit on nation-state that the nation-state was a new cultural form established in Europe through which politics of Europe was reorganized. The leaders were, Great Britain, France, and Germany. They were accompanied by lesser but rapidly modernizing powers of Scandinavia, Holland and Belgium, Italy, and Spain and Portugal. But three vast dynastic empires in Europe resisted these trends until their simultaneous collapse after World War-I. These were the Russian, Habsburg, and Ottoman Empires.

These empires consisted of numerous potential nations, all assembled in dynastic empires of early-modern times. Their survival depended on their restraining national movements even as they modernized their states and societies in other respects. But modernity brought nationalism with it, almost automatically, in region after region. Inevitably, these national movements sought international support; and the great powers, encouraged these nationalisms as and when it suited them in international diplomacy and war.

In such circumstances, the nation-state seemed a radical modern system, in contrast to the polyglot imperial structures that insisted on retaining their diverse regional communities within one overarching structure and which were now perceived as archaic. As it happened, these three dynastic empires contained within themselves the more backward parts of Europe; and virtually each military defeat led to one more round of disintegration, culminating in the final disasters of World War-I and their part dissolution into nation-states.

17.2 NATIONALISM AND EMPIRES

But, of course, the picture is never so simple, nation-state equals modernity, and empire signifies backwardness. As we know, so many of the nation-states that emerged in Europe after 1919 have remained backward; whereas the new multi-national state of Soviet Union that replaced the archaic Russian Empire ceased to be backward, defeated Germany in World War-II, and became one of the superpowers. A multi-national state, Yugoslavia, appeared in the Balkans; and another, Czechoslovakia, was established in central Europe. Also, Switzerland completed the transition to the modern world as a multi-national federation. **It is not the nation-state as such which is modern, but the nationalism on which it is constructed.** But if nationalism could be mobilized for another type of state, the multinational one, that would be equally modern. The Soviet Union is the most obvious and remarkable example; but these smaller ones should not be forgotten.

These three empires were archaic and enfeebled for not being able to harness nationalism to the cause of the Imperial State. Nationalism began developing in these empires in varying degree from the beginning of the nineteenth century; but the state continued to hold the empire together solely through the dynasty, army, and bureaucracy, without a common ideology, religion, language, or institutions. Theoretically speaking, the empire could be converted into a single nation in the manner that Great Britain was formed out of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. But British development possessed a dynamism in which different nations saw an advantage in joining a union dominated by England. On the other hand, the endemic rebellion in Ireland is evidence of the failure of the British nation and points to the kind of problem that the empires faced in every region. Unlike Britain however, these empires consisted of dozens of regions with far greater diversity than in Britain; further, these empires suffered notoriously from the problems of backwardness and underdevelopment; and finally, nationalist ideologies were popularized in far too many regions for the project of a single imperial nation even to be considered seriously. Although the beginnings of such strategies may be discerned in Russian nationalism and russification of the Russian Empire, and Ottomanism for the Ottoman Empire, and a national centralization in the Habsburg Monarchy.

The other theoretical possibility was nationalism being made into a foundation for a modern state without necessarily attempting to create a single nation-state as in West Europe. This was the Soviet and Yugoslavia multi-national model, which survived until 1990-1991. The new Soviet state promoted nationalism vigorously in the 1920s and at the same time integrated various nationalisms under a communist state. Thus the new state was neither an old-fashioned empire integrated by dynasty and bureaucracy alone nor a nation-state possessed of a single culture and territory. Instead, a series of nations were developed with all

the features of nation-states except full sovereignty; they were then united into a single Soviet super-nation, or multi-national state as it is usually described; and the common instruments of this super-nation were a single and centralized communist party, communist ideology, planning, armed forces, bureaucracy, and Soviet culture. The Soviet system thus not merely endorsed but even mobilized nationalism, but not through the nation-state. The nearest analogy to that process is the Indian Union, which reorganized the Union in 1956 into linguistic states, each with its own sub-nationalist or regional aspirations.

The three empires however were not able to conceive of such strategies of multi-national unity. Consequently, imperial policies were most often reactive, following a combination of the following: 1) suppressing the nationalism in question; 2) opportunistically promoting one nationalism against another within the same region of mixed nationality, or between neighbouring regions; and 3) sponsoring a nationalism in a neighbouring empire as part of great power diplomacy, rivalry, and intrigue. The failure of these three empires may be treated, to an important degree, as failures of nationalist strategies; and the result of World War-I may be seen to an important degree as triumph of nationalism in Europe, including even in the Soviet Union, which combined nationalism with liberal or fascist ideologies.

There was however a clear difference between the three empires in their handling of nationalism. The first difference lay in the degree of coherence in the central state. Here the Russian state stood first, the Habsburg next, and the Ottoman came such a poor third that it was derisively called the "Sick Man of Europe." The second difference was a corollary to the first, namely the degree of exposure to international sponsorship of a local nationalism. Again, the same order held. The third lay in the extent to which a single or core nationality was available to dominate the empire. Again, the Russian Empire came out on top easily with a dominant Russian (and by extension Slavic) core, while the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires came a very low second, both devoid of an obvious core. Thus the transition of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empire into numerous nation-states was determined as much by local nationalism as by international diplomacy. But the developments within the Russian Empire were relatively untouched by international manoeuvres during War and Revolution (1914-1921). These differences also provide an insight into why a Soviet multi-national state was able to emerge in the territory of the Russian Empire (with some losses in the north-west) whereas no such multi-national structures could evolve in the other two empires, in Yugoslavia in the Western Balkans, and Czechoslovakia in Central Europe.

17.3 OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire was the feeblest of the three. It had begun contracting since the end of the seventeenth century when the Habsburg Empire recovered extensive territories in the Western Balkans by the treaties of Carlowitz in 1699 and of Passarowitz in 1718. Throughout the eighteenth century it declined sharply, retreating before the Russian Empire also when it ceded territories to the north of the Black Sea, especially by the treaty of Kucuk Kainarca (Kuchuk Kainardji) in 1774. The Russian Empire advanced into Ottoman territory along the west coast of the Black Sea, into Romania, then known as the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. It also advanced in the east, over the Caucasian mountain range, in Armenia.

The early decay of the Ottoman state was followed by dramatic industrialization and modernization of Western Europe from the end of the eighteenth century. These modernizing initiatives were pursued with varying success in parts of Russian and Habsburg empires. The Ottoman Empire also attempted to do so, especially during the reigns of the sultans Selim-III, Mahmut-II (1808-1839), and during the Tanzimat Period (covering the reigns of Abdul Hamit-I, 1839-1861, and Abdulaziz, 1861-1879). But Ottoman institutions were not as responsive to such reforms as the Russian and Habsburg ones were; and the empire continued its decline precipitously.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the empire had effectively splintered into a loose agglomeration of territories dominated by different groups at different times, local notables and nationalists, rebellious Ottoman governors and officials, neighbouring Balkan or Mediterranean states, and finally, the great powers. But it did not split up entirely until after World War-I only because the great powers could not agree on the division of the spoils. Hence it went through the agonizing process of great powers carving out a series of nations from the body politic of the Ottoman Empire as a sequence of bargains or spheres of influence. But what they did carve out each time happened to be a nation, or something close to one, because nationalism independently developed in these regions, not because the great powers necessarily preferred nation-states. However, there was no question of any nation coming into existence independently, without direct intervention by the great powers.

The great powers pursued two contradictory policies throughout: they both sustained the central Ottoman state and promoted local nationalisms. They found it easier to work through a weak Ottoman state than to have to deal with a number of fiercely nationalist Balkan states; they therefore shored up the Empire against a general dissolution. But each of them had independent territorial ambitions for which they prepared to carve out a nation and frequently sponsored a local nationalism to that end. Thus the British and French set covetous eyes on Egypt and the Arab world, and Egypt effectively passed under British control during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Austria wished to expand into the Western Balkans, especially Slovenia, Croatia, Slavonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, all parts of future Yugoslavia. Habsburg policy therefore consisted of a creeping annexation, while trying to preserve the rest of the Ottoman Empire intact against Russian menace.

Russia had by far the grandest ambitions of all. As nearly the whole of Balkans was Slavic by language family (except Romania in part) and Orthodox of religion (save for Muslims everywhere, and the Roman Catholic Croats and Slovenians), Russia could project herself as the leader and protector of these peoples. This was done through the Pan-Slavic ideology which called for unity of all Slavs, under Russian leadership, and freedom from Ottoman "yoke." While various Russian ideological groups pursued the intoxicating idea of a great Balkan Slavic federation free of Turkey and did an enormous amount of propaganda that was not the policy of the Russian state. The Russian government wanted a means of influencing politics in the Balkans for strategic and other purposes. It was sometimes easier to do so through Ottoman government; at other times it could be done better by sponsoring a national-state and retaining control of it or forming a reliable alliance with it. In effect it did both, which accounts for the extremely confusing nature of policies pursued. In addition, various enthusiastic diplomats

or generals pursued their own agendas independently of their government, which further confuses the picture. But in sum, the Russian government and Pan-Slavic movements exerted greatly in favour of Balkan nationalisms and contributed the most to the independence of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania despite its own distaste for nationalism which after all threatened the Russian Empire itself. However, this irony applied to Habsburg and Ottoman empires also, each promoting a Balkan nationalism against another one, even while it would eventually suffer most from nationalism.

17.3.1 Greece

The Greeks were the first to expose the hollowness of the Ottoman multi-national empire. Their independence struggle, like all others, was founded on three elements of nationalism, a dissolving imperial state unable to control local governors, great power interventions, and great power rivalries. The Greek nationalist idea was propagated by the end of the eighteenth century by scholarly and literary groups that celebrated glories of classical antiquity. Rhigas Pheraios was one such secular nationalist poet who was executed by the Ottomans in 1798 and thus became a martyr. The organization that worked for independence was the Philiki Hetairia (Society of Friends), set up by Greek merchants in the Crimea in 1814 under the leadership of Alexander Ipsilanti and with supporters throughout the Ottoman Empire. International publicity came in the form of great European enthusiasm for classical antiquity; but the concrete great power support for their nationalism was provided by Russia.

As early as 1770 Russia helped a rising in the Peloponnese, and by the treaty of Kucuk Kainarca in 1774, Russia acquired a generalized right to represent Orthodox Christians of the Empire to the Sultan. Further rebellions occurred, but the decisive one was in 1821, which rapidly spread through the Morea, the Aegean Islands, Athens, Corinth, Thessaly, and Macedonia. Independently, an Ottoman governor, Ali Pasha of Janina (Ioannina in modern Greece), with his base in modern Albania, was in rebellion against the Sultan and extending his control southward into Greece. The Greek nationalists and Ali Pasha now briefly collaborated against Istanbul. The Ottoman government first attacked the dangerously independent Ali Pasha and executed him in 1822; but they unwittingly removed the single political force that could have held Greek nationalists in check. Its further attempts at repression of the Greeks provoked violent anti-Islamic hysteria throughout Europe, and Greek independence was declared in 1822. The Sultan now summoned the help of his powerful governor of Egypt, Muhammad (Mehmet) Ali, of Albanian origin, who was keen to extend his domain into Greece.

Now a typical Balkan situation developed. Russia put pressure on the Sultan to concede. Britain and France feared the growth of Russian influence, independently made war on Muhammad Ali, and destroyed his great fleet at the Battle of Navarino Bay in 1827. The Russian Mediterranean Fleet supplied the Greeks, and Russia invaded the Ottoman Empire through the Danubian Principalities (modern Romania) and the Caucasus. Following the Ottoman defeat and the treaty of Edirne (Adrianople) in 1829, Greek independence was finally accepted. A Greek kingdom was set up in 1832, but, in order to restrain Russia, under a German prince who was not Greek Orthodox but Roman Catholic by religion.

In effect, Russia, Austria, Britain, France, the Sultan, Ali Pasha, and Muhammad Ali, all acted simultaneously on Greece. The Sultan first knocked out Ali Pasha from the race; Russia then knocked out the Sultan, while Britain and France knocked out Muhammad Ali. Austria passively approved of British and French action. They finally created a Greece which was much smaller than the nationalist dream of modern Greece, chiefly for fear of Russian influence. For the same reason, a complete foreigner by religion and nationality was placed on the throne. Thereafter, in a series of Balkan crises during the next century and a half, Greece was permitted to expand to her present dimensions. *As it happened, each national-state was started off with a minimum territory; it then expanded or contracted as reward or punishment for the positions taken in great power conflicts.*

17.3.2 Serbia

The Serbian situation presents the same ingredients of a national movement, Ottoman state decay, regional conflicts between local rulers and nationalists, Russian patronage, and European great power machinations. The years 1804 to 1813 saw a rising under the leadership of a pig dealer called Kara George against local Janissary rule. Typically, the Sultan was not displeased as he himself had lost control of the Janissaries. The movement itself was minimally nationalist; and while Kara George sought help from the great powers, only Russia came forward with some funding and troops and urged restraint on the Sultan. Much of the success of the rebellion was due to the Janissary revolts and succession crises at Istanbul. In 1813 however, the Ottomans revived and defeated Kara George who fled to Hungary, where he was murdered by his fellow Serbian Milos Obrenovic. In 1815, Milos launched another revolt, declared himself a Christian Pasha of the Sultan, and in 1817 had himself elected hereditary prince by an assembly of notables. The Sultan accepted him as a subordinate prince within the Empire.

The beginning of the Serbian state, later to expand into Yugoslavia, was due largely to the collapse of Ottoman rule; nationalist mobilization and great power intervention followed. Thus, the inevitable “national awakening” occurred between 1820 and 1870 with usual historical researches into past greatness, the folklore cult, and Vuk Karadzic’s reform of the literary language and his composition of a Serbian grammar and dictionary.

In the subsequent great power moves, Russia expressed the keenest interest in a powerful Serbia as a Russian client in the Balkans and as a base for pressure on both the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. In the specific context of Serbia, it was Habsburg policy to shore up the Ottoman Empire even while hoping to detach Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Serbia’s own interest was to expand eastward into Macedonia and southward into Albania, for which rulers periodically attempted a Serb-Greek-Bulgarian alliance against the Ottomans. Serbia, like Greece, was territorially unsatisfied; but unlike Greece, she at least had a native dynasty, the Obrenovic. The Ottoman power inexorably receded from Serbia, such that by 1867 nothing Ottoman remained there except the flag in Belgrade. After the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, and by decisions of the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Serbia finally became independent.

17.3.3 Romania

Romania was a major province of the Ottoman Empire from the early fifteenth century. It consisted of two main segments, Moldavia and Wallachia, also known as the Danubian Principalities, which were united as Romania only in 1859. As was typical of such dynastic empires, the local religion, customs, and even princes continued to rule, but subject to Ottoman control. Between 1634 and 1711, a series of Greek princely dynasties ruled the provinces. During the eighteenth century, the Phanariot Greeks (wealthy Greeks from the Phanar region of Istanbul) administered the country after purchasing their office at auctions in Istanbul. But, with the steady decline of the Ottoman centre and the advance of Russian power throughout the eighteenth century, the Principalities effectively passed under Russian protection, especially from the Russian occupation of 1769. Now, the usual combination of local nationalism, Russian penetration, Austrian attempts to check it, and Ottoman balancing of both, provided the background to the emergence of the Romanian nation.

The “national renaissance” occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. Romanian national history was composed by Mihail Kogalniceanu (1840), the editor of the literary journal *Dacia Literara*; the romantic literary personality was Grigore Alexandrescu; the first Romanian newspaper appeared in Wallachia in 1833, with the National Theatre in Bucharest thereafter. The process of translating the Holy Scriptures and liturgical texts into Romanian began in the seventeenth century and was completed in the nineteenth. The independent Romanian Orthodox Church with its own Patriarch was created in 1865 with authority over Romanian Orthodox Christian even in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As in Bulgaria, this was anti-Greek measure. The cultural foundations for a political national movement had been laid; these would now be used by the great powers.

Russian influence grew sharply after the treaty of Kucuk Kainarca in 1774. The Principalities were under Russian occupation between 1828 and 1834 when the foundations for a modern state were laid by the Russian governor, Pavel Kiselev. Thereafter, it remained nominally Ottoman territory, but effectively controlled by Russia. Russia now faced a typical problem by promoting a nationalism which was useful against Istanbul but dangerous to itself. Thus, during the revolutionary year 1848-1849, Russia suppressed national movements in both provinces. However France under Napoleon-III now supported national movements everywhere hoping to weaken multi-national empires and gain some influence in the bargain. After the Crimean defeat Russia, urged on by France, accepted the unification of the Principalities into a new state of Romania under Alexander Cuza, elected by the national assemblies of both provinces. Owing to his radical reforms, the aristocracy, known as boyars, deposed him in 1866; but, in a manner typical of the Balkans, elected a German prince Carol of the Hohenzollern dynasty, as king. In 1878, after the Congress of Berlin, Romania was declared independent. The subsequent history, in national terms, is as chequered as for the rest of the Balkans, with gains and losses of the various adjacent territories of Transylvania (disputed with Hungary), Bessarabia (Moldavia of the Soviet Union), Bukovina, and finally Dobruja (disputed with Bulgaria).

17.3.4 Bulgaria

Bulgaria was closer to the seat of power; hence its independence came more slowly, although nationalist development occurred early. It was launched in effect by Father Paisy of Chilanderi (Khilendar) Monastery on Mount Athos with his book, the *Slavo-Bulgarian History* in 1762. It was a romantic and nationalist history that called upon Bulgarians to give up things foreign. He was followed by Bishop Sofroniy of Vratsa with his *Sunday Book* in 1806, the first printed work in Bulgarian. In 1835, the first modern Bulgarian school was founded by the grammarian Rilski. These were followed in quick succession by N. Gerov's first Bulgarian dictionary, and the works of the antiquarians Y. Venelin, V. Rilov, and I. Bogorov. This half century of output collectively amounted to the usual "national awakening" through history, folklore, and philology. The new awareness was disseminated through an expanding school network which had 2000 free schools by 1870, periodicals, reading rooms, theatre, concerts, and social events. The process peaked in 1870 with the Sultan granting Bulgaria its independent church under its own head called the Exarch, free of the Greek Patriarch at Istanbul. The Church was a potent cultural force, especially in Macedonia; but it was deeply resented by the Greeks, which is why the Sultan permitted it.

However, during the first half of the eighteenth century, there was no movement for independence, and most thought in terms of a national Bulgarian province of the Empire run by a Christian Pasha, in the manner that Milos Obrenovic had declared himself in Serbia in 1817. After the Crimean War (1854-1856), the demands for independence gathered momentum. These were represented by G. S. Rakovaskii and Lyuben Karavelov. As usual, Russia encouraged such Slavic nationalism; and Istanbul, equally typically, promoted such nationalism opportunistically against the Greek, especially by allowing the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870. Russia had looked to Serbia as the base for her influence in the Balkans; but when Serbia under Prince Milan was roundly defeated by the Ottomans in a war in 1876, Russia turned in disappointment to Bulgaria. Russian Pan-Slavism whipped up feeling in Russia for the liberation of Balkans under Russian leadership; and British public opinion was likewise instigated by William Gladstone, the liberal politician and Prime Minister at various times, against Turkish "atrocities" during the repression of a Bulgarian rising in 1875. The result was the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the creation of an independent Bulgaria. But as in the case of Greece, suspicion of Russia led to the Congress of Berlin in 1878 creating a divided Bulgaria, a Bulgaria proper, and a new state with the name of Eastern Rumelia. And again, they foisted a German prince, Alexander of Battenberg, on Bulgaria.

As always, nationalism was used but promises were not fulfilled by the great powers. Indeed they had been deliberately perverted by the creation of an obviously unstable state like Eastern Rumelia. Russia now demanded concessions in the running of Bulgaria; and, despite her initial sponsorship of Bulgarian nationalism, objected to the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. Almost inevitably, Britain supported such a union, realising what Russians had always feared, that national states tend to assert their newly won independence rather than become clients. In 1885 then, when Alexander pushed through the union, he lost his throne as a result of Russian displeasure. Once again, the peculiarly incomplete nature of Balkan nationalism asserted itself. The Bulgarian Assembly voted for a Danish prince, Waldemar; but the Russian Emperor, Alexander-III,

rejected him. The Assembly now chose a German prince, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, who, to general astonishment, lasted thirty years. Bulgaria now expanded and contracted through the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913; but during World War-I she chose the wrong side, and was punished by the victors in 1919 when, by the treaty of Neuilly, she was reduced in size and even denied her exit to the Aegean Sea. As was once again evident, while the multinational empire was fading out, a national state was the designated successor; but its frontiers remained the whim of the great powers.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Give in 100 words the reasons for the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

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- 2) Discuss briefly the situations relating to the independence of Serbia and Romania.

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- 3) How the independence achieved by Greece and Bulgaria was different from each other?

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17.4 HABSBURG MONARCHY

The Habsburg Monarchy was the most ancient empire in Europe, occupying its centre; it was as multi-national as the Ottoman, and it was plagued by similar problems. The dynasty was Habsburg (also spelt Hapsburg); but the head of the family sported a variety of titles, one for each kingdom, dukedom, principality, or county; and he ruled each of these territories in his separate capacity as sovereign of each of them. He would be elected king of Rome by a group of German princes called Electors, and he then assumed the title Holy Roman

Emperor. Some of the territories over which he ruled were therefore known as the Holy Roman Empire although there was nothing Roman about it. The Empire was abolished in 1806 after defeat by Napoleon; but the then Emperor, Francis II, had, in anticipation of the event, assumed the title Hereditary Emperor of Austria in 1804 itself. Thus, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, save such conventional approximations as Habsburg Empire or Monarchy, Austrian Empire, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, or Dual Monarchy, was employed to describe the Monarchy.

17.4.1 Contradictions within the Empire

The single unifying factor in this disparate group of lands was the dynasty and its head. With this came also its bureaucracy, army and German culture because the dynasty was German. Career success did not require German nationality, but it did require mastery of German language. The Germans were the most advanced, culturally and economically, and they occupied leading positions; but they did so as the *Staatsvolk* or “people of the state,” not as German nationalists dominating non-Germans. A germanised Czech, Hungarian, or Croat could equally rise to the top without prejudice. Similarly, in Hungary, where Magyars were the dominant nationality, a magyarized non-Magyar could make a successful career without suffering any discrimination. These situations were akin to the Greeks occupying such high positions throughout the Ottoman Empire, or the Baltic Germans being so successful within the Russian Empire. These processes were typical of pre-national or a-national political structures; but nationalism remorselessly destroyed all these.

This Monarchy, like the Ottoman Empire, faced two types of challenges to its unity. The first was regional particularism, which was traditional and dated from medieval times. Regions would claim territorial privileges or special constitutions against the centralizing power of the Monarch. They related to the usual issues of taxation, service in the army, religious rights, landlords’ powers over their peasants, and the rights of towns and merchants. The Monarch constantly played one group against another as they competed for favour, and he thus created networks of dependence on the Throne. Thus all relationships were perpetually under negotiation; and each succession and coronation was a special moment for a number of new “deals” to be struck. Dynastic regionalism enjoined loyalty to the Monarch since he was an independent sovereign of that particular historic region, whether it was the Bohemian Crown lands (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia), the Hungarian Crown lands (Hungary, Slovakia, Transylvania, parts of Croatia and Serbia), the Hereditary Lands (Upper and Lower Austria, Carinthia, Carniola, Littoral, Styria, and Tirol-Vorarlberg), or Galicia-Bukovina. Hence unity under a Monarch was conceivable and possible on the basis, and even because, of these separate regional loyalties. But such a system did not admit of any uniformity: attempts at imposing uniformity threatened the peculiar historical relation of the region to the Monarch, and there with the unity of the Monarchy.

The second problem was nationalism, emerging only in the 1830s and 1840s. In this each nationality claimed special rights, starting as rights to preserve and develop a language and culture, then linguistic and cultural monopolies over a particular territory which their historians would have claimed for that culture, and finally the right to a sovereign state. These had little to do with ancient privileges, or directly with class. The Monarch could not play nations against

each other with the same good results as he could, groups instead of networks of dependence he would now be stimulating the very nationalism that ultimately dissolved the Monarchy. Nationalism did not permit attachment to the Monarch, as he was, by nationalist definition, a foreigner to each of these nationalities. The Monarch was German by culture, but he was becoming a part foreigner even to the Germans, for he was committed to the non-German territories as his dynastic patrimony, which violated German nationalist logic. They therefore tended to look to the German Empire as their new nation. Thus, even a federation led by the Monarch was unworkable. Only a federation using nationalism, like the Yugoslav and Soviet systems, could now flourish. But the federating ideology would need to be both modern and compatible with nationalism in order to use it; dynasticism was clearly no such ideology.

Consequently, one strategy of the Monarch was to unify the empire around loyalty to his person by promoting the special relation each region enjoyed with him, their sovereign. But this entailed retaining archaic power structures and privileges, a number of regional administrations without any uniformity, uneven distribution of taxes, unequal contributions to the armed forces etc. As a symbol of such absurd multiplicity, the last Monarch, Francis Joseph (reigned 1848-1916), spoke nineteen languages; but he could do no more than utter platitudes in each of them, as the witticism ran. In short, it blocked the modernization of the state through centralization and homogenization. The failure to keep up in the race to modernize would result in defeat in international warfare and break up by action of other powers. The Monarchy would go the way of the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore the Monarch would attempt the other strategy, that of centralization. But this was an attack on both traditional regionalism and modern nationalism. It was a mere administrative process without an ideology at all, save loyalty to the Monarch. Loyalty to the Monarch was itself an archaic ideology of regionalism which was being overthrown by centralization. Hence such a strategy of centralization was fatally contradictory, a process of unification that destroyed the foundations for unity. On the other hand loyalty to the Monarch was incompatible with modern nationalism, as noted above. The only possible unifying ideology suitable for nationalism was most disastrous of all, that is, a German nationalist (not traditionalist) domination of empire. This was wholly inconceivable, given the Czech, Slovak, Magyar, Croatian, and Serb nationalists. Thus all options were effectively closed to the Monarchy, whether it be tradition or modern in form, a national or nationalist. In the event he would attempt all, sequentially, simultaneously, or in pragmatic combinations, in the ultimate awareness that he was doing no more than postponing the day of dissolution of empire.

While personal union under the Monarch remained the substratum of imperial strategy throughout, Vienna twice attempted centralization, and failed. The first was during the reign of Joseph-II (1780-1790). He was a dynamic, brusque modernizer, who was utterly absolutist and rode roughshod over regional privileges. On the eve of his death he admitted failure and withdrew his reforms while Belgium (then part of the Empire) declared independence. The next phase was in the 1850s, chiefly introduced by decrees known as the Sylvester Patent in 1851, after the victory over the 1848 revolutions. This time absolutism and integration with Austria was carried far. German was made the language of administration and education, not only in rebellious regions like Hungary, but also in Transylvania and Croatia; Hungarian law was assimilated to the Austrian;

and equality before the law (that is, ending traditional privileges of magnates) was enforced. But this was a momentary drive to integration, broken in 1860 after defeat at the battle of Solferino and the unification of Italy. By the October Diploma (a series of constitutional documents of 20 October 1860), much of the regional structures that existed before 1848 were restored. Hungary, Transylvania, and Croatia acquired new constitutional powers, parliaments (Diets generally, in Croatia, the Sabor) and governments (chancelleries). However, with 1848, the politics of the empire tended to crystallize around nation rather than historic region; and after 1867, the balance tilted definitively in favour of nationalism.

In 1866, the Monarchy suffered another major defeat, at the battle of Sadowa (Koniggratz), at the hands of Prussia, which was now well on its way to creating the German national-state, the German Empire. This finally denied the Habsburgs any hope of leading in Germany; and it led to yet another loosening of empire. The Monarchy was divided into two independent units in 1867. Hungary and Austria (including all the non-Hungarian Crown lands) united by the Monarch and certain common ministries. This is known as Dualism, giving rise to the expressions Dual Monarchy, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and the cumbersome official formula “Imperial and Royal Government” (for Austria and Hungary respectively). It was a bitter disappointment to the Slavs who had hoped for a “Trialism” of Germans, Magyars, and Slavs in a federal structure. This arrangement subsisted until the bitter end in 1918.

Nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1910						
	<i>Monarchy</i>		<i>Austria</i>		<i>Hungary</i>	
Nationality	Millions	%	Millions	%	Millions	%
German	12.011	23.58	9.950	35.59	1.903	9.55
Magyar	10.066	19.76			9.994	49.93
Czech	6.643	13.04	6.436	23.02		
Polish	4.978	9.77	4.968	17.77	1.946	9.77
Ruthenian	3.999	7.85	3.519	12.59	0.464	2.33
Romanian	2.888	5.67	0.275	0.98	2.948	14.80
Croat	3.225	6.33			1.600	8.03*
Serb	2.042	4.01			0.650	3.26*
Serbo-Croat			0.788	2.82	0.462	2.32
Slovak	1.968	3.86				
Slovene	1.371	2.69	1.253	4.48		
Italian	0.771	1.51	0.768	2.75		
Muslim Slav	0.612	1.20				
Others	0.368	0.72				
Total	50.942	99.99	27.957	99.98	19.917	99.99

**These are Croats and Serbs in Croatia-Slavonia. The Magyars excluded Croatia-Slavonia from their census figures in order to avoid showing the strength of the Slav minority in Hungary.*

(Source : Edward Crankshaw, *The Fall of the House of Habsburg*, Sphere Book Edn., London 1970, p.437. Percentages and totals were not provided; they have been calculated by the author of the Unit).

After 1867, the empire was plagued by nationalist tensions of extraordinary intensity. Most of it was conducted through the politics of language for education and administration. With different rhythms, all of them pitched in, Magyar, Czech, Slovak, Croat, Serb, Slovene, Ruthene (Ukrainian), Polish, Italian, and finally German. The principle and practice of a national empire was lost. It was only a matter of time and a combination of domestic and international crises before the empire would be broken up by foreign rivals using national self-determination as a principle because it could be readily implemented.

The Habsburg disintegration corresponded to the Ottoman with a difference of emphasis. The primary thrust to the break up of the Ottoman Empire was pressure by great powers; nationalism came a distinct second, even if used by great powers. The Habsburg process was similar, but more spectacular, and due largely to defeat in World War-I. Its early losses in the nineteenth century were due to French action. In 1792 French armies took Belgium which was then permanently lost to the Habsburgs. It lost authority over Germany in 1806 when the Holy Roman Empire was abolished after Napoleonic victories. In 1860 the French deprived the Habsburgs of their Italian possession by promoting the unification of Italy. In 1866, Prussia drove the Habsburgs finally out of the German leadership. On the other hand, the Habsburgs gained territories, chiefly the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the western Balkans at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. But, despite all the nationalist pressures in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, it was only defeat in World War-I that led to the final disintegration, with the victorious powers carving out the new nations of Czechoslovakia, Hungary minus the non-Magyars, Romania with Transylvania, and a south Slav federation called Yugoslavia, leaving the rump Austria. The process was more dramatic than the Ottoman as the Habsburg central state was more modern and effective. It could contain local nationalism and hold off international predators better. But as usual, international rivalry was the ultimate test; and the Habsburgs went down like the Ottomans, and for much the same reasons.

17.4.2 Czechoslovakia

The national culture which developed perhaps first and most significantly was the Czech. With patronage from the aristocracy of Bohemia (Czech country), a modern “national” culture was created. The Czech language had already been standardized and purified of foreign influences by Dobrovsky and Jungmann; now, in the romantic generation, Jan Kollar (a Slovak) composed the heroic epic, *The Daughter of Slava* (1824), Paul Safarik (another Slovak) assembled the history of the Slav languages (1826), and Frantisek Palacky compiled his vast *History of Bohemia*. Prague was the centre of this national renaissance, and all wrote in Czech even if many of them were not Czech (they were often Slovak or German).

Among the Slovaks, there were two contending movements, one for a Czechoslovak linguistic unity, and another of just Slovak nationalism, led by the Archbishop Rudnay, to develop one of the Slovak dialects into an independent language and free of Czech domination. Thus Slovaks had some difficulty defining a Slovak identity. In the event, the Czechoslovakia established in 1918 consisted of two nations, into which they split in 1992, as did Yugoslavia and the USSR.

Within the Empire, Czechoslovakia did not exist as a political region. The Czechs were in majority in the lands of the Bohemian Crown, that is, in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The minorities here were German and Polish. The Slovaks

were in the northern portion of the lands of the Hungarian Crown. The modern capital of Czechoslovakia, Prague, was an entirely German city, which became Czech from the middle of the nineteenth century with industrialization and Czech workers' immigration.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Czechs and local Germans jointly disputed through their Diets (parliaments) with the imperial centre, Vienna, for control of the Bohemian Crown lands. This was traditional regional particularism derived from medieval times. But increasingly, from the 1830s, and then especially after 1848 and 1867, the Czechs and Germans competed to dominate the Bohemian Crown lands. It took the form of rivalry between the Czech German languages for public use. To this the Czechs added the struggle for greater independence from Vienna, while the German minority in Bohemia hoped to ensure German domination by enlisting the support of either the imperial centre, Vienna, or the new German nationalism under Prussian leadership which culminated in the German Empire. Now both the nationalities were acting to a nationalist logic on the premise of nation-states, the Czech and the German.

The Slovaks on the other hand had to conduct parallel struggles within the Hungarian Crown lands, but a) to hold off pressure from Vienna, which did not necessarily mean German, and b) to resist the controls of Budapest, the capital of Hungary. As usual, in the first half of the century, it was a regional particularism against centralization from Budapest and Vienna; but, from the 1840s, and especially from the 1860s, it was a Slovak nationalism blocking the Magyar nationalist centralization of Hungary and attempts at the magyarization of the Slovaks.

The final phase was the coalition of Czech and Slovak nationalisms in a new Czechoslovak nationalism from the end of the century. A Czechoslovak Society, inspired by T. G. Masaryk, was founded in 1896 to promote the idea. In 1916, this goal was pursued by a National Council set up in Paris, where Masaryk convinced the French leadership that French security lay in the break-up of the Habsburg Empire and the creation of a string of national-states, among them Czechoslovakia. This strategic calculation was endorsed by France and the Allies, and the new national states came into being in 1918-1919. Once again, it was military defeat and the security calculations of the victors that led to the final establishment of the nation-state system in so much of Europe. Without military defeat, a federal structure, consisting of national units, might have evolved in Central Europe as it did in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, and even, in part, in Czechoslovakia.

17.4.3 Hungary

What was loosely known as Hungary in fact meant the lands of the Hungarian Crown. This included the majority and dominant Magyar peoples, the Romanians (in Transylvania, which passed to Romania in 1919), Slovaks in the north-west (which went to form Czechoslovakia in 1918), Croats, and Serbs in the south and south-west (which combined into Yugoslavia after 1919). Thus, the Hungarian Crown lands were in themselves a multi-national kingdom (not empire, as the Austrian Emperor was only king of Hungary) within the larger Habsburg Monarchy. Within the Hungarian Crown lands, the Magyars dominated. Therefore, when the Monarchy was defeated in 1918, most of the non-Magyars parts were

sliced off to merge with other national states (Czechoslovakia Romania, Yugoslavia) and the Magyar nation-state, Hungary, was left behind.

In the nation-forming process, the Magyars got off to an early start. Ferencz Kazinczy purified the language, rationalized the grammar, expanded its vocabulary, and created the foundations for a modern literature to bloom. Diets or parliaments after 1792 regularly demanded the wider use of the Magyar language in public life. 1825 saw the foundation of a typical national institution of culture and scholarship, the Hungarian Academy; by Count Istvan Szechenyi. Up to the 1830s, the contests between Hungary and Vienna were confined to the traditional regional privileges of the Hungarian Crown lands; thereafter, a new generation of liberals and nationalists took over the Diets, with Magyar nationalism as their agenda and Lajos Kossuth as their hero. From the 1840s, the magyarization, that is, use of the Magyar language, was pushed energetically against the non-Magyars; and, in reaction and outrage, Slovaks, Croats, and Romanians agitated for their respective languages.

The test came during the 1848 revolutions which swept Europe. The Hungarian nationalist movement, led by Kossuth, sought to gain control of Hungary, free of Vienna, and to impose itself on the non-Magyars. While the Slovaks and Romanians were put down, the Serbs and Croats were already organized communities, and Vienna decided to support their nationalism against the Magyar. So Josip Jellacic, a fanatical Croatian nationalist, was appointed the Ban (governor) of Croatia, in March 1848, and encouraged to fight off the Magyars. Next, the Hungarian Serbs, now led by their Metropolitan (Bishop) Rajacic, organized a "National Congress" and announced the "nation of Hungarian Serbs" in April 1849, as a free nation under the Habsburg dynasty. The Croats and Serbs, with support from Vienna, thus held off the Magyars, throughout 1848-1849; finally, in August 1849, the Magyars were roundly defeated by Russian armies coming to the aid of the Austrian, and Kossuth fled to Turkey. Vienna managed to fend off the challenge of Magyar nationalism, but only by stimulating Serb, Croatian, and other nationalisms and legitimizing the nationalist re-organization of the empire.

17.4.4 Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia-New Multi-national States

The two empires had been carved up in large part on the ground that they violated the principle of nationality. Yet two important multi-national states emerged from the Peace Settlement of 1919 at Versailles, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

Czechoslovakia now contained 6 million Czechs, 2 million Slovaks, 3.5 million Germans, and 1 million Magyars, out of a population of nearly 12 million. Despite the ferocity of nationalism, a multi-national state had been deliberately created with a history of nationalist hatreds of German vs Czech, and Slovak vs Magyar. Unlike the Habsburg Monarchy however, this acknowledged the modern force of nationalism rather than assert the archaic principles of dynasty, historic region, and a-national unity. Czechoslovakia has had a troubled history since then; however, such states could flourish in conditions of modern nationalism only through international guarantees, as Switzerland, a three-nation federation, has managed to do.

Yugoslavia was a similar case. Just as Czech and Slovak nationalisms had coalesced into a Czechoslovak nationalism, so also Serbian, Croatian, and Serbo-

Croat nationalism all developed virtually simultaneously. In the 1830s and 1840s, the Illyrianist movement for uniting all South Slavs had been pursued vigorously by Ljudovit Gaj. As a result, a single language, modern Serbo-Croat, was created. The two separate nationalisms also flourished, especially as Serbia existed as a separate state, effectively from 1817. To these were added Slovene nationalism developing from early nineteenth century, when Jernej Kopitar, the poet and philologist, published the first Slovene grammar in 1808, and in 1843, the first Slovene language newspaper came out from Ljubljana (Laibach in German). These three nationalisms combined with that of Montenegro to form the South Slav federation called Yugoslavia. It took the form of Serbia being rewarded at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 by adding to it Montenegro, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, and Croatia, all of which went by this new name. There were important affinities, and at some levels a common nationalism; but a number of separate nationalisms had also evolved, which did not make the formation of a new nation-state easy. It was a federation of nations, riven by deep internal rivalries, with Serbian domination at various levels. Yet it survived until 1990.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What role did the monarch play in keeping the Habsburg Empire together?

Answer in 100 words.

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- 2) Discuss the importance of nationalisms and wars in the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire.

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17.5 LET US SUM UP

As is clear from these settlements, a national or dynastic state could no longer exist in the modern international relations system. The Habsburg and Ottoman states hoped to survive by obstructing, suppressing, or ignoring, nationalism. But the nation-state did not have to be the result, although so many nation-states had come into being. It could as well have been a multi-national state even if not the a national-state. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union are examples. The modern state could exist only on the basis of the promotion of nationalism; and this nationalism could equally be a single nationalism appropriate to the nation-state, or a number of nationalisms combined through imaginative

federating arrangements into a multi-national state. In principle the Ottoman and Habsburg empires could have evolved into such multi-national entities like the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Soviet states. But the two empires were defeated in international war and were carved up, as happens with almost unfailing regularity throughout history. In this case, the victors used nationalism as the principle by which to slice them up as it was the most readily available and effective instrument. Yet they were not consistent, if it did not suit them, as the shifting frontiers in the Balkans, or finally the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav states demonstrate. The disintegration of the two empires was due to both nationalism and military defeat: military defeat tells us why it happened, and nationalism gives us the form in which it happened.

17.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 17.3
- 2) See Sub-sections 17.3.2 & 17.3.3
- 3) See Sub-sections 17.3.1 & 17.3.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 17.4.1
- 2) See Sub-section 17.4.1 as well as other sub-sections in the section 17.4