

PERIPHERAL IMAGES OF A 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN GREAT POWER: Hungarian and Romanian assessments of the Habsburg Monarchy

Kinga-Koretta Sata
Babes-Bolyai University
kinga.sata@fspac.ro

Abstract

The paper presents an overview of how the Habsburg Monarchy was seen by Hungarian and Romanian political thinkers of the 19th century, especially with regard to its place in the European and global order. It includes, on the one hand, a sketch of the changing conceptual framework that these theorists employed in their descriptions of the international system, and, on the other hand, will try to reconstruct their assessment of the internal conditions needed for this multinational empire to keep its great power status. The focus is on the pre-1848 period, though post-revolutionary developments and their theoretical assessment are also mentioned whenever meaningful. The issue of imperial rule in a multinational empire, structurally and constitutionally very diverse, was related by these theorists to the political and economic transformations in the wider Europe, while these were in their turn seen as being reflected on the internal scene. A particular concern for these theorists was the prospect of the emergence of powerful nation-states which could lay claims on parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, especially the projects of German and Italian unification. The paper assesses how these processes and the long disintegration of the Ottoman Empire were incorporated in the considerations of the Hungarian and Romanian thinkers.

Keywords: empire, imperial thinking, modernization, nation-building, international relations, pre-1848

Introduction

There has been a renewed (and sustained) interest among historians in empires as shapers of history since the 1990s.¹ This change of focus from nation-states was only very recently embraced by explorers of international relations, especially in their historical evolution. Barry Buzan and George Lawson argued, for instance, that 19th century political thinking (much of which was engaging with imperial issues) provided the ideational underpinning of the discipline of international relations (Buzan and Lawson 2013, 2015). Making sense of how empires structured the thinking of political theorists and political actors and activists thus is fundamental to

¹ For a good overview of historical scholarship on empires see Mikhail 2012.

our understanding of the conceptual framework of the very discipline of international relations. Thus, a study of the formative period of the 19th century is illuminating not only as an incursion into the “past,” but also in what regards our awareness of present assumptions.

My paper considers a very peculiar type of empire, the Habsburg Empire: an ancient, land-based dynastic empire, a composite state of very different parts, encompassing a large variety of peoples in the middle of Europe. The paper focuses on how this empire was perceived in the 1840s in the Eastern-most province of Transylvania. I am only considering the views expressed until the 1848 Revolution. The primary reason for this choice of period was that the Revolution would dramatically change the mutual relationships of the different ethnic groups of Transylvania due especially to the series of atrocities committed against each other during the Hungarian war of independence against the Habsburg Monarchy (or, from another perspective, the Austrian civil war of 1848-49). In the pre-1848 period the central Viennese government became more tolerant of the public utterances of political proposals, thus we can witness a plethora of views presented in a state of relative calm, characterized by intense political disputes that still did not rule out some kinds of interethnic cooperation which would become increasingly improbable if not outright impossible after the Revolution.

My interest is in the interconnectedness of ideas/people/groups in the multiethnic setting of Transylvania, great principality within the Austrian monarchy having an ancient constitution based on the corporate representation of the three privileged nations of the Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers (also ethnic Hungarians). The most numerous ethnic group of Transylvania by the 19th century, the Romanians, are not included as a nation in this system of representation.²

The period starting from the 1790s is customarily described as a period in which demand for reforms based on Enlightenment ideas of progress and civilization increasingly becomes the intellectual commonplace. While in economic and civilizational terms this demand is quite unambiguous and undisputed (everybody agrees that there is a need for better infrastructure, better education, better healthcare, etc.), in political terms the demand for reform is far from being uncontroversial. Answers to questions as, for

² There are several histories of Hungary, Transylvania and Romania that discuss this institutional setup. See for example: Kontler 2009, Hitchins 1969 and Hitchins 2013.

example, whether political progress includes a liberal constitution, responsible government or not, are far from obvious, not to speak about issues relating to nationality, and that especially in the specific setting of a multiethnic empire. My paper tries to show the variety of envisaged political outcomes for a reformed Austrian monarchy presented by the Romanian and Hungarian theorists of the period.

I should mention from the very beginning that there is a slight imbalance in my account, as all the Romanian interventions that I study come from Transylvanian Romanians, while in the case of Hungarians no strict delimitation between Transylvanian Hungarians and Hungarian from Hungary (excluding Transylvania) can be made. This is because one of the most important tenets of Hungarian theorists or political activists (both from Transylvania and from Hungary proper, on the whole width of the conservative—liberal spectrum) was that there was no basis or need for a separate political entity of Transylvania, as this land had to be reincorporated into Hungary. Thus, all Hungarian theorists argued for considering issues relating to Transylvania only in their connection to Hungary, i.e. as if the “Hungarian” political space included Transylvania by definition.

Needless to say, this taking together of the two territories was fiercely disputed especially by the publicists of the German-speaking Saxon population of Transylvania, and was far from obvious to the Romanians either. Most of the time the Romanians were prepared to accept that there was (or should be) a special relationship between historically Hungarian territories (Hungary and Transylvania), but were always keen to emphasize that these two cannot be seen as making up a political unit on their own, but just a cultural (i.e. linguistic) unit within the state proper, Austria. As a consequence, there were only two real reference points for both the Saxons and the Romanians in their political proposals: Transylvania understood as an autonomous region of the Austrian monarchy, and the Monarchy as represented by its central government. In these kinds of accounts Hungary could only function by way of comparison, as a similarly autonomous territory under the same government.

The political publications constitute the basis of this study: the focus is on the only political newspaper published in Romanian in the pre-1848 Habsburg Monarchy, the *Gazeta de Transilvania*. It was published starting

from 1837 in Braşov, its founding editor being George Bariţ (or Gheorghe Bariţiu in another transliteration). For the purposes of the current study this publication is going to be the main focus: Hungarian sources are only addressed if they were referred to by the *Gazeta*, if they are relevant to understanding the specifically Transylvanian Romanian stance. This is to balance somehow the Hungarian and Romanian material, but it is also a practical narrowing in the sense that it spells out those sources that are seen as relevant to both Transylvania (the smaller patria) and Austria (the bigger patria).

These two reference points are essential, because all (Hungarians, Romanians and Saxons alike) agreed that the well-being of Transylvania was essential to the well-being of the overarching empire. This commonly held stance included a commonly held belief, namely, that Austria had to remain a European great power, because that was in the interest of all its subjects. This thesis will be, however, passionately contested during the 1848 Revolution by the Hungarians, and much of the appeal of the Monarchy will be lost for the Transylvanian Romanians following the 1867 *Ausgleich*. But these are later occurrences which are not extremely meaningful to my concerns, as they are more accurately understood as reactions to the civil war following the 1848 Revolution on the one hand and the *Ausgleich* on the other (which was seen as gravely injurious to the Romanians).

In the pre-1848 period no significant political actor or publicist questioned the value of being part of a country that was a great power. The question of the dismemberment of the Austrian monarchy was simply not raised. It is significant in this sense that the Romanians, for example, congratulated the Austrian government on its declared advancement of the condition of its Italian territories, which could hardly be defined as connected to the Monarchy by anything more than sheer force, a consequence of imperial expansion. The same sort of language was used in praising Britain's civilizational advances in China and Afghanistan³, or France's planned "civilizing" of Algeria⁴. Thus, according to the commonly held view, the great power status included cultural and civilizational greatness as well, implying somehow that being made part of such a civilizational power was a positive occurrence irrespective of the method of incorporation into such a great state.

³Gazeta de Transilvania 1843, 1, p. 3.

⁴Gazeta de Transilvania 1843, 14, p. 55.

All the theorists that I studied seem to agree that Austria was part of the European (and world) core, though it could only come as second after Britain. Britain has obvious advantages according to Bariț:⁵ it was a “great” nation as only the ancient Romans had ever been, because of two essential features: it had a liberal constitution and ruled a large (that is, world-wide) empire (and as a consequence of both these two features, it was a leading economic world power).⁶ The Romanian editor of the *Gazeta* did not spend too much time on arguing for this point or for discussing the whys and hows of economic success, the case that Britain was somehow the best existing state just seemed obvious to him. The connection of success to industrialization and free trade, though not explicitly made most of the time, was nevertheless implied, and openly suggested as the way forward for Austria as well, if it was to emulate Britain in “greatness”. It is noteworthy that a quasi-republican language of greatness originally devised for city republics was transferred to large empires that had a European core (China, Russia or the Ottoman empire would not qualify). Imperial dimensions and the prospect of modern politics (that is, politics based on popular sovereignty, that is, political representation and constitutionalism) made Austria a prime candidate for the second place in the global contest of states. This, however, was only a possibility for Austria, but Britain (the only actual example of such a great state) showed that such a state could indeed be very successful in economic terms as well (that in turn contributing to its power status).

I am not discussing the economic side to great power status here (or as it was applied to Austria), as this part is not easy to grasp in a single argument. Instead I am going to focus on Hungarian and Romanian proposals relating to the political and administrative re-organization of the Austrian state so that it could maintain (and possibly also increase) its great power status. Every political actor or theorist that I discuss below (and who can be labelled as liberal in early 19th century terms) was dissatisfied with the actual situation, so everybody wanted some kind of reform. All agreed that the political institutions of Austria were outdated, and most people agreed that there was a need for widening the circle of people involved in politics, increasing the rights and duties of citizenship and making them attainable for most of the (male) population. There were, however, wide

⁵ See the discussions on what makes a great nation and the conclusion that only the ancient Romans and the modern English qualify in *Gazeta de Transilvania* 1843, Nos. 29-30.

⁶ On British views of empire see Bell 2007 and Bell 2016.

disagreements on the exact measure and modality of this extension of rights. I am going to discuss these and put them in the context of the Monarchy's envisaged place in the world order.

Constitutionalism on empire-wide scale

As a rule all liberal theorists agreed that the Austrian Monarchy had to become a fully constitutional state with a government that was somehow accountable to the "people". The conservatives did not openly deny the importance of constitutionalism, but placed much more emphasis on the role of the monarch (seen as an enlightened despot, who could really make the difference). There could be, however, interesting combinations of the apparently incommensurable standpoints of fighting for constitutionalism and accepting the emperor as the only real bearer of sovereignty. Such a combined view was the one forcefully presented by the most influential and most important Hungarian early ideologist of liberalism, count István Széchenyi in the early 1840s, when he seemed to propose a close cooperation between the central Viennese government (and emperor) and the Hungarian "nation", that is, the noblemen assembled in the diet and in the municipal assemblies. Széchenyi's stance is better understood in contrast to the more radical views expressed by the followers of Lajos Kossuth, who were clearly not prepared to accept any involvement of the Viennese government, but wanted instead a more robust application of the principle of popular sovereignty, and were willing to cooperate with likely-minded political agents from the German parts of the Monarchy, but mostly only in their fight for getting to such an institutional setup.⁷

The standpoint advanced by Barit as the appropriate standpoint for the Romanians can also be included in the same category as Széchenyi's: he proposed that the Romanians place their ultimate trust in the monarch, and though they should pay attention to the discourses advanced in the public sphere by the Hungarian and Saxon liberals, they should never take sides, but remain neutral in the disputes of the political actors, and hope for their own emancipation into political citizenship by the monarch. This stance was formulated at least partially due to the existence of censorship: no one would actually advance any assessment of the role and person of the monarch that could be seen as detrimental (as this could not get past the censors and be published), but I think that in the case of the Romanian author this stance was more likely a consequence of the earlier culture of

⁷ For a detailed presentation of the variety of Hungarian standpoints see Dénes 2005: 155-196.

petitioning, which was a direct application of the idea of the “enlightened absolute ruler” just as much as practical political calculation, as no decision of the Transylvanian diet could actually get to become a law without the sanction of the monarch in Vienna.

It is not very easy to discern the exact content of the Hungarian views on the best institutional setup relating to the whole of the monarchy: most Hungarian liberals argued that Cisleithania also needed a liberal constitution, and all were fierce advocates of the idea that Transleithania (i.e. historic Hungary) already had an ancient constitution (which might need revisions, but was essentially good). So, in this type of discourse historic “Hungary” was construed as being more advanced than the German dominated territories of Austria, inverting this way the actual economic relationship of the imperial core of Cisleithania and the imperial periphery of Transleithania.⁸ But the view also outlined the possibility of cooperation among the constitutive units of the composite state along constitutional lines: such a properly institutionalized composite state could potentially (in theory) function much more efficiently and deliver wellbeing to all the inhabitants of the whole.

From another perspective this Hungarian liberal view of a dual composite monarchy can be seen as an early utterance of the favorite Hungarian view that was distilled in the 1848 Revolution: that Austria was actually two countries only connected by their monarch. It is in this sense that the Hungarian theorists were primarily (if not only) interested in the political setup of “Hungary”, that is, the Eastern part of the Monarchy, a part that included contested territories of the likes of Croatia and Transylvania. They also refrained from discussing the fate of the Western half of the monarchy because they saw that as part of the much larger issue of a possible German unification, which had become a not-so-distant prospect with the creation of the Zollverein.⁹

For the Romanian writers the monarchy had to be composed of smaller territories that were closely supervised by the central government (that is to say, they were quite happy with the actual administrative setup). They had problems with the Hungarian project of re-creating historic Hungary for

⁸ On the issue of imperial core and periphery see Komlósy 2015.

⁹Barit on how a tariff union may lead to political union, speaking about the specific case of France and Belgium. *Gazeta de Transilvania* 1843, 4, p. 14.

two main reasons: first, it would end their status as being the most numerous ethnic group within their smaller political unit (Transylvania), and, second, because it would make the Hungarians the most important, numerous and dominant ethnic group, who could dispense with the central government and its moderating role and pursue a more intense version of Magyarization.

Constitutionalism in Transylvania

Thus, in Romanian accounts, from the very width of the empire we come to discussions relating to what was suggested as the smallest significant territorial unit, Transylvania. Except for the Hungarians, who were entrenched in the pan-Hungarian nation-building project, all the other ethnic groups of Transylvania (and, arguably, the whole of Austria) devised their solution for the Monarchy as a whole in consequence of their attempts at keeping or increasing their status within their narrower homeland. Thus, the Saxons wanted to keep their privileged status within a separate Transylvania, and seemed quite satisfied with its ancient constitution providing them these privileges. The Romanians also wanted to have a distinct Transylvania, including the ancient diet based on the corporate representation of the “nations”; their goal was to be “incorporated” collectively as the fourth corporate nation.¹⁰

They had their own reasons for preferring corporate over individual representation in politics: this measure ensured that ethnic groups were treated on equal terms, representation could be mediated (this ensured the control of the politically knowledgeable elite over the uneducated masses), and internal dynamics within the corporate nation could ensure a more wider access to politics, suited to the conditions of Transylvanian Romanians, who lacked an autochthonous nobility. So, in a sense, this insistence of the Romanians on the ancient form of constitutionalism was a response to very modern problems: besides the immediate political emancipation of the “Romanian nation” it wanted to provide a form in which the participation in politics for the masses (some sort of democracy) became possible without the danger of politics being left to the mercy of the ignorant.

¹⁰Barit ostensibly calls “citizens” all the inhabitants of the land, whether they have rights that they can make use of, or not: *Gazeta de Transilvania* 1843, 8, p. 31; and calls for the authorities to guarantee actual rights of citizenship for all the inhabitants who were made citizens by legislation under emperor Joseph II already: *Gazetade Transilvania* 1843, 26, p. 101.

The Saxon claim to over-representation and privileges seems to rest on a conviction of their economic and cultural superiority (or, at least, it was perceived like that by the Hungarians and the Romanians): their writers always emphasized the relative economic prosperity of the Saxon lands, as well as their leading role in the cultural and scientific life of Transylvania. Though a claim on German superiority empire-wide was not customarily made by the Saxon writers, they openly rejected the Hungarian proposal of changing the language of political transactions (diet, official documents) from Latin to Hungarian, arguing that from a practical standpoint a change to German would be much more meaningful. They emphasized this point to spell out the not-so-hidden project of Magyarization in this seemingly procedural question. But they did not propose a change to German; they were content with a dead language that was nobody's being the medium of inter-ethnic transactions. In a wider sense, the Saxons were content with the ancient constitution of Transylvania granting them an important say in the diet and the actual political, administrative and cultural power relations within the Monarchy, which favored cultural outputs in German.¹¹

Why did Austria need to remain a great power? – Dangers to the (liberal) national projects

In order to understand why these Hungarian and Romanian political thinkers considered that Austria had to remain a great power, is best to first look at the dangers that these thinkers identified and from which they thought Austria the great power could guard them. For the Hungarians the greatest danger was posed by Russia, and the Pan-Slavism that it promoted. Ever since the Herderian premonition of Hungarian national death in the Slavic sea, the existence of large Slavic ethnic groups within Hungary was perceived as a serious threat. With the intensification of claims to Magyarization in the relatively free 1840s came similar national demands voiced by these Slavic groups, especially the Croats and the Slovaks. It was clear to all Hungarian political thinkers that without a powerful state capable of policing all ethnic groups the newly discovered national enthusiasm of the minority nations could easily become a deadly force. An extra side to the problem of Pan-Slavism was the quite transparent way in which the central Viennese government sometimes encouraged the claims of the Slavic minorities in order to fend off the Hungarians' claims to Magyarization of the public sphere in Hungary.

¹¹ On the structure and historical dynamics of scholarship in Transylvania see the excellent study of Borbála Zsuzsanna Török: Török 2016.

Thus, a mistrust of the central government was mingling into certain versions of Hungarian fondness towards Austria. In these liberal versions Austrian greatness was a possibility to be achieved at the back of or against the Viennese old-fashioned government (including the monarch and the high bureaucracy).

But the biggest problem with Pan-Slavism for the Hungarians was its connection to Russia, an emerging great power of Europe, but one which by definition meant everything that was retrograde, old, autocratic and was customarily invoked just simply as the epitome of the dark middle ages. It was because of their national affinity towards Russia that the Slavic minorities were dangerous; they could constitute a formidable force not on their own or not even by all the autochthonous Slavs uniting against the Hungarians, but by their enlisting of Russia as well on their side. The Hungarians emphasized, however, that this was not only Hungary's problem: the German parts of Austria also had their own Slavs, thus a powerful Pan-Slav movement could potentially destroy the whole Monarchy. Austria thus was seen as necessary in order for people to be able to hold on to everything that was seen as good, modern and worth living for. One can detect the underlying opinion that the worst kind of Viennese government was still better than the best Russian government, a view that was also tainted by the mistrust in the policing and pacifying capacities of a possible Hungarian (half-) state.

For the Hungarian writers Romanians could also theoretically enter into the category of dangerous minorities together with the Slavs (though they were only connected to Russia by their Eastern Christianity). The issue of a possible Pan-Romanian unification was still not on the agenda at this point; except for one or two malicious Hungarian articles on "Pan-Wallachism"¹² nobody seriously considered the possibility of the Romanians uniting with their co-nationals in the Ottoman Empire (which was also construed as backward, retrograde, decaying, etc.) into a nation-state that would endanger the Hungarians' survival as a dominant nation. It was more common for the Hungarian writers to speak about the Romanians as an ethnic group which could be used effectively in their fight in Transylvania against the Saxons' claims to supremacy and privilege. According to such writers, Romanians could be won over by the Hungarians, if they were emancipated by the Hungarians (instead of the Viennese government, and

¹²Barit ironically discusses these in *Gazeta de Transilvania* 1843, 1, p. 2.

against the wishes of the Saxons). Thus, the Romanians seemed to be more of a resource to Hungarian nation-building than a danger to it.

The Slavs and their connection to the imperial endeavors of Russia were seen as problematic by the Saxon and the Romanian authors as well. In the case of the Romanians this picture was also tarnished by Russia's involvement in the Eastern question, fighting the Ottoman Empire allegedly on behalf of the subjected Orthodox/Slav nations. The Romanians kept a very close eye on events in and around Serbia, for example, and saw its fate as foreshadowing the possible fate of the two Romanian principalities. In their account the Ottoman Empire seemed less dangerous for their co-nationals across the Carpathians than the Russian empire. But the Ottoman Empire seemed to be in need of a protector against powerful Russia, and the Romanians urged Austria to accept this role, through quoting an article from the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, the German political journal closely associated with Prince Metternich.

For the Hungarian radicals around Lajos Kossuth, however, the powers of the central Viennese government needed to be limited as the powerful government could pose a second formidable danger to Hungarian nation-building and thus to Hungarian well-being. This view of the government had its roots in the Josephinist attempts to centralize, optimize and Germanize Austria, policies that the contemporary government did not openly advocate any longer but still followed, according to the Hungarian radicals. The power of Austrian Germans was also augmented by the increasing possibility of a Pan-German unification: if Austria became part (or, worse, lead) a new European super-power ("Germany"), then the Hungarians would become no more significant than any of the small (Slavic) nations of the likes of Czechs, Slovaks or Croats, and their fate would be at the mercy of the Germans.

Possible Germanization was obviously not a problem for the Saxons; but it did not seem to bother the Romanians either. This is probably due to the fact that by far the greatest danger to both their national projects (as perceived by the Saxons and the Romanians) was posed not by any existing or would-be great power but by the Hungarians within the Monarchy. It is no wonder that the Saxons and the Romanians both see Magyarization in the version projected by the Hungarian liberals as being excessive and detrimental to their respective ethnic groups, and thus to the larger monarchy as well. For the theorists of both these ethnic groups the only

acceptable Hungarian national ideologue was Count Széchenyi, who proposed moderation in Magyarization (though he himself was in favor of Magyarization), and was a stound advocate of cooperation (and not confrontation) with the Viennese government. In these types of accounts the Viennese government was construed as if it was a veritable moderating force with no nationality (and thus no national agenda), one that could sort out disputes and promote and require interethnic communication and cooperation.

Conclusions

What was common in the Hungarian and Romanian versions of Austria constructions was the conviction that a big state was always better than a small state (not a very original idea), but also the view that a composite state was much better than a centralized empire. A composite state combined somehow the benefits of having a big state with the local and national aspirations of the ethnic groups composing it, so people were capable of being part of a great power and still feel at home or in charge in their smaller local or ethnic community. In these versions of this idea we can see the possible combination of reason of state arguments and applications of the idea of popular sovereignty to smaller regional or ethnic groups. Thus, we see the concatenation of the ancient republican conceptual framework with the very modern language of popular sovereignty. The institutional counterpart of this linkage is the possibility envisage by the liberals of using the very old constitutional framework of corporate national representation in Transylvania for the very modern purposes of national emancipation and increased participation in politics for non-nobles. Obviously, there were great differences in the assessment of who would merit to make up the smaller territorial political units, but composite states composed of smaller units, each of which was governed in a regular manner that was legally sanctioned (preferably had a liberal constitution and a representative legislative) seem to be not only the preference, but also provide the way forward for small states.

Austria being a composite state (just like Britain) made it enter the very restricted circle of truly great powers according to these accounts. There were suggestions (both in Hungarian and in Romanian writings) that it could even increase its territory to become literally greater, though there were no suggestions it should try to imitate Britain. The prime candidates for a possible territorial increase were not placed outside Europe: it was sometimes suggested that Austria should more or less incorporate Serbia, Wallachia, Moldavia (when the Ottoman Empire would finally

disappear)¹³, so it was neighboring territories with problematic sovereignty, all of them small states, that were seen as a possible gain for the Habsburg Monarchy. Another version discussed (though not very intensely in the early 19th century) was the creation of great Germany with a Habsburg core. This possibility was also a variation of the theme of the composite state, as most theorists argued that such an immense state that included such large numbers of non-Germans could only be conceived as a composite state.

Territorial increase, though, was usually not of too much concern for the theorists that I discuss: they considered it, at best, only as a side issue. What was conducive to the greatness of Austria in their opinion was much more the proper ordering of its internal affairs. What made a state great was its constitution – this was the key to its economic development, its leading role in international politics, etc. It is in the discussions relating to the proper constitutional setup of Austria that we see a wide diversity of opinions, it is here that conservative and liberal stances crystallize. The interrelated nature of home and international politics is obvious – and not explored sufficiently.

References

- Bell, Duncan 2016. *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Bell, Duncan ed. 2007. *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buzan, Barry, and George Lawson. 2013. "The Global Transformation: The Nineteenth Century and the Making of Modern International Relations." *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (3): 620–34.
- Buzan, Barry, and George Lawson. 2015. *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dénes, Iván Zoltán 2005. "Political Vocabularies of the Hungarian Liberals and Conservatives before 1848," In *Liberty and the search for identity: liberal nationalisms and the legacy of empires*, edited by Iván Zoltán Dénes. Budapest: CEU Press, 155-196.

¹³ See a discussion of this in *Gazeta* 1843, 26, p. 103.

- Hitchins, Keith 1969. *The Rumanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1780–1849* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hitchins, Keith 2013. *A Concise History of Romania*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Komlósy, Andrea 2015. “Imperial Cohesion, Nation-Building and Regional Integration in the Habsburg Monarchy,” In *Nationalizing Empires*, edited by Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller. Budapest: CEU Press, 369-427.
- Kontler, László 2009. *A History of Hungary*. Budapest: Atlantisz.
- Mikhail, Alan, and Christine M. Philliou. 2012. “The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn.” *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 54 (4): 721–45.
- Török, Borbála Zsuzsanna 2016. *Exploring Transylvania: Geographies of Knowledge and Entangled Histories in a Multiethnic Province, 1790–1918*. Leiden: Brill.

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE'S NOTION OF AUTHORITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL LEGITIMACY¹

Alexandru-Vasile Sava
Babeş-Bolyai University

Abstract

The recent translation both in English (2014) and in Romanian (2012) of Alexandre Kojève's "The Notion of Authority", as well as other major texts, have led to a resurgence of interest in the late philosopher's work. In the following paper I will attempt to approach this body of work critically, focusing on the role that Kojève casts for the notion of Authority in the foundation of Law and Politics in general, showing how it participates in a post-Hegelian tradition that also includes early psychoanalysis and certain strands of phenomenology among others. I will counter-pose this approach to that of contractualist thought, which gained traction in early modernity, as well as the historicist tradition, both of which, I will argue, offer more valuable insights into the development of law and politics, as well as providing for a proper grounding of political legitimacy, both in relation to what politics is and what it ought to be.

Keywords: Kojève, authority, legitimacy, social contract, Hobbes

The recent translation of several important texts by Kojève in English – "Outline of a Phenomenology of Right" (2007), "The Notion of Authority" (2014), "The Concept, Time, and Discourse" (2016) – and also in Romanian – "The Notion of Authority" (2012), "On Tyranny", with Leo Strauss (2014), has led to a revival of interest in one of the major figures of mid-century continental philosophy, whose intellectual influence is visible with most Post-War French philosophy, as well as with the American disciples of Leo Strauss' conservative political thinking, and who helped shape the early stages of the European political community (Descombes 1981; Drury, 1994).

Despite this impressive resume, Kojève's particular brand of post-Hegelian thought did not produce any important direct disciples, and his role in the introduction of Hegel's philosophy to French thought is overshadowed by the massive turn away from Hegel in the 1960 (Descombes 1981, 75-76). Today he has become a semi-marginal figure within the 20th century cannon, and despite the recent interest that translators have shown him, there is very little theoretical development on these new materials. All in all, it can be said that Kojève's thought has not aged well through the

¹ This research was supported by a grant from the project POSDRU/187/1.5/S/155383.