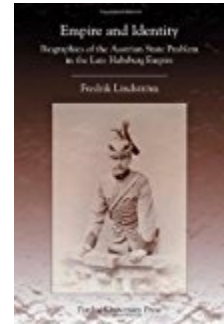


Fredrik Lindström. *Empire and Identity: Biographies of the Austrian State Problem in the Late Habsburg Empire*. Central European Studies Series. West Lafayette: Purdue University, 2008. 248 pp. \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55753-464-4.

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Exploring Imperial Pathologies through Six Biographies, or the Fragmentation of Liberalism in the Habsburg Empire

Fredrik Lindström has given us an illuminating and uncommon foray into cracking the complex nut of Austrian identity. Given the topic, Lindström has a good deal of potential interlocutors. It was particularly the Waldheim Controversy of the 1980s and the fifty-year anniversary of the *Anschluss* in 1988 that provided a great deal of soul-searching and historical work that mined the depths of Austrian “Identity.” What this period of intense scrutiny into the topic of Austrian identity produced was a number of significant studies as well as a good deal of intense debate. As one such debate revealed, however, “Austria” and “Austrian-ness” could have a multitude of meanings and significance; it is therefore better to think in terms of “identities” than one single and definitive Austrian one.[1]

Lindström takes on a range of Austrian identities in his *Empire and Identity*, a work that is a revised version of the author’s 2002 dissertation, which he completed at the University of Lund in Sweden. This work is not primarily on the post-WWI Austrian Republic, however, though it does at times follow lines of inquiry into the republican era. Rather, this book is about Austrian “imperial” identity in the late Habsburg Empire; that is, Lindström focuses on the mentalities and visions of Austria that were contested and shared among members of the German-speaking cultural and political elite in Vienna.

Specifically, Lindström’s work consists of three dual

biographies—a biographical technique that Lindström borrows from Plutarch’s *Lives*. The subjects of Lindström’s biographies are all members of the German-speaking political and intellectual elite of the Habsburg Monarchy. Ernest von Koerber (1850-1919), imperial civil servant and two-time prime minister, is paired with the politically active publisher, journalist, and historian, Heinrich Friedjung (1851-1920). The second dual biography juxtaposes the work of Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) with his friend and fellow writer, Leopold von Andrian (1875-1951). The third and final dual biography pairs law professor and parliamentarian, Josef Redlich (1869-1939), and the Social Democratic politician and later chancellor of both Austrian republics, Karl Renner (1870-1950). Lindström writes that he chose his six biographical subjects because they show different aspects of a “progressive” mind-set that sought to meet the challenges of modernization and democratization in Habsburg central Europe in ways that “tried to find solutions moving with and adapting to these changes” (p. 21).

Lindström musters these three dual biographies to a larger purpose: together they shed light on what Lindström terms the “Austrian state problem.” Lindström does not define the “Austrian state problem” outright, but instead identifies two central aspects, or subproblems. The first aspect “concerns the problems of institutional adaptation that the multinational imperial Austrian state

experienced during the accelerating modernization process of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (p. 2). More specifically, Lindström sees this problem in its political hues, the combined dynamic of “democratization and nationalization” that strained the empire’s political institutions. In this sense, Lindström chooses not to write another monograph on centripetal and centrifugal forces in the Habsburg Monarchy, nor does he focus on national movements but on the “problem of the multinational *state* as such” (p. 2). The second aspect is likewise a “problem”; this one a “problem of imperial mentality and of Austrian culture and identity” (p. 2). This second, cultural problem—what Lindström refers to as the Austrian state problem’s “softer side” (p. 2)—often addresses the different ways in which his biographical subjects were concerned with what it meant to be an “Austrian” and a citizen of a multinational state. In essence, Lindström sees each of his six biographical subjects as having experienced the larger Austrian problem “as a problem of personal identity, as an existential problem” (p. 2). The individual biographies are not comprehensive ones that take as their subject an individual’s life and work, but rather political biographies that together showcase the various ways in which the German-speaking elite in Vienna approached the political and literary culture of the multinational Habsburg Empire.

The first dual biography, the pairing of high official and Prime Minister Ernest von Koerber with Heinrich Friedjung, bears the subtitle “The Problem of the Austrian State.” The statesman and the politician/historian are linked both through Friedjung’s journalistic and political interest in Koerber and also through what Lindström points out as a shared “life-project”; namely, finding a “way out of the Austrian identity crisis created by the events of 1866-67” (p. 84). Of course, it is important to note, but not emphasized in the book, that the “events of 1866-67” to which Lindström refers were very different for Friedjung and for Koerber. Friedjung’s crisis stemmed from Austria’s defeat at Königgrätz and its subsequent exclusion from Germany; Koerber, however, sought a way out of the constitutional straightjacket of the kaiser’s Great Compromise with Hungary in 1867, which stood in the way of imperial constitutional reform.

Lindström approaches this dual biography through a variety of published sources—including Friedjung’s academic writings—as well as archival material, such as private papers, correspondence, administrative memoranda, and thought-pieces on administrative or constitutional reform. From this bevy of material Lindström is able to juxtapose Koerber and Friedjung’s radically dif-

ferent approaches to the “problem of the Austrian state” in what he terms “a field of tension” (p. 17). This allows Lindström to find and explore interesting connections between Koerber and Friedjung and, indeed, between the young Friedjung’s career as a German nationalist activist and his later career as a historian and journalist who used his writings to engage in politics.

The field of tension that Lindström explores in this first section on Koerber and Friedjung is one between Friedjung’s advocacy of a nationalist German conception of the Austrian state and Koerber’s promotion of a bureaucratically dominated but supranational state under the rule of law. Through exploring Friedjung’s academic and journalistic work, including the highly successful *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859-1866* (1897-98) and *Oesterreich von 1848 bis 1860* (1908-12), Lindström determines that Friedjung never abandoned his advocacy of German nationalist politics, but channeled it into writing historical narratives and contemporary opinion pieces in the press. As a part of retelling in narrative form the Austro-Prussian struggle for Germany in the nearly two decades following the revolutions of 1848, Friedjung’s historical work served the purpose of a talking cure. In his narratives, Friedjung addressed the period from 1848 to 1866 as the “failure to renew the leading role of the Austrian Germans in Germany *and* in the imperial Austrian state and their subsequent exclusion from Germany in 1866” (emphasis Lindström’s, p. 32). In this political biography, Lindström reviews Koerber’s various plans for constitutional and administrative reform. Koerber envisioned sweeping reforms that would have brought incredible changes to the empire’s domestic political organization, especially in the relationships of representative and administrative institutions to each other and to the state. In this comparison, Friedjung takes on the role of a German nationalist while Koerber plays the liberal Josephist official. But in this seemingly dichotomous portrayal of these two men’s political outlooks as national/supranational or political/bureaucratic, Lindström also finds and explores points of convergence: for instance, Friedjung often found in Koerber a statesman who could lead the Habsburg Empire on a course to fulfill its “German Mission” as a bearer of German *Kultur* and prosperity to the east.

The second dual biography of the book addresses what Lindström terms the “Problem of Austrian Culture.” Lindström’s analysis here rests on the juxtaposition of the lives and work of two childhood friends and literary figures: Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Leopold von Andrian. In this section, Lindström mines the diaries,

letters, and speeches of the two figures over a wider span of time: this is the only section in which Lindström writes about interwar Austria after the fall of the empire. Of course, much of Lindström's analysis also focuses on Hofmannsthal's literary work (including Hofmannsthal's librettos for *Der Rosenkavalier* [1911] and *Arabella* [1932]) and, fascinatingly, Andrian's attempts to come to terms with the implications of Hofmannsthal's work for his own sense of Austrian identity.

Like the first section on Koerber and Friedjung, Lindström approaches the dual biography of Hofmannsthal and Andrian as individual representatives of opposing ideas and then subsequently muddies the neat dichotomy he has created by showing that their ideas converge. Specifically, Lindström presents both Andrian and Hofmannsthal as cultural thinkers whose works engaged the specific imperial Austrian world of politics and culture. He at first divides them and their conceptions of Austrian identity and the "problem of Austrian culture" into the idea that Austrian culture is a part of a larger German culture (Hofmannsthal) and the belief that Austrian culture was completely separate and distinct from it (Andrian). In both cases, Lindström invokes the language of therapeutic engagement: Andrian's work for the Austrian Foreign Service and his literary output were a means through which he addressed his larger "identity crisis" and a "struggle for his own personal identity" (p. 122); Hofmannsthal's cultural output was likewise both a "political project" and "a search for the meaning of that culture he so strongly felt himself to be a part of" (p. 120).

Again, much like his analysis of Friedjung, Lindström seeks to present Andrian's and Hofmannsthal's artistic and political development as one that is not characterized by sudden shifts or breaks, but rather a steady evolution. Hofmannsthal's initial conception of Austrian culture as a part of German culture morphs over time into something more inclusive and complex: "not as a part of a larger German identity, but rather as being *another German Identity*, separate from the Prusso-German culture of the empire, and housing those culturally unbounded old-German qualities that had been lost in the culturally sharply bounded national German Empire" (Lindström's emphasis, p. 154). In various forms—especially during the First World War—Hofmannsthal and Andrian distinguished Austrian mentalities, as well as its *Kultur* from the graceless militarism of Germany, especially Prussia. Through an analysis of the plots and scenes in Hofmannsthal's major plays and librettos, Lindström makes the case that Hofmannsthal's conception of Austrianness, and his struggle to understand his own Austrian

identity, gradually formed a view that this alternative German culture was distinguished by its role as a bridge culture or "boundary identity" between German *Kultur* and the lands to the south and east (p. 154). Such a view celebrated and emphasized the heterogeneity of the Habsburg Empire and its cross-border connections to its international neighbors.

Andrian, despite his early successful literary career with the publication of *Der Garten der Erkenntnis* (1895) channeled his belief in a distinct Austrian nation into a career of political engagement and service to the state. This would continue after the war into activities that sought to legitimize the distinctiveness of the "Austrian language," and that established the Austrian Society of Art and Sciences. It would also bring him into membership with the *Vaterlandsfront*—the official political party of the *Staendesstaat* between 1934 and 1938.

The final dual biography of the book consists of an intellectual and political biography of two active politicians and political thinkers in the last decades of the Habsburg Monarchy—the German liberal parliamentarian Josef Redlich and the Social Democrat Karl Renner. The context of this section—what Lindström hopes to focus on through this last paired biography—is the "Problem of the Austrian Peoples." In this section, Lindström compares Redlich and Renner as two political visionaries and politicians who applied enormous amounts of thought and work to adapting the Austrian state to the "age of democracy" (p. 20).

As in the previous two sections, it is in mining out the little details and drawing out their larger, important connections in these political biographies that Lindström's book really offers food for thought. Lindström uses Redlich's scholarship—his early work on local self-government in England and his later work on the Habsburg Monarchy after 1848—as a prism through which to explain his political career. His examination of Renner uses a similar technique. Here, however, he focuses on the evolution of Renner's ideas and his identification with the Austrian state from his early advocacy of administrative reform and national autonomy to his embracing of Friedrich Naumann's concept of *Mitteleuropa* during the First World War.

Unlike the preceding biographies, in this dual biography, Lindström narrates a course of divergence rather than convergence. Lindström emphasizes at first the parallel journey of Redlich's and Renner's early lives and careers. After they both grew up in Moravia (Redlich in an assimilated German-Jewish family, Renner in a

German-speaking peasant family), they arrived in Vienna, studied law, and entered the Austrian state service. Moreover, they both became writers interested in the deep complexity of Austria and its constitutional and administrative structure. Redlich made an early name for himself studying English constitutional and administrative history; Renner, while serving as a librarian for the Austrian parliament, published his initial works—which addressed the nationality question in the Habsburg Monarchy as a constitutional and administrative question—under pseudonyms. Both Redlich and Renner would be swept into the Austrian parliament under the 1906 suffrage law, which granted equal, universal suffrage to all men over the age of twenty-four. (Women would not be allowed to vote until after the fall of the monarchy.)

In such works as *Der Kampf der österreichischen Nationen um den Staat* (1902), Renner sought to strike a compromise between the unity of the state and the diversity of its peoples through administrative and constitutional reforms. Redlich took a similar desire to parliament, becoming an unceasing champion of administrative reform. In a sense, Redlich as a parliamentarian followed up on the questions that Renner had attempted to solve in his early publications.

Lindström describes both Redlich and Renner as seeking a means to adapt the multinational Austrian state to a democratic era and the nationalization of politics. Both parliamentarians seemed to see the Austrian administrative system, with its conflicting competencies between autonomous and centralist bureaucracies, as the major object for reform. Renner, the Social Democrat, advocated national autonomy in which national affiliation would be completely “deterritorialized” and based instead on personal choice. In the meantime, the on-the-ground administration would occur mostly at the local or regional level in a new administrative unit: nationally homogenous counties (*Kreise*). Redlich too would advocate for the nationally homogenous county, but stopped short of endorsing Renner’s deterritorialized plans. Instead, Redlich turned increasingly to ideas for reform of the bureaucratic apparatus itself.

The outbreak and dragging out of the First World War was the catalyst that set Redlich’s and Renner’s ideas on divergent paths. Here, Lindström emphasizes a particular style of divergence between the two thinkers. On the one hand, Renner held on to his identification with “the state”; he would eventually even subjugate his socialism to his étatism in his quest to seek domestic support for

the *Mitteleuropa* project and a closer union between Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy. Redlich, on the other hand, became increasingly disheartened by the bureaucratic centralism of military government in Austria and cut his ideological ties to the state. He saw the various political turns to a German-dominated centralist empire in the midst of a war as missed opportunities to make the Austrian state’s purpose “a true expression of its multinational composition” (p. 237). After the end of the war and the fall of the monarchy, Redlich would revisit these missed opportunities in a way very much similar to Friedjung: by writing historical analysis and by retelling in narrative the moments when Austria took its wrong turns. He would do this not only for the First World War, but—similarly to Friedjung—also for the state’s administrative and constitutional developments between the revolutions of 1848 and the creation of the Dual-Monarchy in 1867.[2]

In the end, Lindström did not just write three dual biographies, but six interweaving political biographies that often reference each other and exist in a mutual state of play. Lindström carefully draws lines of connection outside his established pairs and points to shared or opposing outlooks beyond the dual biographies. He often highlights the different varieties of Josephinist outlooks implicit in the reform ideas of the bureaucrat Koerber, the Social Democrat Renner, and the liberal democrat Redlich. On the side of national identification, Lindström sketches out a spectrum of national feeling, between Friedjung, who identified the Austrian state with a Germanic mission; and Andrian, who came to see “Austrian” as a national category and a national group in its own right.

What Lindström demonstrates and extracts from a wealth of detail is that the German-speaking intellectual elite could feel a deep attachment to the monarchy in a multitude of ways. For all of these biographies, the unifying idea seems to be the interplay between the state and the nation when these concepts are changing in meaning—both within Austria and without. For Lindström, political projects that focused on reforming the Habsburg state and adapting, in one way or another, its political institutions and cultural outlooks to a new era of democratic involvement and national identification were a characteristic feature of the final decades of the monarchy.

Moreover, this personal identification with the administratively complex, multinational Austrian state also led to various forms of therapeutic activity. Koerber

authored and directed large-scale plans for administrative and constitutional reform; Andrian's interwar literary works sought to appropriate Hofmannsthal's legacy for the "Austrian nation"; and Friedjung and Redlich both wrote two-volume works that relived and reinterpreted the state crises between 1848 and 1867 as moments filled with missed opportunities for the German nation in Austria or for the continued development of autonomy within the multinational state.

In essence, then, one has to wonder if there was really one "state problem," or if the word "problem" is all too vague a category to employ as continuously and unwaveringly as Lindström does. To be sure, the Habsburg Monarchy had more than its fair share of challenges, but it had survived into the twentieth century because its institutions provided ample means and avenues for compromise and for solving problems pragmatically. This is part of Lindström's larger argument too—i.e., that identity crises were mustered in efforts of progressive, state-supporting reforms of politics and culture. But there is a tendency in this book to overindulge the various identity crises, the fears of decline, or the desperate need for imperial renewal as insights that tell us more about imperial Austrian state and society on the eve of its dissolution than they really do. As Lindström notes early on, these six biographies come out of the Viennese, German-speaking educated elite. Their worries on the future of Austria and the multinational state might never have penetrated beyond the Vienna woods or into working-class Meidling. This focus on the Viennese elite has kept Lindström from entering into a dialogue with much of the recent English-language work on Austria, and national and imperial identity that has emerged in the last decade.[3]

The great usefulness of this book lies in its ability to uncover connections amid the wealth of cultural, social, and political ideals that were flooding Vienna in the last decades of the monarchy. But this same attention to detail, which expresses an enormous and laudable amount of archival research, crowds out the overarching analysis and conceptual rigorousness that is necessary to bring all of the fascinating ideas, linkages, and continuities that Lindström unearths. Terms like "problem," "culture," and "identity" are never defined for the reader; these are slip-

pery terms that, given how often they are employed in this book, needed to be hammered down for the sake of clarity.

Lindström's book has reintroduced the old questions on Austria and its imperial organization to a new generation of historians. He has also uncovered so many intriguing threads of thought, so many connections between cultural values and administrative structures, that this book will provide a useful starting point for future work on Austria and the various ways it was conceptualized, criticized, and—eventually—eulogized.

Notes

[1]. See the debate between Harry Ritter, on the one side, and Margarete Grandner, Gernot Heiss, and Oliver Rathkolb on the other. Harry Ritter, "Austria and the Struggle for German Identity," *German Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 111-129; and Margarete Grandner, Gernot Heiss, and Oliver Rathkolb, "Österreich und seine deutsche Identität. Bemerkungen zu Harry Ritters Aufsatz 'Austria and the Struggle for German Identity,'" *German Studies Review* 16, no. 3 (October 1993): 515-520.

[2]. See Josef Redlich, *Austrian War Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929); and Josef Redlich, *Das österreichische Staats- und Reichsproblem. Geschichtliche Darstellung der inneren Politik der habsburgischen Monarchie von 1848 bis zum Untergang des Reiches*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: P. Reinhold, 1920-26).

[3]. See, for instance, Laurence Cole and Daniel L. Unowsky, eds., *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005); and Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

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