

# Russian Sources on Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austro–Hungarian Rule, 1878–1908

## A Short Overview

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**Abstract.** The article provides a brief overview of Russian historical sources on the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period of the Austro–Hungarian occupation. The body of literature on the subject includes a wealth of work devoted to Austria–Hungary’s modernisation policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1878 and 1914. However, researchers have not yet considered how the Great Powers that made important decisions about the fate of the provinces appraised the governance model of the Austro–Hungarian Empire. Such decisions were made not only on the basis of foreign policy interests and international relations, but also on the basis of observations from the occupied territories. Russian analysts closely explored the development of the provinces in the multi-ethnic Habsburg Monarchy between 1878 and 1908. Russian officials realised that the situation in the multireligious region was very complicated. They analysed both how Austria–Hungary managed this situation as an empire, and their governance model from the point of view of another empire.

**Keywords:** Russian foreign policy, the Habsburg Monarchy, occupied provinces, diplomatic documents, communications from consuls, ethnographic research

In the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the period of Austro–Hungarian occupation was marked by the exacerbation of old problems and the emergence of new ones.<sup>1</sup> The difficulties of the province’s incorporation into the empire were predictable: the Ottoman rulers had successfully put down revolts in the Bosnian Vilayet by force of arms. Austria–Hungary, too, used arms to pacify the rebellious vilayet in 1878 and 1882. However, by acting more energetically and dynamically, and by investing more money, the dual monarchy created an environment conducive to the development of infrastructure, manufacturing, agricultural industries, and culture. However, the most important problem—agriculture—was not solved.

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The subject considered here overlaps with other, equally complex subject areas: Austria's policies in the region, the functioning of the Habsburg Monarchy, and international relations in the Balkans. The period of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina is probably the best explored chapter in the province's history.<sup>2</sup> Scholars from different countries produced studies focused on different aspects of modernization of the occupied provinces and their incorporation into the Habsburg Monarchy: industrialization, and the issue of workers related thereto;<sup>3</sup> the legal framework;<sup>4</sup> the organization of the military;<sup>5</sup> language policies<sup>6</sup> and trade policies;<sup>7</sup> the history of towns and urbanization;<sup>8</sup> cultural development;<sup>9</sup> and other issues.<sup>10</sup> Some of the subject areas, such as the 1882 uprising,<sup>11</sup> have mainly been addressed by Yugoslavian historians.

If we are to obtain a better understanding of how the new lands were integrated, we should take an especially good look at how the Habsburgs ruled over the empire and why this empire broke up.<sup>12</sup> Recently, Austrian policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been approached through the prism of colonial studies.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Clemens Ruthner demonstrates that the occupied provinces were a colony. Ruthner draws on the ideas of the postcolonial studies theorist Gayatri Spivak, according to whom the terms 'coloniser' and 'colonised' can be used "when an alien nation-state establishes itself as a ruler, impressing its own laws and system of education and rearranging the

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- 2 See, for instance: Schmid, *Bosnien und die Herzegowina*; Skarić, Nuri-Hadžić, and Stojanović, *Bosna i Hercegovina*.
  - 3 Sugar, "Austria-Hungary and the Balkan Crisis"; Hauptmann, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Herrschaft*; Juzbašić, "O uključenju Bosne i Hercegovine"; Juzbašić, *Politika i privreda*; Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase*.
  - 4 Imamović, *Pravni položaj*.
  - 5 Šehić, *U smrt za cara i domovinu!*
  - 6 Juzbašić, *Nacionalno-politički odnosi*.
  - 7 Kasumović, *Austrougarska trgovinska politika*.
  - 8 Kruševac, *Sarajevo*; Kreševljaković, *Sarajevo*; Kurto, "Arhitektura"; Donia, *Sarajevo*; Sundhaussen, *Sarajevo*.
  - 9 Reynolds, "Kavaljeri, kostimi, umjetnost"; Sparks, *Austro-Hungarian Sarajevo*.
  - 10 See, for instance, Šehić, ed., *Bosna i Hercegovina*.
  - 11 Kapidžić, *Hercegovački ustanak*; Kapidžić, *Bosna i Hercegovina*.
  - 12 Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*; Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy*; May, *The Habsburg Monarchy*; Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*; Kann and Zdenek, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands*; *Die Habsburgermonarchie*; Rudolph and Good, eds, *Nationalism and Empire*; Islamov and Miller, eds, *Avstro-Vengriia*; Khavanova et al., eds, *Avstro-Vengriia*; Kolm, *Die Ambitionen Österreich-Ungarns*; Schall, *Der österreichisch-ungarische Dualismus*; Kolodnikova, *Sud'ba dvukh imperii*; Pivovar, *Mekhanizmy vlasti*; etc.
  - 13 See: Ruthner et al., eds, *Wechselwirkungen*; Šistek, *Imagining Bosnian Muslims in Central Europe*.

mode of production for its own economic benefit".<sup>14</sup> Whatever their views on how the occupied territories were governed, most scholars agree that the government laid the groundwork for absolutism. Bojan Aleksov calls this system authoritarian paternalism based on a culture originating from Josephinism.<sup>15</sup>

Tomislav Kraljačić wrote a seminal piece about Austrian rule in the occupied territories: *The Kállay Regime, 1882–1903*.<sup>16</sup> He characterized the rule as absolutist, while also pointing out some positive effects of economic modernization. Yet another work of fundamental importance in relation to the Austro–Hungarian period is Robert Donia's *Islam under the Double Eagle*.<sup>17</sup> Despite Benjamin von Kállay's efforts, his dream of the peaceful coexistence of Bosnians never came true; one of the reasons, in Donia's opinion, was the fact that the imperial minister did not take political steps and therefore failed to tame the rivalry among ethnic groups.

In literature devoted to the national liberation movement much prominence is given to the activities of Bosnia and Herzegovina's residents themselves and of the Habsburg authorities.<sup>18</sup> The authors of these works, however, practically do not mention the role of Russia, which was interested in helping Orthodox Christians (the Serbs). Some aspects of this problem have been addressed by Soviet and Russian researchers.<sup>19</sup>

The history of the diplomatic settlement of the Bosnian problem has been comprehensively researched in many studies devoted to the history of international relations and to the foreign policies of Austria–Hungary and Serbia.<sup>20</sup> Scholars have studied the Bosnian problem profoundly and consistently in the context of Russia's handling of the Eastern question.<sup>21</sup>

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14 Ruthner, "Sleeping Beauty's Awakening."

15 Aleksov, "Habsburg Confessionalism."

16 Kraljačić, *Kalajev režim*.

17 Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle*; Donia, "The Habsburg Imperial Army"; Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina*.

18 Madžar, *Pokret Srba*; Bataković, "Prelude to Sarajevo"; Grunert, *Glauben im Hinterland*.

19 Kondratieva, "K istorii pervykh let okkupatsii"; Freidzon, "Otkliki v Rossii"; Vyazemskaya, "Porokhovo pogreb"; Vyazemskaya, "Bosniia i Gertsegovina"; Vyazemskaya, "Konfessii i natsional'nost"; Novikova, "Bosniisko-gertsegovinskaia politika".

20 Seton-Watson, *The Role of Bosnia*; Vojvodić, *Putevi srpske diplomatije*; Medyakov, *Mezhdru Vostokom i Zapadom*; Aganson, "Politika Velikobritanii"; Preshlenova, *Avstro-Ungariya i Balkanite*; Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin*; Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo*; Bridge, *The Habsburg Monarchy*; Diószegi, *Bismarck und Andrassy*; Adam, *Großbritanniens Balkandilemma*; Rauscher, *Die fragile Großmacht*; Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins*; etc.

21 Chikhachev, *Velikie derzhavy*; Butkovsky, *Sto let avstriiskoi politiki*; Zhigarev, *Russkaia politika*; Khvostov, *Istoriia diplomatii*; Vinogradov, *Bosniiskii krizis*; Skazkin, *Konets avstro-rusko-germanskogo soiuza*; Kinyapina, ed., *Vostochnyi vopros*; Fedosov et al., eds, *Rossia i vostochnyi*

Because I approach the subject relying on Russian sources, I need to take into account the situation in the Russian Empire: in the 1880–1890s it was going through a period of apparent calm marked by multiple internal storms.<sup>22</sup> When the focus shifted to the Far East, the result was the war with Japan in 1904–1905 and, hard on its heels, the First Russian Revolution. The empire ruled by the Romanovs was busy managing its own provinces and incorporating the new Muslim-populated lands along its periphery.<sup>23</sup> As for foreign-policy decisions, they were made by the Tsar relying on reports submitted to him by his close associates. The views of many of them are well known.<sup>24</sup> The spectrum of opinions on the matter was analyzed by Irina S. Rybachenok, who pointed at their common thread—Russia was regarded as a great power with a historical mission of becoming the connecting link between the East and the West. The foreign ministry’s general position was set out in instructions sent to ambassadors,<sup>25</sup> and specific practical steps were discussed in letters exchanged by the ministry and ambassadors. The main pillar of Russia’s Near-East policies was Orthodox Christianity—the success of the political concepts originated from the specifics of the way of life of the non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> I agree with Lora A. Gerd, who argues that with regard to the history of Russia’s foreign policies after 1878 the term ‘pan-Slavism’ is incorrect: this term became a “symbolic [...] label” deployed by these policies’ opponents.<sup>27</sup>

Another important thing to mention is the publications that address the Bosnian question in the context of Russo-Austrian relations. One of these publications is a thesis defended by Nachum Samonsky at the University of Vienna in 1928. It is interesting because the author, researching Russia’s position, used reports by Austro-Hungarian diplomats stationed in St. Petersburg: the diplomats paid much

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*krizis*; Pisarev, *Velikie derzhavy i Balkany*; Kinyapina, ed., *Balkany i proliivy*; Zolotukhin, *Rossia, zapadnoevropeiskie derzhavy*; Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan Entanglements*; Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; Marriott, *The Eastern Question*; Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*; Sugar, “Austria-Hungary and the Balkan Crisis”; Haselsteiner, *Bosnien-Hercegovina*; Horel, ed., 1908, *l’annexion*; Nikiforov, ed., *Istoriia Balkan*; etc.

- 22 On the history of Russian foreign policy in the last third of the nineteenth – early twentieth century, see the works in the previous footnote, and also: Rybachenok, *Soiuz s Frantsiei*; Rybachenok, *Zakat velikoi derzhavy*; Ignatyev, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii*; Ayrapetov, *Istoriia vneshnei politiki*; etc.
- 23 Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich*; Miller, *Zapadnye okrainy*; Lieven, *Empire*; Arapov, *Rossia i musul'manskii mir*; etc.
- 24 Rybachenok, “A.B. Lobanov-Rostovskii”; Avdeev, “A. P. Izvol'sky”; Chernov, *N. V. Charykov*; Loshakov, “Graf V. N. Lamzdorf.”
- 25 Rybachenok, “Korennyye interesy Rossii.”
- 26 Gerd, *Konstantinopol' i Peterburg*.
- 27 Gerd, *Peterburg i Konstantinopol'skii patriarkhat*, 44–45.

attention to public opinion.<sup>28</sup> Another reason for this choice of focus is the lack of access to many documents held at the Austrian archive. Yet another study was penned by Oksana N. Novikova—she focused mostly on the annexation-related crisis and the reactions of the Russian press to it.<sup>29</sup>

However, researchers have not yet considered how the Great Powers, which made important decisions about the fate of the provinces, appraised the governance model of the Austro–Hungarian Empire. Russia played a crucial role in the transfer of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia and Herzegovina, to Austria–Hungary. Later, Russian observations were carried out in the context of studying the problem of the viability of the Austro–Hungarian Empire. In 1888, based on consular reports, Russian Foreign Minister Nikolai Karlovich Girs concluded that the Danube Monarchy would do its best to establish itself in the occupied lands.<sup>30</sup> Twenty years later, in 1908, after a meeting in Buchlau, Minister Alexander Petrovich Izvolsky wrote that the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria–Hungary would be beneficial for Russia. Tsar Nicholas II agreed with his Minister.<sup>31</sup> For the St Petersburg Cabinet, it was obvious that the Habsburg Monarchy would face huge challenges resulting from the annexation of the occupied provinces: the problems of the dual system were evident, and the Russian government was interested in weakening its antagonist. The decisions by Russian officials and the Tsar were based on a long-term analysis of the incorporation model used in the occupied territories, which had previously been parts of a different state and political system.

The role that Bosnia and Herzegovina played, after the Congress of Berlin, in Russian foreign policy and sociopolitical life has attracted researchers' attention, albeit not very often. Historians that have addressed this subject include Vera N. Kondratieva, Yelena K. Vyazemskaya, and Vladimir I. Freidzon. Kondratieva analyzed Bosnia-related communications from consuls in Ragusa and Cetinje.<sup>32</sup> Vyazemskaya focused her attention on the correspondence of the Russian consul in Sarajevo between 1879 and 1880.<sup>33</sup> Freidzon delved into old newspapers to investigate Russian society's reaction to the occupation in 1878.<sup>34</sup> In present-day Russia,

28 Samonsky, "Bosnien und Herzegovina."

29 Novikova, "Bosniisko-gertsegovinskaia politika."

30 Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi istorii (AVPRI). Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/2. Delo 303. Consulats politiques. 1888. Listy 103 oborot –104.

31 AVPRI. Fond 151. Opis' 482. Delo 3201. Listy 94–96. Some documents from this file have been published: Bor'ba v praviashchikh krugakh Rossii po voprosam vneshnei politiki vo vremia Bosniiskogo krizisa, *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 5 (1962).

32 Kondratieva, "K istorii pervykh let."

33 Vyazemskaya, "Bosniia i Gertsegovina."

34 Freidzon, "Otkliki v Rossii."

the subject of Bosnia has been addressed by Oksana N. Novikova.<sup>35</sup> She zeroed in on newspapers published in Russia's south, mostly during the annexation-related crisis.

In this article, I would like to offer a brief but unfortunately incomplete overview of Russian sources related to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period of the Austro–Hungarian occupation. (This overview does not contain materials produced between the start of the annexation crisis in 1908 and World War I.) There are several identifiable types of sources:

- documents of the Russian government, namely
  - A. Foreign Ministry documents
    - consular reports
    - correspondence between ministers and ambassadors
    - ministry reports
    - official documents
  - B. Military Ministry documents
    - agent reports
    - statistical data
    - mapping data
- ethnographic studies
- newspaper publications.

## Documents of the Russian government: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### Consulates as information-gathering centres

The Russian Consulate in Sarajevo was a fully developed hub for gathering and analyzing information about the occupied provinces. Consuls Nikolai Nikolaevich Ladyzhensky (1879–80), Modest Modestovich Bakunin (1880–93), and Gustav Viktorovich Igelström (1893–1914) continued the tradition of watching the situation in Bosnia.

The first Russian diplomat in Bosnia after the occupation, Ladyzhensky, held office for only a few months before the arrival of his replacement, Bakunin, who had already served as Russian Consul in Sarajevo during the Great Eastern Crisis—from the beginning of the Herzegovina Uprising in 1875 until the start of the Russo–Turkish War in 1877. Bakunin was transferred to Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1893; in the same year, Igelström was transferred from the Bulgarian town of Plovdiv to Sarajevo, and would remain in Bosnia until the start of World War I.

A matter worth noting was the uncertain status of foreign diplomats in a province governed by Austria–Hungary but which *de-facto* remained a domain of the Ottoman

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35 Novikova, “Bosniisko-gertsegovinskaia politika.”

Empire. For instance, the question of status had to be dealt with when Rudolf, Crown Prince of Austria, visited Sarajevo in 1888. The Russian ambassador to Vienna, Prince Aleksey Borisovich Lobanov-Rostovsky, instructed Bakunin not to acknowledge, even indirectly, the Habsburgs' right to Bosnia—Rudolf, wrote Lobanov-Rostovsky, should be treated only as the heir to the throne of the Monarchy, whatever objectives he might be pursuing in the occupied territories.<sup>36</sup> The consuls' official status and the procedures they had to go through to obtain authorization for their arrival remain a matter of conjecture. It could be that the diplomats' work in the occupied province was governed neither by Austro–Hungarian nor by Ottoman documents. The fact that the Russian Foreign Ministry's Personnel Department refused to issue a consular commission to Igelström was no obstacle to the performance of his function as Russia's envoy to Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>37</sup>

The search for sources of information was another challenge facing Russia's consuls. In their reports, they had to relate not only official news but also local opinions. Consul Ladyzhensky, however, failed to forge links with locals, who, anxious to stay on the good side of the new authorities, refrained from maintaining contact with the Russian consul. Whereas British, German, and French envoys who had stayed in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Russo-Turkish War between 1877–1878 could use their old sources, Ladyzhensky had none.<sup>38</sup>

Since Bakunin was already familiar with the region, he had old acquaintances among locals and often travelled around Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia. The Consul wrote: "Frequent travel is absolutely necessary for collecting all the information that is unavailable in Sarajevo, the information which local authorities would hide from a local Russian consul now even more carefully than ever."<sup>39</sup>

Bakunin's successor, Igelström, however, had a hard time trying to forge links with the residents of the occupied provinces: he did not know the local language and it was difficult to find a language teacher. Moreover, the landlords of the building rented by the Russian Foreign Ministry for its Sarajevo mission refused to renew the rental agreement for fear of incurring the wrath of the Austro–Hungarian administration. "The grip of fear on the Serbs is so strong that communicating with them directly is next to impossible", stressed the diplomat. He acknowledged that as a result "the main question of interest to us—learning about the situation of the Serbian population—is precisely the one that is the most difficult to answer."<sup>40</sup>

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36 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/2. Delo 303. List 94.

37 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/1. Delo 1139. List 3–3ob.

38 AVPRI, Fond 161/2. SPb. Glavnyi arkhiv. V-A2. Opis' 181. Delo 830. List 1ob.–2.

39 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/2. Delo 330. List 63ob.–64.

40 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/1. Delo 1139. List 25–26.

The Bosnians<sup>41</sup> were not the only ones to avoid contact with Russian diplomats—the Austro–Hungarian officials, too, tried to shield the local Christian Orthodox population from contact with the consuls: not only on account “of the linguistic affinity and the sameness of the religion”, as Ladyzhensky assumed,<sup>42</sup> but most likely also because they remembered how Russian diplomats had acted in Ottoman Bosnia. Working in close cooperation with the Slavic committees, Russian consuls had helped the Christian Orthodox community—primarily in the educational sphere. However, attempts to intervene and help often caused tension between the diplomats and the Ottoman authorities.<sup>43</sup>

Now, with Bosnia governed by Austria–Hungary, the empire was doing all it could to deprive foreign powers, especially Russia, of any pretext for intervention in the province’s affairs. The new administration set up ‘communal’ schools in order to reduce the role of religion in education, provided churches with all necessary furnishings and literature, and paid salaries to senior clergy. Therefore, Bakunin had difficulty delivering books and icons which the Slavic Committee, keeping in mind the charitable activities it had undertaken between the 1850s and 1870s, was sending from Russia.<sup>44</sup>

In fact, the Austro–Hungarian administration had real reasons for concern—at least with respect to Bakunin. The duties of the Russian Consul included not only collecting information about the economic, sociopolitical, and cultural situation in the area, but also gathering military intelligence.<sup>45</sup>

Austria’s agents were therefore busy keeping an eye on Russian diplomats. The reports they sent to the Governor-General of the occupied region have survived at the Bosnia and Herzegovina Austrian–Hungarian Ministry of Finance Archive.<sup>46</sup> Each step by Russian diplomats and other Russian visitors to Bosnia and Herzegovina was reported through the Head of the Bosnian Government to the Joint Ministry of Finance in Vienna.

Bakunin’s trips around the area and his contacts with locals regularly put him at odds with the Austro–Hungarian authorities. Bakunin believed that the local administration—and the Civil Governor Hugo von Kutschera in particular—did not respect him and had demonstratively indicated that he was *persona non grata* in

41 Here ‘the Bosnians’ are the people who lived in the province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this article I also use the adjective ‘Bosnian’ for the province of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

42 AVPRI, Fond 161/2. Aziatskii departament. Opis’ 181. Delo 830. List 1ob.–2.

43 Melchakova, *Bosniia i Gertsegovina*.

44 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol’stvo v Vene. Opis’ 514/2. Delo 303. List 47.

45 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol’stvo v Vene. Opis’ 514/2. Delo 303. List 19.

46 *Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine. Zajedničko ministarstvo finansije*.



Sarajevo. This is how Bakunin characterized his situation: “An extremely difficult, delicate and awkward situation of the Russian Consul in Sarajevo amidst animosity and the suspicious Austrians, who are captious, confrontational and perpetually confusing the police with politics”.<sup>47</sup> This was Igelström’s first impression on arrival too.

Despite Bakunin’s propensity towards conflict and a certain over anxiousness, he acted as the Russian Foreign Ministry’s eyes in the region, closely watching Austria–Hungary’s political manoeuvring. It appears, however, that after yet another big scandal (in 1893), the situation around the Russian diplomatic mission became so tense that Bakunin was recalled from Sarajevo, to be replaced with consul Igelström, who was instructed by Lobanov-Rostovsky as follows: “maintain the friendliest relations and do not become involved in internal administrative affairs, inform the [Russian Empire’s] Embassy about all directives and novelties introduced by the Austrian government that apply to all of the country and also identify [...] negative and positive effects that these reforms may produce on residents of the provinces”.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, recognizing Austria–Hungary’s right to govern but not to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russian diplomats were adapting the Consulate’s work to the new reality: fifteen years after the beginning of the occupation this formerly proactive agent of influence had to assume a largely ceremonial role and adjust himself to the position of observer.

It is a source of regret that there are many communications from the Sarajevo consuls that are still to be found. Among the currently available sets of reports, the most comprehensive ones are dated from 1880 and 1881. Later communications are fragmentary and scattered across different funds of the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire: embassies in Vienna and Constantinople, diplomatic missions in Belgrade and Cetinje, the chancellery and secret archive of the Foreign Minister, the Slavic and Turkish Desks, and the Main and Political archives. Perhaps the difficulty associated with the search for the consuls’ reports is tied to the evacuation of the Russian mission from Vienna in 1914. It was there that the consuls sent all their communications. Documents related in one way or another to Bosnia that have been found are mostly focused on local Serbs and the Christian Orthodox Church. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Russian Foreign Ministry was primarily concerned about Orthodox Christians living in the occupied provinces.

### Correspondence between the foreign minister and the ambassadors

The Russian government was especially mindful of the situation of the Christian Orthodox Church in Bosnia. From 1902 to 1904, the Most Holy Synod, the

47 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol’stvo v Vene. Opis’ 514/2. Delo 330. List 15ob.

48 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol’stvo v Vene. Opis’ 514/2. Delo 384. List 56–56ob.

foreign minister, and the Russian diplomats—ambassadors to Constantinople and Vienna and the consul in Sarajevo—were involved in the negotiations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and Austria–Hungary’s government concerning the status of the church and its communities in the occupied provinces.<sup>49</sup>

The issue of the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina as such was addressed mostly within the context of Russian–Austrian relations. Russian plenipotentiary at the Congress of Berlin, Pyotr Andreyevich Shuvalov, believed that although Article 25 of the Peace Treaty’s final text referenced “occupation for an indefinite period of time”, all emissaries of the European Great Powers assumed that occupation was tantamount to annexation.<sup>50</sup> The politicians from St Petersburg, too, did not rule out the possibility that the establishment of temporary control over Bosnia would lead to irreversible annexation.

There was only one thing that could offer comfort to Russian diplomats: the occupation revealed a weakness in the Austro–Hungarian system. Russia’s Foreign Ministry predicted that the growth of the Slavic population in the Habsburg Monarchy would create “a weak spot in case of a war against us”.<sup>51</sup> As Alexander II noted in 1880 in his draft of instructions to the Ambassador to Vienna, Pavel Petrovich Uбри, the fact that Austria–Hungary “would be attached to the Adriatic region, far from the Black Sea”<sup>52</sup> was yet another reason not to worry about the occupation.

The Bosnian question figured in Russo–Austrian relations throughout the 1880s—there were several reasons for this. First and foremost, after the Congress of Berlin, the system of international relations changed and the great powers regrouped. Important information illuminating the impact of international factors in Bosnian history is contained in documents pertaining to the alliance treaties signed in 1881 and renewed in 1884 and again in 1897.<sup>53</sup> A large collection of documents from the Foreign Ministry was produced between 1908 and 1909—the time when Austria–Hungary was preparing for annexation and the period of crisis in its aftermath.<sup>54</sup> Second, Bosnia in Russian diplomatic correspondence was discussed in the context of the events unfolding in the wider Balkans, Serbia, and Bulgaria. In addition, the goings-on in Austria–Hungary itself and its occupied territories were quite important too. In letters exchanged between the foreign minister and the ambassadors to Vienna, Berlin, Cetinje, and Belgrade, the question of potential change in the provinces’ status

49 AVPRI, Fond 180. Posol’stvo v Konstantinopole. Opis’ 517/2. Delo 3671.

50 AVPRI, Fond 133. Kantseliariia ministra inostrannykh del. Opis’ 470. Delo 201. List 19.

51 AVPRI, Fond 133. Kantseliariia ministra inostrannykh del. Opis’ 470. Delo 201. List 24–24ob.

52 AVPRI, Fond 133. Kantseliariia ministra inostrannykh del. Opis’ 470. Delo 201. List 24.

53 For instance, AVPRI, Fond 133. Kantseliariia ministra inostrannykh del. Opis’ 470. Delo 114.

54 AVPRI, Fond 133. Kantseliariia ministra inostrannykh del. Opis’ 470. Delo 201.

was broached in the context of the 1881–82 Herzegovina uprising<sup>55</sup> and the reception of the delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina by Francis Joseph,<sup>56</sup> etc.

### Foreign Ministry reports

Relying on diplomatic documents, the Foreign Ministry prepared reports on different countries every year. The documents on Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina have been published by Lyudmila V. Kuzmicheva and Dušan Kovačević.<sup>57</sup> The Foreign Ministry's annual reports on Bosnia and Herzegovina offer information about practically every aspect of the life of local Serbs. Over the course of twenty-five years—from 1878 until 1903—the Russian diplomats in every report emphasized Austria–Hungary's ambition to better integrate the occupied territories with a view to later annexing them. However, whereas between 1878 and the early 1890s officers of the Asian (First) Department often mentioned issues of economic development in their reports to the emperor, their later reports made fewer references to this aspect of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Instead, far more attention was paid to the question of the church, or rather, the struggle for autonomy of the church and schools.

### Other documents

The official documents of different departments mostly concern Russian assistance to Slavic communities outside Russia. After the 1877–1878 Russo–Turkish War, the structure of philanthropy changed appreciably as the Moscow Slavic Charitable Society phased out its activities.<sup>58</sup> The Society's Saint Petersburg Branch tried to keep alive the tradition of sending books and icons to Bosnia. However, since the Austro–Hungarian government was eager to supply churches with all essentials, the authorities refused to accept gifts from the Russian Empire.<sup>59</sup> The consulate was no longer the link in the delivery chain from Russia's partly governmental, partly public philanthropy aimed at Orthodox Christians living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it used to be under Ottoman rule.<sup>60</sup> Different governmental agencies tightened their regulatory grip on assistance given to Slavic communities abroad, and documents

55 AVPRI, Fond 138. Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra. Opis' 467. Delo 63/67; AVPRI, Fond 138. Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra. Opis' 467. Delo 64/68; AVPRI, Fond 138. Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra. Opis' 467. Delo 65/69; AVPRI, Fond 138. Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra. Opis' 467. Delo 68/73; AVPRI, Fond 166. Missiia v Belgrade. Opis' 508/1. Delo 29.

56 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/2. Delo 295.

57 Kuzmicheva and Kovačević, eds, *Godišnji izveštaji*.

58 See: Popovkin, "Slavianskie blagotvoritel'nye."

59 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/2. Delo 303. List 47.

60 See: Melchakova, *Bosniia i Gertsegovina*.

they exchanged to handle money transfers survive. For instance, the Russian Foreign Ministry, after consultations with the Ministry of Finance and the Emperor's approval, sent a one-time grant of 10,000 roubles to the Montenegrin government by way of assistance for Herzegovinian refugees in 1885;<sup>61</sup> and in 1892 the Ober-Procurator of the Most Holy Synod Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev allocated funds in response to requests from priest Trifković from the village of Blažuj, who needed money for the upkeep of a Christian Orthodox church, and from the Banja Monastery, whose residents wanted to set up a Serbian secondary school and support a local parish.<sup>62</sup> There are also documents showing that the Foreign Ministry dedicated some of its resources to Bosnian natives who came to Russia and found themselves in a difficult spot.<sup>63</sup>

### Documents of the Russian government: the Military Ministry

The developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina were watched not only by diplomats, but by military intelligence as well. Instructions sent to military attachés in 1880 and updated in 1905 stated that they should collect information and report on military recruitment and the composition of the army, procurement (including victuals and fodder), military training, transportation routes, and budgets. In addition, military intelligence officers had to write profiles of top generals and report on the populace's views about matters social and political.<sup>64</sup> The agents' reports from Vienna show that they followed these instructions to a tee. Judging by the maps and compendiums of army statistics held in fund 846 *Voенно-uchenyi arkhiv* [the Academic Military Archive], Russia's military intelligence agents kept an eye on Bosnia and Herzegovina and collected publications produced by Austria–Hungary's military ministry.

Communications of intelligence officers prior to 1917 are held at the Russian State Military Historical Archive [*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voенно-istoricheskii arkhiv*, abbr. RGVIA]: fund 401 *Voенно-uchenyj komitet* [Academic Military Committee] and fund 2000 *Glavnoe upravlenie General'nogo shtaba* [Main Directorate of the General Staff]. Researching these documents is a fairly difficult task because the names of the files do not reflect their actual contents: standard, generic appellations are often attached to unique documents of great historical value.<sup>65</sup> This is because

61 AVPRI, Fond 146. Slavianskii stol. Opis' 495. Delo 9149.

62 AVPRI, Fond 172. Posol'stvo v Vene. Opis' 514/2. Delo 370.

63 For instance, AVPRI, Fond 146. Slavianskii stol. Opis' 495. Delo 4660; AVPRI, Fond 146. Slavianskii stol. Opis' 495. Delo 4698; AVPRI, Fond 146. Slavianskii stol. Opis' 495. Delo 4718; etc.

64 *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voенно-istoricheskii arkhiv* (hereinafter RGVIA). Fond 2000. *Glavnoe upravlenie General'nogo shtaba*. Opis' 15. Delo 24.

65 Kashirin, *Dozornye na Balkanakh*, 56.

the inventories and contents of the military intelligence files were kept secret until the 1990s. Nevertheless, several reports from Vienna by military intelligence officers Vladimir Khristophorovich Roop (1900–1905) and Mitrofan Konstantinovich Marchenko (1906–1910) have been located. They reported on the internal situation in Austria–Hungary, sending detailed accounts which contained much of the same information that was supplied by diplomats in their reports. References to Bosnia and Herzegovina do not come up in intelligence reports filed before 1908. Only once, in 1907, did Marchenko mention his intention of seeking the Austro–Hungarian authorities’ permission to visit the occupied provinces. Unfortunately, whether Marchenko indeed made the visit as he wished to in the autumn of 1907 has yet to be determined. The reports now held at the Joint Ministry of Finance’s Fund at the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina show that Russian military officers used to visit the occupied provinces. In particular, 1900 saw the visit of the future military agent in Belgrade, Vladimir Petrovich Agapeyev (1907–1909).

RGVIA’s fund 2000 contains special folders related to the annexation crisis. In addition to those from Marchenko in Vienna, reports about Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908–1909 were filed by agents stationed in Serbia and Montenegro, Vladimir Petrovich Agapeyev and Nikolai Mikhailovich Potapov (1903–1916).

Marchenko focused on the military build-up in Austria–Hungary’s south, compiling tables about the army units’ movements, reporting on army reserve personnel, procurement, types of weaponry, and financial expenditure. He related conversations he had had with various highly placed individuals in Vienna (including the heir to the throne), described reactions in both parts of the empire, and conveyed his thoughts on the consequences of the annexation of the occupied provinces. In addition, he wrote about public attitudes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the capitals towards the annexation. In one of his communications to the general staff, he noted: “Bosnia’s populace, although dissatisfied with Austria, does not at all want to live under Serbia’s rule, much less to be annexed by Hungary; it dreams of autonomy for Bosnia and Herzegovina”.<sup>66</sup> Copies of some of the agent’s reports were sent to the Foreign Ministry and have survived in its archive.

In 1908, Agapeyev, the agent in Belgrade, reported specific movements of troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina, quoting a source in the Austro–Hungarian military. The agent in Cetinje, whose letters, journals, and reports have been published,<sup>67</sup> focused on public attitudes in Montenegro and the actions of Nicholas I of Montenegro, and his texts do not contain much detail about the situation in the annexed province.

Russia’s naval agent for Austria–Hungary and Italy also addressed the situation

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66 RGVIA. Fond 2000. Glavnoe upravlenie General’nogo shtaba. Opis’ 1. Delo 713. List 118–118 oborot.

67 Potapov, *N. M. Potapov*.

concerning the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, although in his other reports he did not bring up these matters. Communications about potential battlefield developments and the possible consequences of the warfare that could result from the annexation were filed by naval agent Dmitry Vladimirovich von Den (1906–1911) and are now held at the Russian State Archive of the Navy [*Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv voenno-morskogo flota*], fund 418 “*Morskoi Generalnyi Shtab*” [Russian Navy Headquarters].

### Ethnographic works

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was studied not only by Russian diplomats and soldiers, but also by scholars, who put down their observations in travel notes. As Maria Todorova shows, travelogues have been very important for “imagining the Balkans” and played a role during the periods of the discovery of the Balkans, the making of the Balkans, and the classification of the Balkans.<sup>68</sup> Ksenia V. Melchakova in her work analyzed travel notes about Ottoman Bosnia written by the first Russian consul in Bosnia, Alexander Fyodorovich Hilferding.<sup>69</sup> The body of literature on the subject that is discussed includes, inter alia, monographs focused on Bosnia travel notes: Neval Berber, for instance, published a monograph about the travels of Britons in the region.<sup>70</sup>

An informative account about the takeover of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Habsburg troops is provided in the travel notes of Pavel Apollonovich Rovinsky (1831–1916), a reporter sent to the Balkans by the Saint Petersburg newspaper *Novoe vremya* [The New Time]. Late in the autumn of 1879, he travelled through the Sanjak of Zvornik, Bosnia’s north-eastern region. Rovinsky set out on his Bosnian journey late in the autumn of 1878. His earliest dispatches from Bosnia are dated November 1878 and the latest April 1879, when the Austro–Hungarian police expelled the journalist from the occupied province.<sup>71</sup>

Rovinsky’s article “Observations during My Bosnian Travel in 1879” was printed in the third (March) issue of the *Magazine of the Ministry of Public Education* in 1880.<sup>72</sup> Unlike Rovinsky’s newspaper dispatches, this text focused on Bosnia’s north-eastern region (Sanjak of Zvornik and its central town Donja Tuzla), and is well structured, has clear paragraph division, and offers various bits and pieces of information, including historiographical information.<sup>73</sup>

68 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.

69 Melchakova, *Bosniia i Gertsegovina*.

70 Berber, *Unveiling Bosnia-Herzegovina*.

71 Khlebnikova, “«Russkii chernogorets»”, 75.

72 Rovinsky, “Nabliudeniia.”

73 See on Pavel Rovinsky’s travel notes: Pakhomova, *Balkan Litmus*.

It is worthwhile to note that Rovinsky's notes about Bosnia are, on the one hand, a travelogue—that is, personal commentary—but on the other, are an ethnographic study that meets the standards of scholarship that existed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; and his dispatches printed in one of the most popular Russian newspapers can be characterized as social commentary. Rovinsky's texts about Bosnia and Herzegovina are especially interesting because they were written at the beginning of a period of great upheaval in Bosnian society. They are significant because they capture the population's first reactions to the foreign presence.

Pavel Rovinsky believed that after an 'Islamic aristocratic' phase Bosnia entered a period of 'Christian democratic' protest against the authorities. Particularly noteworthy is the traveller's observation that this transformation came about not due to agitation by the Serbs but because of the Bosnians' high level of political culture. Rovinsky's travel notes are full of cutting remarks about the Islamic elites and Austro–Hungarian authorities, while the tone of his passages about the local Orthodox Christians is positive. Rovinsky held these views because he came from the fold of Russian Orthodoxy. Besides this, his texts reflect his *narodnichestvo*—between 1862 and 1863 he was one of the most influential participants of the clandestine revolutionary organization *Land and Will*. The writer sympathized with the common folk and criticized the aristocracy and large landowners for oppressing peasants, as well as the Ottoman and Austro–Hungarian governments for their failure to solve the agrarian question.

After the pacification of the region, the Habsburg Monarchy began a systematic study of it and opened the Regional Museum (*Zemaljski muzej*) and the Balkan Institute. Historians Ćiro Truhelka, Kosta Hörmann, Lajos Thallóczy and others were involved in historical research. Although Slavenko Terzić called the study of Bosnia and Herzegovina during Habsburg rule "academic propaganda", it should be remembered that these scholars made a valuable contribution to the study of the region's history.<sup>74</sup>

Eager to show off and publicize the first achievements of the initial stage of their rule, the Austro–Hungarian authorities in the 1890s began to invite journalists, academics, and travellers to the region. In 1893, they organized the visit of a group of journalists from *The Times*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Temps*, etc. This visit produced, inter alia, a book by the Berlin journalist Heinrich Renner.<sup>75</sup> Renner was already familiar with Bosnia and Herzegovina: in 1878, in the capacity of a war reporter, he accompanied the Austro–Hungarian troops under General Josip Filipović's command during the

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74 Terzić, "Projekt austrougarskog Balkana."

75 Renner, *Durch Bosnien und die Herzegovina*.

invasion.<sup>76</sup> 1897 saw the release of *Outgoing Turk*<sup>77</sup>—a book written by the famous traveller Harry Thomson who visited Turkey's other provinces, as well as Rhodesia, India, and China.

In 1894, the government organized a congress of anthropologists and archaeologists in Sarajevo. On-site research was carried out in Bosnia as well. This research produced, amongst other things, books by two scholars of Central Asia—French ethnographer Guillaume Capus<sup>78</sup> and his Russian colleague Alexei Nikolaevich Kharuzin,<sup>79</sup> each of whom contributed a great deal to the development of ethnography as an academic discipline.

A study by ethnographer and statesman Alexei Kharuzin offers a comprehensive account of the process and results of the Austro–Hungarian administration and a multifaceted analysis of Bosnian and Herzegovinian history. Regrettably, it was only recently that Kharuzin and his works were introduced to the general public, since the scholar fell victim to repression in the Soviet Union in 1932. He was an ethnographer with a rich experience of studying the ethnic groups of Central Asia and had been a statesman working in the Russian Empire's ethnic borderlands. He worked in Estland, the Vilna governorate, and Bessarabia.

In 1899, Kharuzin travelled to the occupied provinces in order to study in-depth the process of the incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Taking note of the general positive effects of the Austro–Hungarian modernization and infrastructure improvement programme, he nonetheless concluded that the practice of ignoring society's traditions created difficulties, and the purely mechanical growth of economic indicators did not amount to successful modernization.<sup>80</sup> The ethnographer's point of view about the development of ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina is interesting. Despite Kharuzin considering religion to be an important factor in the nation-building process, he was against its absolutisation.<sup>81</sup> According to Kharuzin, the Austro–Hungarian government had demonstrated the formation of a political nation based on the results of historical, ethnographic, archaeological, and anthropological research, as well as on language and national consciousness.<sup>82</sup> The idea of a Bosnian nation, which Benjamin Kállay tried to promote, was not supported by the Russian scholar. Kharuzin believed Kállay's purpose was purely to oppose the Serbian people. The Russian ethnographer was particularly displeased by the fact

76 Capus, *A Travers la Bosnie*, 56.

77 Thomson, *The Outgoing Turk*.

78 Capus, *A Travers la Bosnie*.

79 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*.

80 See, Pakhomova, *Balkan Litmus*.

81 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 38.

82 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 37–38.



that the authorities banned the words ‘Serb’ and ‘Serbian’ in relation to the Orthodox population. Kharuzin believed that the Serbs and Croats had begun to separate in the tenth century, when church masses began to be held in the Slavic language.<sup>83</sup> The final division of the peoples, according to Kharuzin, could have occurred in the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, after the split in the Christian church.<sup>84</sup> The ethnographer considered another feature of belonging to the Serbian or Orthodox nationality was the use of the Cyrillic script, while the Croatian or Catholic nationality used the Latin alphabet.<sup>85</sup> As for Islam, the scholar believed that some of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina had embraced Islam primarily because of the related social and economic privileges,<sup>86</sup> although Kharuzin did not exclude the existence of sincere feelings of the adherents of Islam.<sup>87</sup>

## Newspapers

There is not much information about Bosnia and Herzegovina in Russia’s socio-political space as yet. Published works include the already mentioned study by Oksana N. Novikova. Coverage of the Balkans in the Russian press is addressed in Elena G. Kostrikova’s publications,<sup>88</sup> although in neither case does the research extend to a period earlier than 1908.

Our analysis of the daily newspapers *Novoye vremya* and *Moskovskiye vedomosti* has shown that there was a surge of public interest in Bosnia in 1878 and 1908, as well as in the mid-1880s. This was probably related to the activities of the well-known Slavophile Gavriil Sergeevich Wesselitsky-Bozhidarovich.

It is generally believed that Wesselitsky-Bozhidarovich began his career in 1882 as a London-based correspondent of *Novoye vremya* writing under the pen name Argus.<sup>89</sup> The first dispatch signed ‘Argus’ from Vienna was printed in issue 25 (13) of September 25, 1883.

In his publications from Vienna, the journalist regularly addressed Bosnian themes. Three issues were especially important to him: Catholic propaganda, ‘the Catholic–Jewish’ governance of the occupied province, and rumors of annexation. His correspondence with publisher Alexander Sergeevich Suvorin, which is held

83 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 231.

84 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 232, 241–42.

85 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 231.

86 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 247–48.

87 Kharuzin, *Bosniia-Gertsegovina*, 246.

88 Kostrikova, *Russkaia pressa*; Kostrikova, *Rossiiskoe obshchestvo*.

89 In ancient Greek mythology, Argus is a giant with many eyes who never sleeps.

at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, shows that Wesselitsky stayed in Vienna when he was sending dispatches ostensibly written in Sarajevo.<sup>90</sup>

However, the shift in thematic focus was conditioned not only by Suvorin's demand to write "a nonsense though it is tiny" but also by the fact that Wesselitsky set up a news agency in Berlin called *Allgemeine Reichs Correspondenz – ArcBureau* and in 1884 became a Berlin correspondent for the *Moskovskiye vedomosti* newspaper. He signed his dispatches for the Moscow daily "X.X". In 1885, this newspaper ran a series of articles entitled "Letters from Bosnia and Herzegovina". Considering Gavriil Wesselitsky-Bozhidarovich's interest in his ancestors' country, it can be assumed that the letters were penned by him.

It appears that Wesselitsky concealed the fact that he worked for two leading Russian news outlets at once. Suvorin's archive contains Wesselitsky's letter in which the writer informed him that he worked for a scientific publication. Wesselitsky contributed stories to *Moskovskiye vedomosti* for four years, until the death of the newspaper's publisher Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov in 1887.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs knew Wesselitsky not only as a journalist. In 1885, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, Alexei Borisovich Lobanov-Rostovsky, believed that Wesselitsky, who was living in Dresden but filing stories datelined Zagreb, had organized and become the head of a Bosnian Revolutionary Committee. The Committee was financed by the Slavic Charitable Society. Wesselitsky and his associates were supposedly laying the groundwork for an uprising in the spring of 1886.<sup>91</sup> However, neither the academic literature nor primary sources contain any reference to a revolutionary committee active in the 1880s.

In the spring of 1892, the German authorities expelled him from Germany. While he was still working as a correspondent in Vienna, he had visited London on several occasions, and after his expulsion he relocated there. For more than twenty years, he was a London correspondent for *Novoye vremya*.

Since it appears that the Bosnia and Herzegovina stories published in the dailies *Moskovskiye vedomosti* and *Novoye vremya* are not absolutely trustworthy sources, they should be treated accordingly. These publications ought to be regarded rather as an expression of sympathy for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The documents prepared by Russian analysts supply researchers with a plethora of information such as how the Habsburg Monarchy organized a peaceful life for its subjects, how Russia was preparing for a potential war, and how Russia influenced the destinies of the Balkan nations. Russian documents on Bosnia mostly

90 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva. Fond 459. Suvorin. Opis' 1. Delo 678.

91 AVPRI, Fond 138. Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra. Opis' 467. Delo 759/764. List 127–29.

show Russia's role in Bosnian history. In the majority of Russian sources on Bosnia, there is little in the way of statistics or quantitative data. Diplomats, ethnographers, and journalists presented their own opinions on Bosnia and their picture of Bosnia, or more precisely, Orthodox Bosnia. Russian officials realized that the situation in the multireligious region was very complicated. They analyzed both how Austria–Hungary managed this situation as an empire and their governance model from the point of view of another empire. The main object of observation was the Habsburg experience in the field of modernization and of the maintenance of an empire.

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