

LARISSA DOUGLASS

“Caesarism without Caesars”: Representation, Autonomy and the Democratization of the Law in the Late Habsburg Empire

I.

In The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy (1907), Otto Bauer sought to reconcile nationalism and socialism while anticipating the introduction of universal suffrage in Austria.¹ To this end, he referred to Friedrich Naumann’s suggestion that imperial sovereignty could be wedded to the power of the people through the concept of “Caesarism.”² Caesarism, a fairly well-known idea by the early twentieth century, has been most simply defined as imperial monarchical authoritarianism or as a military dictatorship. However, Caesarism also possessed debatable democratic qualities. Scholars and theorists ranging from Theodor Mommsen to Oswald Spengler to Max Weber defined and redefined Caesarism. Weber particularly associated Bismarck’s role in German politics with classic characteristics of Caesarism. The latter included: a charismatic leader; a broadening of suffrage and growth of mass politics; plebiscitary elections paradoxically combined with a weak parliament and courts; legislation passed by emergency decree; and daily governance managed by a bureaucracy, concealed behind the legitimacy of the imperial leader or monarch.³ Following Naumann, Bauer defined Caesarism as “the al-

¹ Otto Bauer (1881-1938), noted Austro-Marxist theoretician and later statesman viewed the national strife in the Habsburg empire as a class struggle and developed the idea of non-territorial national cultural autonomy with Karl Renner (1870-1950). H. Fischer, foreword to *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, by O. Bauer, ed. E.J. Nimni, trans. J. O’Donnell, Minneapolis 2000, ix.

² Friedrich Naumann (1860-1919), a German imperial liberal, attempted to find a non-Marxist, Christian reconciliation between national and social interests. O. Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, ed. E.J. Nimni, trans. J. O’Donnell, Minneapolis 2000, 346.

³ G. Casper, *Caesarism in Democratic Politics: Reflections on Max Weber*, Paper delivered at Library of Congress John W. Kluge Center, 22 March 2007, http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4035 (Webcast transcript accessed 6 March 2009), 6, 9, 13, 15-16.

liance of the old imperial power resting on the force of arms with the force of ... universal suffrage and national freedom."⁴

In late imperial Austria-Hungary, the need to reconcile the wellsprings of power from the king with power originating in the people might have, Bauer observed, settled at the feet of Emperor Franz Joseph I. Nonetheless, Bauer—again, following Naumann—believed, as do historians, that such a “revolution in favor of the state ... will not occur, for ... the Habsburgs are not revolutionary.”⁵ Bauer described similar proposals from his fellow Social Democrat, Karl Renner, who tried without success to resolve crises in Austro-Hungarian dualism by calling for democratic reforms of the élite-dominated Hungarian parliament: “he met with the same response as Naumann: what nonsense to expect a revolutionary policy of the Habsburgs, the pillars of the principle of legitimacy!”⁶ This was, in Bauer’s words, “Caesarism without ... Caesars!”⁷ And here he hit on a critical point. As a socialist, he naturally anticipated an end pre-eminence of popular power. In fact, I argue that ‘Caesarism without Caesars’ promised a different substitute for monarchical authority when Naumann’s triad of Caesar, democracy and national liberty finally converged.

The question of what came to occupy the role of Caesar in Caesarism cryptically points to one of the fundamental problems of Habsburg politics up to, and through, the end of Austria’s imperial period. The crux of the problem rested on how Bauer, Renner and their contemporaries connected democracy and national liberty. Their answer was federalism, cast in forms with varying degrees of national decentralization and multinational centralization. Bauer initially believed that “national liberty [might become] an instrument of the power of the Crown” through “force of arms, and democracy.”⁸ This was evident, he felt, in Franz Joseph’s pressure on the privileged Hungarian MPs of Transleithania and their German and Polish Austrian counterparts in Cisleithania to accept universal manhood suffrage.⁹ If implemented, a broadened suffrage would allow other nationalities greater *de facto* freedom in the polity, and spark the development of what Bauer called ‘national autonomy.’¹⁰ With his idea of “national cultural autonomy,” Bauer famously proposed that national criteria be administered separately from imperial non-national con-

⁴ Bauer, *Question*, 346.

⁵ Naumann cited in Bauer, *Question*, 346. W.A. Jenks, ‘The Later Habsburg Concept of Statecraft,’ in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 1966, 93.

⁶ Bauer, *Question*, 346.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 346, 350.

⁹ Women did not receive the right to vote in Austria until 12 November 1918 under Renner’s Chancellorship. My occasional references here to ‘universal suffrage’ refer to hypothetical theories and expectations which circulated in the period leading up to 1907, not the 1907 universal manhood suffrage reform itself.

¹⁰ ‘Transleithania’ and ‘Cisleithania’ respectively referred to the Hungarian and Austrian parts of the Dual Monarchy. Bauer, *Question*, 346, 350.

cerns.¹¹ In ethnically homogeneous regions, Bauer imagined that national groups could become "juridical entities," and non-territorial "sovereign corporations with specific and exclusive competences."¹² For regions where the population was too heterogeneous to separate different peoples into local administrative groups, his colleague Renner conceived of national autonomy reduced to the level of individual decision. In other words, a single person might become a nationally autonomous unit or entity and decide on his or her corporate affiliation with regard to nationalized administration of cultural affairs and education. This atomization of national non-territorial autonomy was known as the 'personality principle.'¹³ To Bauer, these ideas described how Caesarism would develop. Ultimately, however, he saw Caesarism as a means to an end. The economic issues that existed beneath national autonomy would come to the fore and socialists could use them to develop their own agendas.¹⁴ Sub-national economic factors would overcome Caesarism and socialists would remove Caesar (the emperor) from the Caesarist equation.

Of course, Bauer and Renner were not alone in contemplating these matters. Bauer's references to Caesarism encapsulated many issues that his contemporaries in public life and government also considered. Indeed, in this era, democratic federalism enjoyed a renewed vogue.¹⁵ The last decade before the war was characterized by what John W. Boyer calls a "federal revolution in Austrian state governance."¹⁶ Bauer's and Renner's contemporaries did not necessarily reach the same conclusions as Bauer and Renner, or refer to Caesarism in relation to federalism. However, they, too, confronted problems of changing law and state authority associated with 'Caesarism without Caesars,' as they tried to manage democratic, national and economic trends sweeping the empire.

¹¹ E.J. Nimni, introduction to *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, by O. Bauer, ed. E.J. Nimni, trans. J. O'Donnell, Minneapolis 2000, xvii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xix.

¹³ G. Stourzh, *From Vienna to Chicago and Back: Essays on Intellectual History and Political Thought in Europe and America*, Chicago 2007, 179.

¹⁴ Bauer, *Question*, 352-353.

¹⁵ Wiskemann summarizes: "More and more people spoke of a Swiss system for Austria. ... Eisenmann's remarkable book, *Le Compromis austro-hongrois*, appeared in 1904, and ended with an appeal in favour of Swiss federalism. In 1906 came Renner's brilliant piece of work, *Grundlagen und Entwicklungsziele der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, urging a combination of Swiss methods with the Moravian personal system which had just been worked out. It is interesting, too, though he was only 24 and of no account at the time, that in 1908 Edvard Beneš wrote a thesis, *Le Problème autrichien et la question tchèque*, in favour of federalization. ... But ... Austria had problems which Switzerland did not know, and above all the tremendous problem created by a state of affairs in which the national so often coincided with the social question." E. Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans: A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia*, 2nd ed., London 1967, 69.

¹⁶ J.W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918*, Chicago 1995, 172.

Taking these themes as a starting point, this article explores connections Austria-Hungary's Cisleithanian bureaucrats and parliamentarians drew between suffrage reform and federalism.¹⁷ With reference to their studies and proposals, I argue here that democratization via broadened representation in fact sparked a two-tiered decentralization and centralization of the state along lines respectively determined by national and 'sub-national' aspects of citizens' identities. To locate the causal connections between democratic representation and federalism, I define representation as a legal association between identity and state power.

I isolate patterns in that definition and thereby answer the final question of what replaced Caesar in Caesarism through a review here of: bureaucratic assessments of suffrage reform prior to the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in the Austrian half of the Habsburg empire in 1907; parliamentarians' calls for provincial suffrage reform after the passage of the 1907 imperial law; and a bureaucratic 'master plan for little compromises' related to provincial suffrage reform during the post-1907 period.

II.

From contemporary debates on representation, a central question arises of how suffrage reform might create a 'nationally federated state.' Bauer's expectation of the collapse of dualism notwithstanding, there was no automatic implication of national autonomy or decentralization in widespread calls across Austria for universal suffrage following the Russian Revolution of 1905. Indeed, universal suffrage was intended to defuse national conflicts, not encourage them, and was meant to strengthen a centralized, multinational imperial state. The ultimate hazard élites perceived in the potential introduction of universal suffrage was not nationalism. They feared the rise of mass Christian Social and especially Social Democratic movements, already confirmed by Bauer's and Renner's growing prominence. Boyer comments:

For both [mass parties] universal suffrage was nothing less than an institutional, etatist solvent that might reduce the tensions of nationality. Not only would these tensions be confronted with direct, democratically legitimated solutions and the parliament's attention shifted to social and economic issues, but, equally important, the national parties would be forced to act in a responsible, *independent* way vis-à-vis the civil service.¹⁸

The old socio-economic hierarchy was at stake, apparently constituting the price of peace between the nationalities. Universal manhood suffrage had al-

¹⁷ My focus is on the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, where, unlike Hungary, universal manhood suffrage was successfully introduced in 1907.

¹⁸ Boyer, *Culture*, 350.

ready been legalized in 1896, but was restricted to a fifth general electoral curia. Full universal suffrage implied that electoral curias, based on the old estates, would be dismantled at the imperial level. With the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in 1907, this dismantlement effectively occurred, while curias for local-level elections persisted.

The imperial reform occasioned calls for provincial electoral and constitutional reforms. They inspired the settlement of the Moravian Compromise in 1905, followed by other schemes in the Bukovina (1909-1910), Budweis (1913-1914), and Galicia (1914). While these settlements depended on the national demarcation of voters, William Jenks believes that these compromises did not give rise to mature federalism along national lines. In his view, the "change in the Fundamental Law on Imperial Representation did little or nothing to change the essentially centralizing aspects of Austrian administration."¹⁹ His list of the imperial parliament's powers, reveals the non-national, or sub-national, concerns upon which Austrian centralization rested:

The matters of legislation expressly reserved to the Reichsrat left little to the competence of the diets; the competence of the Reichsrat extended to commercial treaties, certain types of political treaties, the regulation and financing of military affairs, the budget, the granting of taxes and the imposition of customs duties, the regulation of the monetary system, banks of issue, telegraphs, posts, railways, and navigation, legislation concerning banks, credit, patents, weights and measures, public health, citizenship, passports, census, confessional relations, the rights of assembly, association, and of the press, the educational system, etc.²⁰

Even so, imperial and local suffrage reform depended upon the entrenchment of national labels for electoral and administrative purposes. Efforts to appease and separate the nationalities intensified after the failure of official Czech-German bilingualism during the Badeni crisis at the turn of the century.²¹ By 1905, Moravia's constitutional settlement required individual Czechs and Germans to confine themselves to one or the other monolingual group for the purposes of administering school boards and elections.²² Historians observe that the settlement was one example among many in which national

¹⁹ W.A. Jenks, *The Austrian Electoral Reform of 1907* (= Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, Columbia Studies in the Social Sciences 559), New York 1974, 77.

²⁰ Jenks cites Article 12 of the Fundamental Law of Imperial Representation which stipulated the relative legislative 'jurisdiction' of the Imperial and provincial parliaments: "'All matters of legislation, other than those expressly reserved to the Reichsrat by the present law, belong within the power of the Provincial Diets of the kingdoms and countries represented in the Reichsrat and are constitutionally regulated by such Diets.' The matters of legislation expressly reserved to the Reichsrat left little to the competence of the diets" *Ibid.*, 109-110.

²¹ H. Glassl, *Der mährische Ausgleich*, Munich 1967, 60.

²² J. Kořalka, 'Nationality Representation in Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1914,' in: G. Alderman / J. Leslie / K.E. Pollmann (ed.), *Governments, Ethnic Groups and Political Representation IV*, Comparative Studies of Governments and Non-Dominating Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940, New York 1993, 106.

identification came to dominate institutional development, as each nationality increasingly acquired its own educational, social, professional and agricultural associations.²³ Along similar lines, the 1907 imperial suffrage law allocated imperial voters to gerrymandered, nationalized electoral districts.²⁴ Stourzh has followed that process of hyper-nationalization to grim ends in Social Darwinism and the doom of the empire.²⁵

It is worth asking what connection the decentralized proliferation of national labels—as described by Stourzh—had with the sub-national factors pronounced by Jenks as being indispensable in centralized Austria. While parliamentarians and diet members negotiated over national demarcation of voters and districts, bureaucrats strove to manipulate sub-national identities in order to counter the impact of nationalism on the state. Any assessment of the corresponding impact of constitutional and electoral reforms must assess both sets of efforts.

In order to evaluate the reforms in this manner, we must first confirm the types of national and sub-national identity that contemporaries recognized. The Moravian Compromise is commonly analyzed for its focus on linguistic national identities; but the legislation also hinged on sub-national identification of citizens in terms of territory, class and socio-economic conditions evident in taxes.²⁶ Bauer complained that the Moravian Compromise was “a completely inappropriate application of the personality principle,” for three reasons.²⁷ First, it allowed citizens’ own declarations of national identity to be challenged by communal authorities—and Bauer wanted to avoid the latter’s association of nation with territory.²⁸ Second, Bauer did not believe that the personality principle should reinforce class inequalities between voters:

We call for the national register as a foundation for national self-administration, not as an electoral roll [I] for the election of the *Reichsrat* and the provincial assembly. ... [T]he personality principle seems to be distorted here due to its having been artificially grafted onto the system of privileged [curial] voting rights.²⁹

²³ Kořalka, ‘Nationality,’ in: *Governments*, 111; Stourzh, *From Vienna*, 160.

²⁴ Jenks, *Austrian*, 207, 213–214.

²⁵ Stourzh confirms the growing emergence of a nationally-divided Austrian political culture. G. Stourzh, ‘Ethnic Attribution in Late Imperial Austria: Good Intentions, Evil Consequences,’ in: R. Robertson / E. Timms (ed.), *The Habsburg Legacy. National Identity in Historical Perspective* (= Austrian Studies 5), Edinburgh 1994; G. Stourzh, Robert A. Kann Memorial Lecture (1989). ‘The Multinational Empire Revisited: Reflections on Late Imperial Austria,’ in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 1992, 18–19.

²⁶ Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv [General Administrative Archive], Austrian State Archive, Vienna, Ministry of Interior, Präsidium records, Sig. 30, 1900–1918, Box 2165 (hereafter AVA).

²⁷ Bauer, *Question*, 282.

²⁸ Stourzh has described contested cases in which individuals quarreled with communal authorities’ re-evaluations of their personally declared national identities: Stourzh, *From Vienna*, 163, 166–167.

²⁹ Bauer, *Question*, 283.

Third, Bauer saw the national labeling of citizens as a misdirected, class-driven response to a modernizing economy.³⁰ He believed the polity had to be reformed so that civil administration could reach critical socio-economic factors *beneath* nationalism.

Among scholars, T. Mills Kelly echoes Bauer's dislike of class inequalities preserved in the Moravian curias. Kelly has criticized the Compromise for hardening both the national divide between Czechs and Germans—and the class divide between the élites and the lower strata of society. He argues that the curias blocked fair representation of mass political parties in the Diet.³¹ As a corollary to his findings, I maintain that the significance of these class factors only increased when the local preservation of curias—in Moravia and elsewhere—was combined with the imperial reform. Under these conditions, popular parties converged upon the imperial centre, further radicalizing *Reichsrat* debates with mass politics from the provinces.³²

In short, the very act of intensifying and decentralizing national labels appears to have rendered sub-national terms of identity centrally important in Vienna. All of this was possible because compartmentalization of identity was a fact of life in the late empire, where citizens behaved differently in different contexts. Social, cultural and political historians generally recognize that compartmentalization existed in society, without necessarily tracing the impact of this phenomenon on the history of the state.³³ For example, Marsha Rozenblit asserts that Habsburg Jews possessed a compartmentalized, political, cultural and ethnic "tripartite identity."³⁴ Scott Spector describes Jeremy King's isolation of "distinct, competing, but often coextant strands of national politics: ethnic, historical, civic ... and territorial," and he summarizes King's argument that these "different permutations of identity politics ... relating to locality, region, town/country, or class may not have receded but gradually became subsumed to categories of 'nationality.'"³⁵ King additionally points out that during the late imperial period "the Habsburg state was moving toward a multinational model different both from the empire of the Habsburg past and from

³⁰ "National hatred is transformed class hatred." Bauer, *Question*, 187, 213, 218.

³¹ T. Mills Kelly, 'Last Best Chance or Last Gasp? The Compromise of 1905 and Czech Politics in Moravia,' in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 2003, 280-281.

³² My idea reappraises Kelly's conclusion that, "[t]he only venue for that [mass political] struggle was the streets." *Ibid.*, 281.

³³ One scholar who has uncovered it in his research is Klaus Hödl. See: L. Douglass, Review of *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener: Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert*, by Klaus Hödl, in: *H-German*, October 2007, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=286161216070652> (accessed 9 March 2009).

³⁴ M.L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*, Oxford 2001, 4.

³⁵ S. Spector, 'Review of *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948*, by Jeremy King,' in: *The American Historical Review* 110/1 February 2005, 251.

the reigning model of nation states. This would have entailed a supranational, imperial civic identity concurrent with national identities and politics.”³⁶

This point was lost neither on the government, nor on the parties.³⁷ When the Emperor’s insistence made suffrage reform inevitable, the largely bureaucratic Cabinet and its cadre of supporting officials responded alongside parliamentarians with formal plans to compartmentalize voters’ varied identities. Their response was novel and complex, and did far more than rework the old Habsburg approach to the nationalities of “*Divide et impera*.”³⁸

If national and sub-national modes of identification were already features of daily life, it does not seem surprising that they would be formalized and would interrelate at imperial and local levels of representation. What is less obvious is what precise influence the interplay of these factors had on the evolution of the state. I suggest that that impact may be summed up in terms of the following outcomes: the rise of the bureaucracy as a new, modern estate; the curtailment of minority representation; the resort to imperial coalition tactics along sub-national lines as a substitute for electoral majorities; and the centralized state’s linkage to decentralized national identity by means of its imperial administration of sub-national identities.³⁹ Together, these factors reveal the causal connections between representation and federalism.

Interior Ministry files reveal the development of the bureaucracy into a new, modern estate: officialdom gained new authority by administering sub-national identities.⁴⁰ Bureaucrats’ studies evaluated different possible suffrage reforms in terms of national and sub-national identities in order to project electoral outcomes. At the behest of the Interior Minister in 1905, crownland governors asked provincial bureaucrats to concentrate upon the economic, social and regional underpinnings of national identity in local communities. The ultimate imperial aim was to create nationalized electoral districts which grouped together populations whose sub-national interests would predispose them to vote against national political divisions. In the Tyrol, officials recommended that, “[t]he economic interests of these cities and communities are in any case identical when [national] political antagonisms also ... persist be-

³⁶ Spector, review of *Budweisers*: 251. See: J. King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948*, Princeton 2002, 10, 115, 147.

³⁷ Bauer’s and Renner’s ideas clearly involved formal compartmentalization of national and sub-national identities.

³⁸ Glassl, *Ausgleich*, 61. My italics.

³⁹ Don Price maintains that by the twentieth century, four new estates had replaced the old estates: the scientific, the professional, the administrative, and the political. Price cited in J.R. Pennock, ‘Political Representation: An Overview,’ in: J.R. Pennock / J.W. Chapman (ed.), *Representation* (= Yearbook of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy), New York 1968, 10.

⁴⁰ This new role of the bureaucracy was confirmed as the Ministry of the Interior received dozens of direct appeals for the “universal, equal, secret, and direct right to vote” from local citizens’ associations and communal authorities. AVA, Vienna, Ministry of Interior, Präsidium records, Sig. 34/2, 6301-1905, Box 2235.

tween th[ose] same [towns]."⁴¹ They expected that these factors would remain significant even if the imperial suffrage reform did away with curias and with the associated categorization of voters based on their income taxes.

Hence, officials embedded tax considerations into proposals for the national demarcation of electoral districts. In his report to Vienna on 30 December 1905, the governor of Tyrol and Vorarlberg admitted that this was an imperfect process, wherein matching "an equitable number of votes" with "equality of tax distribution" was difficult because of "the inequitable conditions of the census of the population to the tax output in the German and Italian provincial sections."⁴² Some plans took into account population numbers as well as direct taxes levied per voter, compared against their 1901 imperial voting patterns. This use of previous electoral results against the local census and taxes in order to draw up voting districts emphasizes the strategic approach that the government took when faced with the prospect of thoroughgoing suffrage reform.

Regional considerations involved urban and rural sub-national distinctions and their corresponding influence on past performances of political parties. Thus, in Carniola, bureaucrats were not as concerned by national distinctions as they were by expected liberal losses upon the introduction of universal suffrage. They noted that the inhabitants of small towns, who laboured in the local economy's factories, iron works and industries, hailed mostly from the surrounding agrarian provincial population. Once these people received fair distribution of the right to vote, the district would become a clerical rather than liberal stronghold. The focus here was less on the fact that the clericals were Slovenes, and more on the fact that they were Catholic populists.⁴³ This sub-national factor of religion reappeared in the 1910 constitution, where it was used to pacify newly-annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁴ The constitution, composed by the Imperial Finance Minister and civil governor, Count István Burján de Rajeczí (1851-1922), included in its suffrage protocol religious electoral cadastres for Serbian Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Croatian Catholics; these religious cadastres mimicked the Czech and German national cadastres set up in the Moravian Compromise.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid. For the sake of brevity, I cite place names as mentioned in the historical documents without any intended national connotations that can be associated with the use of such terms. I have also anglicized them where there is a common English version of a place name, as with Tyrol or Vienna.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ R. Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia, 1878-1914*, Oxford 2007, 144-153, 177-178. For contemporary news reports on the Bosnian-Herzegovinian constitution, which initially included the Jewish faith in its religious electoral cadastres see: *Times*, London, 23 February 1910, 5; Dr. Bloch's *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, Vienna, 25 February 1910, 137-138 (hereafter *ÖW*); *ÖW*, 29 January 1909, 80; *ÖW*, 19 February 1909, 125-126; *ÖW*, 26 February 1909, 149; *ÖW*, 14 May 1909, 356.

⁴⁵ Glassl, *Ausgleich*, 95.

Even in cases where language—the main constitutional marker of Austrian nationality—dominated bureaucrats’ studies, they still appealed to other factors to decide whether or not to transcend local territorial bounds and unite “language islands” together within single national electoral districts. The concern for homogeneity of national language was weighed against the estimated expected bureaucratic costs incurred to assess, liquidate, divide and “apportion” electoral districts.⁴⁶ Provincial officials requested directions from the Ministry of the Interior regarding which language islands were large enough to merit the bureaucratic expense.⁴⁷ Local bureaucrats felt for the most part that the general character of the surrounding region might trump nationality. They advised that the cost of awarding a language island its own electoral district might only be warranted for “the cities [of] Lundenberg and Göding in Moravia” and continued: “[i]t may appear scarcely as an eligible goal of nationalities’ politics that every little nation’s party pocket ... [might be] secured in its existence. In fact, it may be considered far more desirable that such small language islands [be] absorbed by their surrounding neighbourhood.”⁴⁸ These sentiments reappeared in discounted plans for proportional representation, which would have secured minority representation.⁴⁹

As a result of the discouragement of minority representation, parliamentary tactics favoured coalitions formed along sub-national lines. Generally speaking, parliamentary rules favoured loose collaborations among small parties, which could endorse petitions and interpellations together.⁵⁰ These little coalitions formed the bases of Austria’s famous parliamentary ‘clubs.’ Philip Howe confirms that outside parliament, citizens sorted by nationality at the polls tended to concentrate politically on sub-national matters. Pre-electoral compacts and coalitions, along with election results in nationally pre-defined districts, derived from debates *inside* national groups that depended on economic and social issues.⁵¹ Vratislav Doubek’s study of Czech MPs elected to

⁴⁶ AVA, Box 2235.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ One noteworthy assessment of proportional representation at the crownland level came from former *Reichsrat* president Johann von Chlumecký (1834-1924). AVA, Vienna, Ministry of Interior, Präsidium records, Sig. 31, Moravia 1905-1907, Box 2192. For Chlumecký’s role as the “father of the [Moravian] compromise” hailed later that year in Vienna’s leading newspaper, see: Glassl, *Ausgleich*, 96; *Neue Freie Presse*, Vienna, 5 November 1905, 1 (hereafter *NFP*); and *NFP*, 7 November 1905, 3.

⁵⁰ See a Moravian parliamentary protocol document from 1900 for a good example. AVA, Vienna, Ministry of Interior, Präsidium records, Sig. 31, Moravia 1900-1904, Box 2191.

⁵¹ P.J. Howe, *Well-Tempered Discontent: Nationalism, Ethnic Group Politics, Electoral Institutions and Parliamentary Behavior in the Western Half of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 1867-1914*, Ph.D. diss., University of California at San Diego 2002, 202, 206, 209-210, 218, 231-232, 332-335; See also Kelly’s analysis of gerrymandering under the 1907 system, which had real effects on voting results and encouraged mini coalitions between parties. T. Mills Kelly, *Without Remorse: Czech National Socialism in Late-Habsburg Austria* (= East European Monographs 589), Boulder 2006, 115-116.

the *Reichsrat* in 1907 and 1911 further confirms that interpellations initiated collaboratively by smaller national parties depended on sub-national factors which provided a foundation for common agreement and cooperation.⁵² These results were an incipient precursor to what would have become a two-party or limited multi-party system—if definite parliamentary majorities could have been attained.

Even as this phenomenon of sub-national collaboration appeared, it gained a centralizing dynamic through the interplay between provincial and imperial parliamentary systems. The 1905 Moravian reform combined with the 1907 imperial suffrage created what Kelly calls “an asymmetrical democratic system, where there was universal manhood suffrage at the [imperial] parliamentary level, but still elite control of provincial and local government.”⁵³ Yet *Reichsrat* debates reveal that contemporaries analyzed this system as a whole. The Minister of the Interior Richard von Bienenrath (1863-1918) did so when he connected taxes, economic interests, and provincial electoral reforms to the larger authority of the *Reichsrat*.⁵⁴

In 1907 and 1908, MPs demanded provincial Diet reforms during the Austro-Hungarian budgetary debates, thereby prompting discussion on the relationship between the local and imperial parliaments. Significantly, MPs’ discussions about provincial reforms *did not* focus on national problems; rather, they stressed *the type of authority stemming from sub-national identity and on the ultimate dynamic and locus of that authority*. For example, MPs Josef Redlich and Karl Renner complained that the presumed main concern of the Diets was financial and economic. As such, local councils were commonly thought to be administrative bodies, while the *Reichsrat*’s authority was primarily legislative. Redlich insisted: “The Diets are legislative corporate bodies!”; at the same time, he noted that the *Reichsrat* was an administrative body in its negotiation of the Austrian budget.⁵⁵ He defined provincial legislative powers in terms of public (and some private) laws which determined how public monies were dispensed to “hospital complexes, children’s homes, orphanages, and mental institutions,” as well as some streets and roads, and schools.⁵⁶ With this

⁵² V. Doubek, ‘The coalition potential of Czech parties in the Imperial Council: A comparison of the years 1907 and 1911,’ in: *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 2006, 131-132.

⁵³ T.M. Kelly, *Without Remorse: Czech National Socialism and the Origins of Radical Nationalism in East Central Europe*, Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/history/faculty/kelly/proposal.htm> (accessed 25 March 2002). See also: Kelly, *Without Remorse*.

⁵⁴ Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrathes, 4th sitting, 27 June 1907, 124 (hereafter SPA).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 125-126.

⁵⁶ SPA, 4th sitting, 27 June 1907, 127. Oskar Krejčí confirms these sub-national spheres of diets’ authority: “The jurisdiction of land assemblies was directed to [the] legislative and administrative sphere. However, the legislative activity related only to selected and expressly enumerated issues – fiscal budget, agriculture, public works and constructions within the land and charity institutions

seemingly simple remark, Redlich had drawn some startling conclusions. By connecting public law to the sub-national provincial parliamentary jurisdiction in this way, he had related the implementation of sub-national identity to the creation and transmission of legal power; and, given that the larger context was provided by the imperial budget, he had briefly indicated the centralizing dynamic path of that authority. By observing how a term of identity could transmogrify into a type of state authority and then into a centralized or decentralized dynamic of that authority, Redlich had glimpsed the encrypted underlying connections between representation of identity, state authority, and federalism.⁵⁷ He acknowledged Renner's speech from the same *Reichsrat* session, which elucidated those connections through the latter's insistence that tax reform and the legal dispensation of provincial finances were inextricably bound up with suffrage reform, curias, class identity, regional identity, minority representation, the imperial and local bureaucracies, and the constitutional relationship between centre and periphery in what parliamentarians called the "question of competence" between the *Reichsrat* and the *Landtage*.⁵⁸

This complicated picture of diets acting as legislatures brings us back to the problem of Caesarism.⁵⁹ The picture became clearer over the course of 1908's imperial budget debates. These debates led to calls for local constitutional compromises and diet suffrage reforms. In Rudolf Schlesinger's eyes, such centralized sub-national budgetary concerns led directly to national decentralization in federalism:

Economic links created by incorporation into a multi-national empire ... have to compete with the powerful forces of modern nationalism which may embody the strongest class antagonisms of our times. But by artificially uniting diverse peoples and at the same time creating real links between them, the military-autocratic monarchy in its attempt to reconcile national diversity with economic unity produced the conditions essential for the application of federalism. It also produced the main obstacles to the success of such attempts.⁶⁰

supported from public funds. Land assemblies were supposed to issue legal regulations within the legal framework determined by the Imperial Council concerning community, church and educational matters, horse relays, catering and housing for the army." O. Krejčí, *History of Elections in Bohemia and Moravia* (= East European Monographs 433), New York 1995, 75.

⁵⁷ Moreover, he saw a common decentralizing pattern, sparked by exceptional increases in spending of local monies in provinces, districts and communities, in Austria as well as England, Belgium, France and Germany. SPA, 4th sitting, 27 June 1907, 126.

⁵⁸ SPA, 4th sitting, 27 June 1907, 120-127; SPA, 9th sitting, 5 July 1907, 768. For discussions relating these matters to minority representation, see Jewish Club members' emergency petitions and speeches: SPA, 7th sitting, 3 July 1907, 567. For the connection between minority representation and imperial versus local competence, see a debate from a Ruthenian MP on the question of whether the *Reichsrat* would protect a minority subject to discrimination in a Diet (in this case, in Galicia): SPA, 10th sitting, 9 July 1907, 920-925.

⁵⁹ SPA, 9th sitting, 5 July 1907, 763-766.

⁶⁰ R. Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, London 1998, 7.

On 8 July 1908, Interior Minister Bienert responded in parliament to an emergency petition regarding the introduction of universal suffrage in all the Diets. While he agreed in principle with the idea, he claimed that the government still had to decide how to implement a widespread democratic reform of local governance. He drew the shouting MPs' attention to the "different competences" of the imperial parliament and the Diets; he noted that the former bicameral parliament was "exclusively legislative," with capacities backed by "administration in the broadest sense," which in turn conveyed the needs of political corporate entities and "known interest groups."⁶¹ On the other hand, the latter unicameral Diets concerned themselves primarily with the economic and cultural spheres. He promised the MPs that the state would investigate measures necessary to reconcile these powers while introducing democratic reform in all the diets.⁶²

The records of the Interior Ministry confirm that the bureaucracy exhaustively investigated the connections between citizens' identities, democratic representation, legislative and administrative jurisdictions, and imperial federalism in a search for an elusive 'master plan for little compromises.' Officials laboriously summarized and compared, party by party, all the MPs' provincial reform proposals, for all the crownlands.⁶³ In each case, they weighed numbers of seats against curias, taxes, and projected electoral districts and electoral results, town by town.⁶⁴ One document reveals the bureaucrats' desire to create a two-party system along class-based, national, and economic lines wherever possible, and to avoid a multitude of factions.⁶⁵ Yet another chart shows the number of crownland districts where absolute electoral majorities were assured under different suffrage plans. Civil servants considered, but rejected, a system of professional or vocational representation, since they did not believe it constituted "a natural and healthy representation of the populace."⁶⁶ Similar plural electoral schemes were reviewed to strengthen the representative voices of the intelligentsia (university graduates) and higher taxpayers. These, too, were rejected.

Two large files from February 1908 traced all possible known local Diet candidates for Lemberg and Prague, and ran their profiles through postulated provincial suffrage reform systems in a series of charts; each politician's chances of winning in a future election were ranked from "not at all" to "very good" when cross-referenced against 1907 imperial electoral results.⁶⁷ Offi-

⁶¹ SPA, 103rd sitting, 8 July 1908, 7077-7078.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 7079.

⁶³ AVA, Vienna, Ministry of Interior, Präsidium records, Sig. 31, in gen. 1906-1909, Box 2168.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ The file also mentions Trieste. *Ibid.*

cials showed some anxiety about mass parties: the files include a sample National Socialist pamphlet against the Social Democrats.⁶⁸ Various plans were considered to diminish the latter's growth. Bureaucrats collected newspaper clippings to follow calls for local suffrage reform, as with Czech MPs' demands for national autonomy in Bohemia.⁶⁹ In Carinthia, officials suggested shifting rural electoral districts into urban districts in order to prevent minority results for the three major parties; they planned to bolster the chances of the Slovenian People's Party and "bump" the National Progressive Party, a boisterous opposition party which had "blighted" debates with constant obstruction.⁷⁰

These documents and a final summary report reveal that bureaucratic authorities in 1907 and 1908 concluded that the equal right to vote could not be avoided in the Diets, but they wished also to secure for "pro-state elements a decisive influence in the electoral results."⁷¹ Government bureaucrats consequently hoped for incremental reforms that were less radically democratic than universal manhood suffrage.⁷² They drew up their 'master compromise plan,' with its recommendations for diet reform in crownlands besides Moravia, to ensure watertight majorities for local elites while reconciling national divisions.⁷³ This plan offered a general but disproportionate right to vote through suffrage schemes which considered: plural voting; provision of some electoral districts with two Diet representatives, in order that privileged groups could be assured one seat to uphold their interests; and tinkering with voting rights, districts and curias.⁷⁴ This, then, was the core principle of Habsburg federalism before the First World War: the mechanistic implementation of local sub-national factors to serve the centralizing aims of the imperial state, combined with overt decentralization toward national factors, all filtered through various degrees of democratic representation.

III.

By the start of World War I, Austria's 'little compromises,' including the less well-known proposals described here, cultivated nation-state models within a multinational state.⁷⁵ The compromises respectively associated sub-national and national terms of identity with state power through the mechanisms of central and local representation. This study provides initial evidence that the national definition of voters laid the groundwork for decentralized

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ The file number of this 'master plan' is P. Nr. 300 M. I. 1908. *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ King, *Budweisers*, 138-139.

associations between nation and state—while imperial representation of sub-national aspects of citizens' identities laid the foundations of the centralized social welfare state.

Whether bureaucratic reform plans were implemented or not, they showed the spectrum of authorities, political interests, institutions, jurisdictions and legal justifications at work in the state which compartmentalized citizens' identities and related such administrative acts to democratic power. Suffrage reforms and little compromises did not solely highlight the encroachment of nationalism upon the imperial state. Bureaucratic and parliamentary records indicate that the core issue was neither autonomy for nationalities, nor the nationalized individual. Rather, it was the evolution of institutions such as the bureaucracy, which had gained new agency to define national identity in non-national terms, for the purposes of implementing autonomy along alternate lines, while upholding the constitutionally-stipulated equal rights between the nationalities.

Did these layered trends influence the evolution of the state and alter its legitimizing power? Historians recognize that adjustments to representation possessed a constitutional dimension, since they affected citizens' rights. Gary Cohen suggests that the little compromises revised the conditions around the 1867 constitution by effectively initiating national corporate rights.⁷⁶ In Boyer's view, the 1867 system created "an independent sphere of public power unlimited by and uncontrolled by the world of private domestic (or personal wealth)"; this system later gave way to "democratic parliamentarism and economic neocorporatism."⁷⁷ That transition was not straightforward. Constitutions were intended to establish immovable principles of government; in the face of broadening suffrage, they increasingly had to encompass movable principles related to the administration of a growing economy and society. In this case, representation altered conditions around the constitution without formally amending it. Representation absorbed the movable aspect by prompting national federalism and encasing it within sub-national centralism. Various contemporaries established that a demonstrable connection between representation and national autonomy could be made through sub-national factors, consequently creating two democratic conduits of power between the people and the state.

Two of Naumann's Caesarist elements are easily recognizable here: democratic representation and national liberty through federalism. Yet Caesarism implies that these two elements had to be bound together by the power of overarching authority, namely, the Crown bolstered by military power. In a polity in which the Crown was unwilling to transform the state completely, another

⁷⁶ G.B. Cohen, 'Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914,' in: *Central European History* 2007, 272-273.

⁷⁷ Boyer, *Culture*, 462.

predominant authority could begin to unite the other two elements. At what centre did the administration of sub-national factors converge? The Austrians' cryptic expansion of representation did not allow an easy replacement of dynasticism by the demos. For that matter, neither did the post-war peace treaties and attendant post-imperial constitutions. I maintain that the arcane reconciliation between imperial and popular power—a problem which all European countries confronted as absolutist monarchies gave way to mass democracies—did take place. When national liberty and democratic egalitarianism finally converged, connections between suffrage and federalism revealed that the Crown had been replaced by the law as the supreme authority in the state. Thus, it appears that the causal connections between representation and federalism provided the seeds of a subsequent causal connection between imperialism and republicanism. Therein lie the characteristics of the law as the new supreme power in the Austrian polity, to which the sovereignties of both king before the war—and of the people after the war—were ultimately forfeit.