THE IDEA OF "EUROPE" AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT[1]

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Abstract:

In recent years, the European Union and its Member States have been struggling with many crises. Economic stagnation and gradual decay of the welfare state have triggered many socio-political issues, the most prominent being the rise of radical political movements. The current state of the EU is raising many concerns. Yet, the idea of "Europe" is not a brainchild of the 20th century; it is the product of historical process that spans over 2 millennia. In that regard, Early Modern Age (15th-18th centuries) should be considered crucial to the process, as this was the time when the instruments of the European policy were established. The subject of this research is the 18th century Europeanisation of the Western Balkans, namely the territory of the modern day Serbia proper. This era saw great improvements, especially following the expansion of Habsburg Empire in 1718 to the territories south of Sava and Danube. Effort was made to establish the contemporary European institutions which could efficiently exploit natural resources, create modern taxation system and implement European mercantilistic policies. Based on the sources of different provenance, the focus of this research will be on the Austrian governance of this region, which had an enormous impact on Serbian society as well.

Keywords: Balkans, Serbia, The Habsburg monarchy, Europeanization, 18th century

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Historical literature distinguishes between two notions of the term "Europe", an older and a younger one. The former refers to the period of the ancient world, when the Hellenic historians, e.g. Herodotus in his *Histories*, sought to give a name to the wider geographical and cultural space that the Greeks inhabited. Thus, *Europe* was just a synonym for the Greek world: in the 5th century BC, this meant continental Greece and the islands, roughly the territory of today's Balkan Peninsula. Like the other two then known continents, *Asia* and *Libya* (Africa), Europe spread in spatial terms, and, over time, this concept meant a growing area. In the era of the Roman Empire, Europe as a term denoting geographical and/or cultural space

completely disappeared. Instead, Rome became a pervasive civilizational and geographical determinant and was equated with the world empire, *orbistherarum*. The rise of Christianity brought great political and cultural upheaval as Roman *orbis therarum* was transformed in the 5th century into *orbis christianus* or *res publica Christiana*, i.e. the Christian world or the Christian republic. It was believed that Christianity coexisted in the same area as the Roman Empire, although the African and Asian provinces were permanently lost in the meantime, while vast areas of northern and eastern Europe adopted Christian faith. Roman Catholic Church sought to present itself as the successor of the Roman Empire: dogma of the four world empires was established, of which Roman should have been the fourth and last until the second coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment. The idea of universal governance also remained alive through the existence of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. The conflict between these two centers of "global governance", the so-called Investiture contest that marked the period from the 10th to the 13th century, dispelled that little of authority that reference to the old Roman name entailed (Pagden, 2002, pp. 42–45; Šmale, 2003, pp. 10–12, 22–26; Gearry, 2007, pp. 9–236; Kožminjski, 2009, pp. 15–73).

The Notion of Europe in the Early Modern Age

The epoch of the younger concept of Europe began with humanism and the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th century. The overall social, political and economic rise of countries of today's Western and Atlantic Europe, as well as waning authority of the Pope and the Emperor, led to a new definition of *Europe*; it gradually emerged from the shadows of the *Christian world* and the process of accepting the name for the continent lasted until that time. Around 1500, Europe was seen as a kind of cultural and geographical affiliation. Important impulses in the ascent of Europe as a cultural determinant found support in centuries of conflict with other cultures (Šmale, 2003, pp. 11–12; Kuncevič, 2007, pp. 33–52). As much as Europe was a site of differences in religion, language, and customs, and as much as there were different countries, in times of a "clash of civilizations", there was solidarity. Such a conflict was the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, humanist, scholar, and the future pope, called for a crusade at the Imperial Diet of Frankfurt in 1454, which would expel Turks from Europe and recover Constantinople, saying "in earlier times we were defeated only in Asia and Africa, and now we face the most difficult defeat in Europe (...) in our own home" (Šmale, 2003, pp. 5, 27).

The key element of the concept of the younger *Europe* was a sovereign nation-state, opposing the idea of a universal world empire. Of course, the process of nation formation was very long; embryos of future nation-states on the European continent appeared around the X century at the latest. Forming nations from the Middle Ages could not be separated from establishing the bureaucracy (Živojinović, 2000, p. 86–97, 319–329; Kuncevič, 2007, p. 52–81). "Construction of the modern age state began with institutionalizing governance, written conduct of dynastic affairs, and the establishment of permanent government archives, along with professionalization of certain groups, like lawyers, who had a decisive part in the process of state formation, systematically collecting information that became the basis of rulers' knowledge, fixing and pulling political borders, and creating a submissive nation" (Šmale, 2003, p.192). The development of science as part of social and intellectual changes in

Europe also helped form a nation-state. New scientific methods, based on empirical research, mathematics, and logic, and its application, caused the *scientific revolution*. The result was a powerful impetus to all branches of science, including historiography, linguistics, cartography, geography, etc., seeking to take advantage of new methods and explain the world. Nation system provided the ability to better categorize and distribute the newly acquired and inherited knowledge (Živojinović, 2000, pp. 32–47).

If we observe early modern Europe from a historical distance, we can notice the development of specific international relationships that did not exist in earlier epochs and were specific only to the European continent at the time. These international relations appeared on the Apennine peninsula. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Italian states developed complex diplomatic instruments: there were the beginnings of modern European diplomacy, with the institution of a permanent diplomatic representative – ambassadors, as well as various kinds of diplomatic and trade agreements, delimitation of spheres of influence, etc. The goal of building new diplomatic relationships was to maintain the balance of power between Italian states, so none of them could become too powerful to endanger others (Živojinović, 2000, p. 92). New ways of diplomatic communication were soon adopted by other states and powers of Europe. In synergy with the phenomenon of building a national bureaucratic state in the period from 15th to 18th century, new diplomatic instruments and relations led to the creation of a European political system, which was to the contemporaries, in fact, *Europe* itself. To paraphrase German historian Wolfgang Schmale, Europe became more than a mere sum of independent states, but not reaching the level of political union yet (Šmale, 2003, p. 194).

Of course, the European political system gradually evolved from medieval notions of universal monarchy, Christian republic or Christian world, led by emperor or Pope, depending on the angle of the observer. Since the power relations changed in favor of the new nation-states this hierarchical and basically hegemonic system became obsolete (Pagden, 2002, p.45)[2]. Instruments of international politics were further enhanced by the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe. This treaty was expected to serve the maintenance of the power distribution between the four former great powers, the Emperor, France, Spain, and Sweden; thus the emperor symbolically gave up the role of head of the Christian republic in favor of a system of balance of power (Šmale, 2003, pp. 196–203). Peace Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 was the last in which the term "Christian Republic" was used to mark the European continent: later treaties exclusively used the term "Europe" (Sutter-Fichtner, 2008, p. 88).

This social and political transformation was limited to the countries of Western and Central Europe. The eastern parts of the continent gradually began to "Europeanize" only in this period (Pagden, 2002, p. 47; Šmale, 2003, p. 52)[3]. To an even greater extent this applies

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[2] The last ruler who clearly aspired to be a universal monarch was Emperor Charles V. On the basis of dynastic marriages, he inherited Spain and its overseas possessions, the imperial crown, and large parts of Central Europe, and was called *totius Europae dominus* – the master of the whole of Europe. This title certainly suggests gradual secularization of the concept of Christian world.

[3] To countries in Western Europe, east of the continent was a complete mystery. There was no consensus on where Europe ends in the east. In ancient and medieval times, the river Don was seen as the border between Europe and Asia. In the *Mappa Europae* (Map of Europe) by Sebastian Munster, composed in 1536, Russia was included only to Don. The eastern border then slightly shifted to the east, and, in the 18th century, Peter the Great divided his empire into the European and Asian part by Ural mountains; science has accepted this division as the border between Europe and Asia.

to the southeast of the continent, the Balkans, the ancient "source" and the "birthplace" of Europe (Bideleux, 2007, p. 27). Muslim Turkish tribes in the 13th century destroyed the Byzantine power in Asia Minor, and in its place established a number of small states, which fought with each other for supremacy. In the next few decades, the Ottoman sultanate acquired supremacy over other Turkish states and moved to the Balkans to continue its conquests. The Ottoman state relatively quickly and almost simultaneously managed to demolish the Orthodox Christian countries, which stood on the path of the *Ghazis*, warriors for the faith: up to mid-fifteenth century, the entire Balkans was under the firm rule of an emerging Islamic empire, and civilization threads that connected the peninsula with the rest of the Christian Europe were interrupted (Mantran, 2002, p. 38–93).

The Habsburg Encroachment on the Western Balkans in the 18th Century

In the 16th and 17th century, Southeastern Europe and the Western Balkans turned into a battleground for supremacy between Habsburg Austria and the Ottoman Turkey. Until Karlovac peace treaty in 1683, the real border as a clear, mapped, physical line did not exist between these two empires. Instead, conflict in a wider border area, i.e. *Military Frontier*, was steady, which was the result not only of Islamic law that prohibited the establishment of permanent borders with Christian neighbors, but also the fact that both empires claimed the Hungarian royal crown (Dabić, 2000, p.9–67; Luis, 2004, pp. 19–77). The Habsburg court's interest in the sultan's Balkan possessions increased by learning about the Ottoman state's weaknesses in the late seventeenth century. Of course, for a military penetration into the Balkans, it was necessary to first develop reliable and accurate maps of the region. In this period in Europe, maps became an instrument of rule, as well as a means for better planning of military operations. One of the most famous map authors in this period was Luigi Ferdinand Marsigli, chief engineer of the Austrian army. Specifying, among other things, the best military routes, he contributed to making the future accurate maps of the Balkans (Mrgić, 2011, pp. 165–176; Todorova, 2006, p. 78–96)[4]. Geographical presentation of Serbia, as a border territory in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, was far better than in the past. By highlighting the title of "Kingdom of Serbia" on maps, it was given great importance, primarily because it was presented as a separate territory, and not as part of the kingdom of Hungary.

After two victorious wars against the Turks (1683–1699; 1716–1718), the Habsburg monarchy gained a territorial foothold onto the Western Balkans after more than 250 years of Ottoman rule, by acquiring the entire kingdom of Hungary along with the northern Serbia with Belgrade. Peace treaties signed in Karlovac (1699) and Požarevac (1718) marked the farthest advance of a European civilization into the Balkan Peninsula before the end of nineteenth century, but also a change in relations between the two empires. Austrian focus on foreign policy in the Balkans shifted to economic and trade issues rather than on territorial expansion.

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[4] Marsigli remained known for his masterpiece, *Opus Danubiale*, printed in 1726 in Vienna. This was the first scientific work on the Danube flow. More importantly, he questioned the size of the Balkan Mountains, which were from ancient times mistakenly believed to stretch from the Black Sea to the Adriatic Sea; now they were correctly limited to the area up to the river Timok.

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By the provisions of the peace treaties, the two empires were separated by a clearly defined linear border – an era of constant warfare on the frontier had been finished. Delimitation was conducted by special deputies and the border was proclaimed sacrosanct, unchangeable, and inviolable (Pešalj, 2014, pp. 21–37)[5]. The President of the Court War Council in Vienna (Hofkriegsrat) and Austrian chief military commander, prince Eugene of Savoy, after the conquest of Belgrade in 1717, considered the Emperor Charles VI (1711–1740) got not only a strong defensive outpost in the Western Balkans, but also an opportunity to establish trade relations in the region in which they had been for centuries suppressed due to the constant state of war (Sutter-Fichtner, 2008, p. 90). Victories against the Turks were supposed to serve the commercial market penetration of the East. Trade agreement with the Ottoman Empire, concluded in 1718, equalized the Habsburg merchants' rights with those of other European powers on the properties of the sultan. They got freedom of movement and trade, with the prior possession of a passport, as well as the release of all costs for traders except customs duties of 3%. Požarevac trade agreement also guaranteed consular protection for Habsburg traders in the Ottoman Empire (Mihneva, 1996, p. 85)[6].

Favorable provisions of the trade agreement inspired Vienna to draw up and implement a broader plan of penetration in the Levant trade. Since the preparation of infrastructure for the successful maritime trade demanded a lot of time and money, penetration of goods from Habsburg territories into the Ottoman Empire was to be done by road through the territory of Serbia. In that regard, Emperor Charles VI (1711–1740) issued a patent in 1719 creating the *Imperial Privileged Oriental Company* (OeStA/FHKA SUS Patente 50.21.(27 May 1719.)), modelled on state-owned trading companies of other European great powers, with branches in Belgrade, Rijeka, and Trieste. A warehouse of goods was also opened in Belgrade, and a little later in Constantinople. Company operations quickly proved to be unprofitable because of the competition of local Serbian traders who were satisfied with small profits, and sometimes sold smuggled goods. Finally, the company was forced to close the Belgrade warehouse (Pešalj, 2011, pp. 144–148). In general, the company was poorly managed, sultan's European holdings were not sufficiently developed to establish a profit-making trade, and lay far away from production centers in the Habsburg monarchy. The company suffered the greatest damage when the Peace of Belgrade (1739) was signed. Austrian negotiators easily gave up possessionsin the Western Balkans, and at the same time failed to provide better trading conditions, so the company went bankrupt and was closed in 1741 (Bowman, 1950, p. 31; Herzfeld, 1919, pp. 4–5).

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[5] In the Middle Ages, European monarchies were perceived as a collection of feudal rights and jurisdiction, not as a physical territory. Territorial fragmentation became an obstacle only when mercantilistic economic thinkers began to see the state as an economic unit, i.e. in the 17th century. Within clear and mapped borders it was easier for the central government to implement a unified fiscal and economic policy and to guarantee public safety. Thus, the state was gradually transformed into a physical territory, owing also to the advancements in geography and cartography.

[6] In addition to trade, liberalized travel of subjects-merchants had deeper significance for the Habsburg monarchy: it was to be used for easier travel of cartographers and engineers for mapping parts of the Balkans that remained under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

The Habsburg Administration in the Kingdom of Serbia (1718–1739)

When Habsburg Monarchy occupied Serbian areas south of the Sava and Danube in 1718, the question of government regulation in them arose. Emperor Charles VI ignored the demands of the Hungarian Parliament to leave them the right over these possessions: instead, the *Kingdom of Serbia* was presented as a heritage of the house of Habsburgs, *patrimonium domus Austriacae*, and the area was placed under the direct administration of the emperor's Court Chamber (Hofkammer) and the Court War Council (Milošević, 2010, p. 21; Biderman, 1972, p. 233). In Belgrade, civil administration was established, with fourteen districts, while seven districts in the east were under the administration of Timisoara. The structure of the Belgrade administration consisted of the Presidency, headed by Earl Alexander Württemberg as "governor of Serbia", Main Chamber Administration, and several departments and senior officials who were under its jurisdiction (General Customs Administration, Organization for Salt Monopoly Control, Forest Administration, and a commission with assistants) (Pecinjački, 1980, p. 113; Ćirković, 2004, p. 156). The reform, whose rationalistic and Enlightenment principles affected all the countries of the Habsburg monarchy when Maria Theresa came to power (1740–1780), received their initial outlines in the newly conquered areas with the help of bureaucratic apparatus subordinate only to central government authorities in Vienna.

Administration tasks were limited to organizing the entire inner life of the country. The issue of keeping the borders and keeping the Austrian army garrisons in the cities was exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Court War Council in Vienna, which often led to disagreements with the Court Chamber (Langer, 1889, p. 187). A large number of important institutions for the functioning of the government were not formed for twenty years of Austrian rule – the lack of judicial system was most visible. In Belgrade, after the Emperor Charles VI issued a statute on the town organization, this function was performed by the city judge (Stadtrichter). People who adjudicated outside Belgrade were not judges as in other Habsburg countries, but various administration officials (Popović, 1950, pp. 81, 203–205, 263; Pavlović, 1901, pp. 12–14). Organization of state administration in the districts was entrusted to deputies and their main tasks were to ensure secure collection of taxes wherein collaborating with local elders called *knezes* and *obor-knezes*. District-level government did not set up its lower bodies in the villages, but it took over organization of *knežina* with self-governments based on common law that existed in the period of Ottoman rule (Grujić, 1914, pp. 62–63). In this regard, Austrian administration represented a clear continuation of the previous regime.

Organization of defense was very important for the Austrian authorities in Serbia and it used the experience of previous Ottoman-Habsburg wars. The country was based on the Military Frontier model, divided into captainates, with commanders from the ranks of local elders. Part of the area closer to the border had military obligations and counted as *Heiduckenvolk* (hayduk villages), and was exempted from paying certain taxes. The residents of these villages had rights and obligations as those of the Military Frontier. Villages in the interior came under chamber administration (*Bauerndörfer* – agricultural villages). They had tax obligations, which financed the Austrian government and garrisons in towns.

One of the first measures of the Austrian government in Serbia was organizing the census. The interest of the state, in addition to proper census, was also forming a general picture of the economic situation in the country, financial situation of subjects, and then determining the measures to improve it, as well as measures to prevent disruptive factors in the implementation

of state fiscal policy (OeStA/FHKAAHK HF Ungarn, Fasz. VUG 20 A, fol, 149. Article 14). During Austrian rule, Serbia made six censuses (1717, 1718–1719, 1721, 1723, 1725, 1735). The accuracy of their results increased with each successive census, and changes in the census books were eventually more and more comprehensive and reflected in the introduction of new population data (Popović, 1950, p. 19). The administration received specific instructions to introduce identical tax system as it existed for centuries in empire's hereditary countries. Tax on land (Grundsteuer), determined on the basis of the quality of arable land, however, was not enforced because for the population that lived for centuries in the Ottoman state it was a mystery. Instead, from 1724, the tax levied on the basis of the number of households (home or sessions) was introduced, and amounted to 24 forints (Pavlović, 1901, pp. 38–42). An important place in terms of income belonged to tolerance tax: German Jews tolerance tax – *Teutschejudenschaft,* and tax for Turkish Jews – *Judenschaft Haratz* (Andraši, 2006, p. 75; Hrabak, 1991, p. 63) and Romanies – *ZigeunerHaratz,* which was an indication of their position in relation to other ethnic groups.

In order to raise the economy, the Austrian administration initiated the programs of resettlement of war-torn territory. Immigrants were attracted by a variety of tax breaks. Belgrade and other towns received catholic Germans-colonists originating from Speyer, Worms, and Mainz (Kallbruner, 1938). In Belgrade they created their own municipality, called Danube or German Belgrade. Germans were given various benefits in terms of land, taxation, and army lodging. Belgrade completely changed the ethnic structure, since Turks withdrew from it, which also favored the Serbian population that experienced both numerical and cultural expansion in contact with European civilization. They concentrated around the existing Orthodox Cathedral and Metropolitan court, where they formed their municipality, known as the Serbian or Sava Belgrade. Serbian town administration was organized by the model of the Serbian municipality in Buda and Southern German towns, and received privileges such as those Germans had. Thanks to the Austrian mercantilistic politics, Belgrade became a trade and transit center: privileges offered by Požarevac trade agreement attracted Ottoman merchants and initiated the import of luxury goods from Europe, such as furniture, tableware, paintings and portraits, civil clothes (Gavrilović, 1997, pp. 217–218; Samardzic, 2011, p. 260).

Following the idea of the Austrian authorities, Belgrade was supposed to take on the appearance of a European Baroque town. Work on fortress reconstruction started immediately after the Turkish surrender of the city of 1717. Of extensive fortification works, only the gate of Charles VI on the northeastern bastion of Belgrade fortress survived to date. During the first decade of the Austrian rule, about 80 private and public buildings were raised. With its baroque architecture, *Alexander Württemberg's barracks* dominated the town, built on the old muslim cemetery, which in 1726 became the palace of the governor of Serbia. Two Roman Catholic churches were built, too: a Franciscan one in 1728 on the site of the old mosque, and a Jesuit one in 1732. The emergence of Baroque architecture and Jesuit cultural events in Belgrade were supposed to reflect the character of the Habsburg Monarchy, as the victor over the Turks (Tomašević, 1997, pp. 69–78). The baroque style's expansion marked transition from feudalism to modern nation-state and capitalism, especially since 1683, when it became clear that Austria was inclined to respect religious freedom in the case of security threats (Samardzic, 2011, pp. 259–262).

Conclusion

Although Europe as a cultural and spatial concept was known to the ancient Greeks, not until the Early Modern Age was it completely accepted as a geographical and civilizational determinant, gradually replacing the term Christian world. Two main elements of the newly emerging political Europe were the building of a nation-state and complex instruments of diplomatic relations that were developed to maintain the power distribution between the same nation-states. Ottoman Empire that had controlled the Balkan Peninsula since the 15th century did not partake in this process. Instead, it waged a Holy War against European Christian states, namely the Habsburg monarchy. Since the end of the 16th century the Ottoman state was weakening and started to lose territory. In 1718 parts of the Western Balkans, including Serbia and Belgrade, came under the rule of the Habsburgs.

Habsburg governance over Serbia (1718–1739), although short, had a lasting impact on the Western Balkans. First of all, it had rediscovered the region to the rest of Europe via accurate maps. Ottoman Empire, through the peace treaties signed with Christian states, was implicitly accepted in the European system of balance of power. Effort was made to integrate the European possessions of Ottoman Empire with the wider European economic area through the activities of Oriental company. The governance based on rationalistic and Enlightenment principles affected local Serbian population, as it was introduced for the first time with the European division of administration on civilian and military branches, previously unknown in the expansion-driven Ottoman Empire. Belgrade became the center of Serbian national movement, and the Austrian Baroque and civic culture was adapted to Serbian Orthodox needs. As for Habsburg construction effort in Belgrade, very little survived the reestablishment of Turkish rule; most of the buildings were destroyed or got their purpose changed. Since the Peace of Belgrade, Serbian urban population moved to the territory of southern Hungary, today's Vojvodina, where they transferred the achievements of their Balkan civilization, enriched with European experience. In the future, these territories were the venue of Serbian national revival.

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