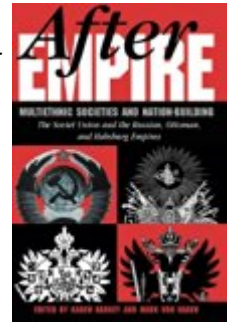


Karen Barkey, Mark von Hagen, eds.. *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires.* Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997. 200 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8133-2963-5.



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This volume offers a series of revised conference papers by scholars in the fields of political science, sociology, history, and Islamic studies. The subject of the 1994 Columbia University conference and of the work under review is empire, specifically the causes and consequences of Habsburg, Ottoman, tsarist, and Soviet imperial decline. This collection joins several other recent studies which examine facets of empire in a comparative perspective.[1]

The topic readily lends itself to comparative historical treatment in view of the similarities shared by the Habsburg, Ottoman, Romanov, and Soviet regimes. All four were large, land-based, and polyethnic empires. They faced the overwhelming task of ruling, cementing, and modernizing vast domains inhabited by peoples of diverse religion, culture, language, and ethnicity. The collapse and fall of empire resulted from the interplay of internal and external forces such as war, revolution, centrifugal nationalism, structural crisis, institutional breakdown, and stagnant imperial leadership. An array of post-imperial successor states experimented and continue to ex-

periment with various forms of nation-state building and national self-determination. Such experiments have been and still are marked by political turmoil, socio-economic instability, and national minority unrest. This last issue points to perhaps the overarching commonality of the ethnically mixed empires and successor states under study: the discrepancy between political and ethnic frontiers. Centuries of war, conquest, resettlement, and migration in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and the Balkans, and the Middle East have produced ethnic mosaic states characterized by national minority populations, contested borders and resources, and political manipulation of nationality issues.

A standard observation in reviewing collections of multi-authored essays—that some contributions are more useful and readable than others—certainly holds true for this volume. Though the list of contributors includes scholars who rank among the leading specialists in their particular fields, the work as a whole is uneven and disjointed. Eight case studies of specific empires are generally well crafted, concise, and important pieces

of research. While they do not necessarily break new ground in interpreting causes and consequences of imperial decline, they provide excellent summaries of existing literature on the subject and can be incorporated readily into lecture or seminar courses on Habsburg, Ottoman, tsarist, and Soviet history. Five introductory and concluding articles which compare aspects of empire are overly general, theoretical, and vague. Insufficient concrete material, truisms masked as conceptual analysis, and unengaging prose make for tedious reading. These pieces have marginal importance for researchers and teachers and minimal value for undergraduate and graduate students.

The four case studies in Part One deal with specific situations and examples of imperial decline. Caglar Keyder explores the viability of an Ottomanist identity as a possible formula for keeping the Ottoman Empire together in the critical period of 1908-1913. This Tanzimat-inspired Ottomanist perspective on empire, supported by the National Liberals and by sectors of Anatolia's Greek and Armenian professional and merchant classes, favored a multi-ethnic federalist state grounded in a constitution that established rule of law, universal and equal citizenship for minority groups, and ethnic and territorial autonomy. Keyder is understandably doubtful of the prospective success of the Ottomanist approach to imperial integration. The empire endured grave shocks and setbacks on the eve of the Great War: lost wars in the Balkans, continued territorial shrinkage, Italy's invasion of Tripoli, foreign capitulations, rebellion in Albania, and ethnic assertiveness by Muslim Turk refugees who fled from the Caucasus and Balkans and resettled in Anatolia. Most importantly, the ruling Young Turks' program of political centralization and aggressive Turkish nationalism as a solution to imperial decay provoked ethnic clashes with Greeks and Armenians and triggered anti-Turkish reactions by Arabs and Kurds. Indeed, the author might have said more about the possible viability of a Muslim Arab and

Turkish Islamicist alternative to both Ottomanism and Turkish ethnic nationalism.

Solomon Wank focuses on the various factors that eroded the Habsburg Empire's stability, above all a weakened imperial state structure which failed to integrate variegated lands and peoples into any sort of cohesive entity with a common purpose. The absence of a supranational ideology and of effective institutions diminished the Dual Monarchy's capacity to compete internationally and made its geopolitical security increasingly dependent on Imperial Germany. As in 1859 and 1866, the Habsburg decision in 1914 to opt for war as a way to restore great power prestige not only backfired but was symptomatic of the empire's structural crisis. In a parting shot, the author notes that the persistence of empire delayed and distorted the process of nation-state building in Central and Eastern Europe and fueled the region's aggressive nationalism in the interwar era. While one can find support for many of Wank's points in the existing literature, Istvan Deak's essay later in the volume reminds us that in World War I "... Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, and even Transylvanian Romanians had fought roughly in the same proportion as the Hungarians and Germans in the armies of the Habsburg Monarchy [and] ... Croats, Slovenes, and Bosnians were counted among the most reliable soldiers of the Habsburg army" (pp. 131-32).

The causes of imperial decline in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union are adequately discussed, respectively, by Mark von Hagen and Victor Zaslavsky. The essay on tsarist Russia offers an illuminating reminder of the social and ethnic explosiveness of imperial borderlands (Finland, Baltics, Poland, parts of Ukraine, Transcaucasia). An interconnected series of structural, social, and political imbalances led to the old regime's crisis both before and after the 1905 Revolution. The Romanov imperial crisis featured socio-economic protest from peasants and industrial workers, political opposition from reactionary right to radical

socialist, and unsuccessful attempts to forge an ideology and institutions that would effectively coordinate the center with the peripheries of empire. The Great War not only exacerbated these stresses and strains but sharpened national identities, thereby preparing the way for stronger movements of national autonomy and independence which emerged in the cacophony of revolution and civil war. Von Hagen's summary of old regime collapse might have mentioned the counter-productive impact of tsarist Russification in the borderlands; the essay would also benefit from a broader concept of imperial space that encompasses Siberia and Central Asia, imperial "peripheries" where wartime mobilization policies sparked social, ethnic, and religious strife.

Victor Zaslavsky details causes of the Soviet Union's systemic crisis and territorial disintegration, pointing to a variety of factors that led to collapse. He effectively argues that the Soviet military-industrial system proved to be an unviable and unsustainable form of political organization. Economic and industrial decline, technological backwardness in the civilian sector, ecological ruin, a bankrupt ideology, and a single-party regime that stifled structural innovation far too long all contributed to systemic failure. Zaslavsky further claims that regime crisis virtually guaranteed the breakup of empire in view of a party-state nationality policy which simultaneously maintained Moscow's imperial control over the republics while promoting at least some nation-building initiatives. Nationalist and separatist impulses gathered steam in the era of stagnation and took advantage of favorable conditions for political mobilization and ethnic activism during the Gorbachev transformation. *Perestroika* and democratization not only precipitated the system's implosion but invigorated nationalist movements for real autonomy and outright secession which fractured the union's geopolitical order in 1991.

The consequences and legacies of empire are ably charted in Part Two's four case studies of

successor states. Serif Mardin describes the transition from empire to nation-state in Kemalist Turkey, where Kemal and other founding fathers of the Republic (1923) continued many of the intellectual and political concepts of the Young Turks. The loss of imperial domains necessitated the rump state's adoption of an ideology and system that would replace Ottomanism, Islamism, and pan-Turkism and serve as a successful mobilizing force to promote citizenship and cohesion. Kemal's program of secular reform, nationalism, and authoritarian politics cemented a new order in which Turkey's political discourse now featured the secular concepts of statism, popular sovereignty, nation, and civil law. Yet as Mardin correctly notes, the Kemalist formula failed to accommodate Islam, which provided (and still does) an inextricable part of citizens' personal and social identities, by functioning as a network of cultural and religious ties, a catalyst for opposition to Kemalism, and a counter-value system.

Istvan Deak concisely summarizes the harsh and tragic repercussions of the Habsburg Empire's dissolution on new successor states Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland and on enlarged Romania. While mindful of positive Habsburg legacies in technology, education, infrastructure, and administration, Deak records the litany of misery and bloodshed which plagued the "lands between" in the interwar and World War II eras. The breakup of empire resulted in nationalist frustration in revisionist Hungary and Austria; border wars and contested frontiers; thwarted political ambitions of Slovak, Magyar, Croatian, Bosnian, and Ukrainian minorities; land redistribution with nationalistic overtones; and an absence of regional economic and political cooperation in the face of Hitlerite Germany and Stalinist Russia. For Deak the most profound consequence of Habsburg demise was the ethnic cleansing of millions who were killed, deported, or forced to become refugees, "an ethnic revolution of still unfathomable proportions" (p. 136) which victimized not only Jews and Germans but

virtually every single ethnic group of Central Europe and the Balkans. The post-imperial slate makes Deak neither nostalgic for the Dual Monarchy's staying power nor optimistic about contemporary prospects of regional cooperation and reconciliation.

Ronald Suny's survey of the aftermath of tsarist Russia reads like a condensed text, yet offers an insightful picture of major developments in the crucial periods of revolution and civil war. From post-imperial chaos and conflict a powerful new state emerged, a multinational federalist union of national republics characterized by a single ruling party, an authoritarian state structure, a command economy, and social mobility in the formation of new elites. Bolsheviks ruled borderlands with a combination of military force, political repression, limited administrative autonomy, economic and cultural opportunity, and affirmative action geared toward the creation of native intelligentsias, working classes, and local communist elites. Stalin later transformed the formula "socialist in content, national in form" into "Stalinist in content, Russified in form" as part of his drive to assert Moscow's core hegemony over non-Russian republics.

The newly independent non-Russian republics, or the near abroad in Russia's political dialogue, are the focus of Rogers Brubaker's comparative work on the unmixing of peoples in post-imperial contexts. Though written in a cumbersome and labored style, the article explores a significant and timely topic. The actual and potential migration of some twenty-five million Russians and Russophones from the politically reconfigured successor states poses an economic and political challenge for any government of the Russian Federation. Before treating the Russian reflux, Brubaker discusses three earlier cases of post-imperial outmigration by previously ruling ethnic and national groups: Muslim Turks from the Balkans during and after Ottoman disintegration, Hungarians from post-Habsburg states, and

Germans from post-Habsburg and post-Hohenzollern successors. The author's information on the process, reasons, duration, and social composition of ethnic outflow is solid and his comparative framework stimulating. Yet the essay falls short in view of its speculative approach to the parameters of Russian migration. Brubaker concludes that ethnic unmixing will be uneven and selective, with sharply different rates of movement depending on such variables as economic and professional opportunity in non-Russian states, degree of anti-Russian popular feeling and legal discrimination, and duration of Russian diaspora settlements. Outmigration is less likely from areas with deeply rooted Russian communities--such as parts of Ukraine and Kazakhstan--and more probable from regions like Central Asia and Transcaucasia where Russian settlement is not as well entrenched. Regardless of why and whence it occurs, ethnic unmixing will invariably strain the budget and resources of the Russian Federation as it tries to absorb the influx. Outmigration also will generate protest from nationalistic Russians about ethnic diminution in strategic borderlands. The ramifications of Brubaker's subject deserve close attention in the years ahead.

Five overly schematic and confusing essays detract from this otherwise valuable publication. In prose that is pretentious, pedantic, and laden with social science verbiage, these pieces obfuscate more than they clarify, and their proffered kernels of wisdom are best described as trite or self-evident. For instance, Charles Tilley's "How Empires End" states the obvious: "If empires have over four millennia been so prevalent and yet so various, we are unlikely to derive from their histories any constants less trivial than those I have already named: that some combination of external conquest and internal defection usually brings them down" (p. 5). Alexander Motyl's introduction to Part One, "Thinking About Empire," provides little concrete information or perceptive insight beneath its prolixity and technical jargon. His attempt to delineate the concept of empire

opens with a gratuitous and self-serving assault on the discipline of history: "Coming to grips with the rise and fall of empires as a class of objects with certain properties must also involve something so obvious--and so obviously tedious for most historians--as a conceptual analysis" (p. 19). Motyl then denigrates the study and methodology of history: "On its own, historical investigation, no matter how rich, detailed, and nuanced, is powerless either to explain why empires rise and fall or even to identify the class of entities that rise and fall" (p. 19). The author's vaunted "conceptual analysis" proves lame as it delivers platitudes on the rise and fall of empire and on the imperial core-periphery relationship. Regarding the future of empire, Motyl closes with the pedestrian observation that "by and large, the same factors that can bring empire into existence can also end it" (p. 27).

The Ottoman specialist Karen Barkey in her introduction to Part Two, "Thinking About Consequences of Empire," builds a comparative framework for examining the process of post-imperial nation-state building. She identifies such key factors and variables as imperial legacies, geopolitical borders imposed by international treaty, definitions of nationhood, and the strength or weakness of post-imperial institutions and elites, all of which influenced the development of successor states. My reaction to Barkey's essay echoes my assessment of the conclusion she co-authored with Mark von Hagen. Readers of this volume are better served going through the eight specific case studies; they are written for the most part in a lucid if not elegant style and they contain useful material and excellent bibliographic leads. The five introductory and concluding pieces obscure the topic, fail to engage, and are superfluous. With the breakup of Yugoslavia, issues of ethnicity, nation-state building, and multinational society will continue to resonate in post-imperial lands and will capture the attention of more scholars from various disciplines.

Notes:

[1]. Richard Rudolph and David Good, eds., *Nationalism and Empire: The Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); L. Carl Brown, ed., *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Impact on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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