ARTICLE

The Paris System in Western Europe: Minorities, Self-Determination, and the Management of Difference in the "Civilized West"

Emmanuel Dalle Mulle,[1] Volker Prott[2] and Alessandro Ambrosino[3]

[1]Departamento de Historia, Teorías y Geografía Políticas, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain; [2]School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Aston University, Birmingham, United Kingdom and [3]Department of International History and Politics, Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland

Corresponding author: Emmanuel Dalle Mulle; Email: edalle@ucm.es

Abstract

In most accounts of peacemaking after World War I, "flawed" decisions at "Versailles" caused the ethnically mixed states of Central and Eastern Europe to descend into violent ethnic clashes, while the allegedly more homogenous Western European states faced few issues with minorities. This article challenges this simplistic view by examining the treatment of German-speaking minorities in the borderlands of Alsace-Lorraine, South Tyrol, and Eupen-Malmedy between 1918 and 1923 in the immediate post-war and the early interwar period. Building on an innovative comparative framework of five key variables, we find that, in all three cases, post-war borders generated incentives for the respective governments to suppress their new minorities, and that states used ethnic markers to target them. The strength of state institutions and liberal principles account for a reversal (Alsace-Lorraine), moderation (Eupen-Malmedy), or hardening (South Tyrol) of measures. International commitment to defend the new borders and the absence of a tradition of ethnic conflict also had a significant impact.

Keywords: nationalism; minorities; Western Europe; Paris system; interwar period; borderlands

One of the ironies of World War I is that the same principle of nationality that had contributed to setting Europe ablaze in 1914 was enshrined as the main pillar of the post-war peace settlements in the form of national self-determination (Redslob 1931, 5). The resulting "Paris system" – the international order established at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 – was built on the premise that "the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983, 1).[1] Henceforth, the Allies proclaimed, political authority and state power ought to be based on the consent of the governed. In practice, the democratic principle of self-determination soon translated into attempts to create ethnically homogeneous nation-states (Manela 2007; Weitz 2008, 2015; Throntveit 2011; Prott 2016). Redrawing the map of much of Central and Eastern Europe, the ideal of self-determination collided with realities on the ground. But ethnically mixed populations with multi-layered collective identities existed not just in Central and Eastern Europe.[2] Western European borderlands also featured patchworks of people speaking different languages and holding political allegiances that often conflicted with their rulers' demands for loyalty. Following the Paris Peace Conference, the "problem" of minorities became a pressing issue for several Western European states. Even so, the Allies created a minority protection regime supervised by the League of Nations that only applied to

the eastern half of the continent. The great powers, and later the League of Nations, de facto defined minorities as an Eastern European problem (Frank 2017, 45–46).[3]

Despite important studies published since the early 1990s by scholars such as Larry Wolff (1994) and Maria Todorova (1997), the historiography of the early interwar period is still today hampered by a stereotypical depiction of a calm and ethnically homogeneous "West" pitted against a turbulent and violent "East" troubled by large ethnic minorities. Indeed, historians studying minorities in the interwar period have rarely shifted their focus to the "civilized West." Although there are important regional historiographies on specific "questions," such as Alsace-Lorraine and South Tyrol, until recently most historical works have focused on Eastern European cases, while Western European regional historiographies have rarely embedded their findings in the wider international context.

A growing number of scholars have begun addressing these shortcomings. Rejecting what Rogers Brubaker (1998) has called the "seething-cauldron" view of Eastern Europe, specialists of the Habsburg Empire have challenged "the tradition of pathologizing" the wider region and its multi-ethnic states (Judson 2016; Snyder 2018; Wheatley 2019; Becker and Wheatley 2020). In a similar vein, Mark Mazower (1997), Carole Fink (2006), and Eric Weitz (2008) have highlighted the disturbing affinities between concepts of minority protection, on the one hand, and policies of ethnic classification and mass deportation, on the other, as post-war states across all European regions used coercive measures of varying degrees to mold their heterogeneous populations into homogeneous nations (see also Naimark 2002; Mann 2009; Ther 2016). In more recent years, a series of young scholars – including Tara Zahra (2008), Tim Wilson (2010), Volker Prott (2016) and Shannon Monaghan (2018) (see also Nuñez Seixas 2001; Dalle Mulle and Bieling 2023a) – have conducted comparative studies that either cross the East-West divide or zero in on Western European cases.[4]

This article builds on these calls for a more balanced account of the regionally diverse dynamics of the Paris system. Our comparative analysis of Alsace-Lorraine, South Tyrol, and Eupen-Malmedy not only contributes to shifting the focus of the historiography from East to West, but also allows us to identify the factors that, operating at the local, national, and international levels, determined whether a region would see a peaceful or a violent trajectory following the conclusion of the peace treaties. The resulting multi-level analysis of interwar minority politics helps better assess and explain both the fragility and the (at least temporary) resilience of the interwar international order. Furthermore, we suggest that the comparative study of Western European cases as presented here can be applied to other interwar regional settings, helping us overcome continuing divisions between "East" and "West" (Prott 2023). But this article could also prove to be a useful analytical tool for scholars working on ethnic conflict and minority issues in other global regions and historical eras.

The article examines three disputed borderlands that changed national affiliation after the war: Alsace-Lorraine in France, South Tyrol in Italy, and Eupen-Malmedy in Belgium. While Alsace-Lorraine and Eupen-Malmedy had been part of the German Empire before the war, South Tyrol had belonged to the now defunct Austria-Hungary. All three regions found themselves outside the scope of, and thus unprotected by, the minority treaties of the League of Nations.[5] The three sections below explore how in each of these cases, in the immediate post-war and early interwar period, the drive to national disambiguation that emanated from the Paris system interacted differently with liberal checks, economic needs, and local circumstances.

We identify five factors that, in their interplay at the international, national, and local levels, worked to fuel, or to contain, violent conflict between states and their new minorities:

(1) *The adequacy of territorial decisions*: the extent to which the decisions at the Paris Peace Conference respected the will and expectations of local inhabitants and were, therefore, deemed legitimate;

(2) *Local identities and markers of difference*: the nature (religious, linguistic, descent) and sharpness of ethnic divisions;

(3) *Traditions of ethnic conflict*: the extent to which the areas had previously experienced episodes of violence or intense conflict between the different populations living in the region or in direct confrontation with state authorities;

(4) *State power and commitment to liberal principles*: the extent to which state authorities were capable of enforcing decisions; the extent to which democratic institutions operated effectively; and the extent to which political elites adhered to principles such as the rule of law, citizenship rights, civic liberties, and democratic representation;

(5) *International commitment*: the extent to which the great powers and the states immediately involved were willing to defend the new border.

This systematic comparative approach enables us to trace and explain the varying dynamics resulting from the interplay of these five factors in the three regions analyzed. In all three cases, new borders coupled with the ideal of national homogeneity generated incentives for the respective governments to assimilate, deport, or suppress their new minorities. All three countries of the "civilized West" used repressive and in part violent measures to homogenize the regions inhabited by their newly acquired German-speaking minorities. In this regard, they showed little difference from the "minority states" of Central and Eastern Europe. Despite this common homogenizing dynamic, the strength of state institutions and the elites' commitment to liberal principles largely determined whether repressive measures were contained or not. In Belgium and France, stable liberal and democratic institutions allowed politicians to moderate or reverse oppressive policies. Italian moderate forces, meanwhile, succumbed to fascist assaults, causing a shift from tolerance to forceful assimilation. The weakness of traditions of ethnic conflict worked to reduce conflict in all three regions. Strong international commitment had opposite effects in France and Italy, helping to defuse violence in the former, while contributing to stoking it in the latter. Although some factors played a greater role than others, and allowing for the different impact of specific domestic economic contexts and international events such as the Russian Revolution, it is the analysis of the interaction of these five factors that provides new insights into the dynamics and impact of the Paris system in Western European borderlands.

Contained Escalation: Alsace-Lorraine

Following the defeat of Germany in November 1918, Alsace-Lorraine was subjected to a combination of uncompromising French territorial claims, an ambivalent and tense situation on the ground, and the imperatives of national self-determination. Crucially, the military and political collapse of the German Empire unhinged the balance of forces that had existed in the region until the end of the war, allowing French administrators and policymakers to set aside earlier concerns about a gradual transition and the need to preserve local particularities. The result was a temporary escalation of state-led violence against the German minority, including expropriation, mass deportations, and a policy of forced assimilation of the native population (Harvey 1999; Boswell 2000; Schmauch 2004; Grohmann 2005; Prott 2016, chap. 5). After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, however, this rigid policy gave way to a more accommodating approach that continued throughout the interwar period – a dynamic totally opposite to the hardening of minority policies in South Tyrol (Fischer 2010, chaps. 5–7; Carrol 2018).

While it was based on the historical boundary that had existed before 1871, the Allied decision to move the Franco-German border back to the Rhine was hardly as straightforward as French statesmen and policymakers would have liked. The rise of national self-determination in the wake of the Russian Revolution and, shortly later, American President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points forced both the French and German governments on the defensive. The French socialists and the German social democrats in particular were hard pressed to defend their stance that the region should be awarded to, or stay with, their country after the war without popular consultation. Indeed, the preliminary discussions at the planned socialist peace conference in Stockholm in the spring of

1917 reveal a strong international impetus to carry out a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine to resolve this "question" in a peaceful and democratic manner (Stillig 1975; Kirby 1982; Prott 2016, 65–8). In January 1918, shortly after Wilson (1918) had announced his Fourteen Points, including point eight that "the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine … should be righted," the French experts and policymakers preparing the reintegration of the "lost provinces" were unable to agree on what the president meant. While some argued that Wilson had expressed his unequivocal support for a "pure and simple" return of the provinces to France, others noted that Wilson's eighth point did not exclude the need to carry out a plebiscite.[6] Consequently, the French stepped up their lobbying with American and British policymakers and experts until the end of the war (Ter Minassian 1997; Young 2004; Fischer 2014; Prott 2014). These efforts were successful in convincing the French allies to support the French war aim publicly and take it off the agenda at the Paris Peace Conference. Yet doubts remained. As late as June 12, 1919, James Headlam-Morley (1972, 143), a British delegate at the peace conference, privately told French diplomat André Tardieu that in his view the fait accompli of Alsace-Lorraine was "radically and completely wrong and unjustifiable," and if Britain did not intervene, it was only because it regarded the issue as an internal matter of France.

While doubts remained concerning the legitimacy of French claims on Alsace-Lorraine, the region's complex web of overlapping religious, linguistic, social, and political identities defied any hopes for a smooth transition to French rule. Alsace and Lorraine have a long history as borderlands between France and the German-speaking territories east of the Rhine (Carrol 2018, chap. 1). Travel diaries long into the nineteenth century reflect a "double culture" and underline the gradual transitions from one country or "civilization" to the other (Struck 2006; Fischer 2010, 22–23, 25, 82–83, 183, 201). The German annexation of 1871 – bringing with it growing immigration from territories east of the Rhine and fostering political, economic, and cultural contact with the rest of Germany – accentuated and complicated the region's character as a land of mixture and transition. While most Alsatians and Lorrainers spoke German or a Germanic dialect, for instance, there were sizeable French-speaking regions in the western parts, and many members of the middle and upper classes continued to use French as their main language in business and at home (Rimmele 1996; Berschin 2006). Not only divisions of class, region, politics, and religion, but also intermarriages between locals and Germans from the interior further complicated the picture (Wahl and Richez 1993; Uberfill 2001).

When the French troops arrived in Alsace-Lorraine in late November 1918, they were thus faced with an ambivalent situation that hardly corresponded to the idyllic propaganda image of perennially Francophile "lost provinces" unchanged by time or German influence (Hansi 1913, 3, 9; Nolan 2005, chap. 4; Roth 2010, chap. 3). Eager to assert their authority and demonstrate the unmistakably French character of the region, the French administrators began classifying the local population into four groups: "native" Alsatians and Lorrainers whose parents or who had themselves been born in the region before 1870 (group A); those of "mixed" origin, with one parent born in Alsace-Lorraine before 1870 and the other in Germany (group B); those of foreign origin from neutral and allied countries (group C; mostly Swiss, Belgian and Italian citizens); and those who had themselves been born in the German interior or whose parents had been born there before 1870 (group D) (Harvey 1999, 548–549; Roth 2010, chap. 3). These four groups received temporary identity cards, granting them different levels of access to government services – for example, more or less favorable exchange rates when changing their German *marks* to the French *francs.* Later, the authorities and parts of the local population used the identity cards to dismiss primarily "D" cardholders from their jobs, seize part of their property, and, in many cases, expel them to Germany (Prott 2016, 166–170). Within a few weeks, the French administration had thus established clear markers of difference, allowing them and the local population to target the German minority.

It is true that, like Eupen-Malmedy and South Tyrol, Alsace-Lorraine did not have a record of severe ethnic conflict or upheaval. However, it had a recent history of tensions between the German military authorities, who demanded unconditional loyalty of the population, and local inhabitants,

who pushed for the recognition of their regional particularities, their affinities to France, and equal legal status within the German Empire (Wahl and Richez 1993; Preibusch 2006; Fischer 2010). Mostly, these incidents concerned symbolic disputes around the use of French emblems, but the Saverne Affair of November 1913 demonstrated that they could escalate to serious violent confrontations with national ramifications (Schoenbaum 1982). The First World War acted as a catalyst of these preexisting tensions, sidelining more liberal approaches to integrate the region in the German state. German military authorities' rigid policy of demanding unconditional loyalty – while suspending most personal liberties – transformed economic hardship and political discontent into national antagonism and ubiquitous suspicion (Kramer 2002; Prott 2021a; Prott 2021b). Toward the end of the war, the German government began a policy of aggressive Germanization, which involved changing French names of places and persons, the expropriation of French-owned large properties, and the resettlement of Germans from eastern parts of the Empire to Alsace-Lorraine, right up to planning the partition of the region after the war (Preibusch 2006, 519–568). At the same time, the authorities were confronted with large numbers of denunciations where neighbors accused each other of anti-German behavior, a practice that seamlessly continued in the opposite direction after the war.

When the war was over, these experiences of violence and nationalist upheaval culminated in a climate of suspicion, national divisions, and eagerness to settle scores. The drive of French administrators to classify the population and target the German minority, then, needs to be understood both as an attempt to dispel remaining doubts about the legitimacy of the initial territorial decision to award the region to France *and* as a reaction to bottom-up pressure to cleanse the region of the German minority (Prott 2016, 158–160).

The impetus for state-led violence against what had become a minority was further fueled by a combination of the military, political, and moral collapse of German rule and the region's unclear legal status following the armistice of November 11, 1918. As most Alsatians and Lorrainers in the immediate aftermath of the war longed for economic stability and a clear break with Germany, the incoming French administrators met with little resistance as they dissolved the revolutionary workers' councils that had formed in Strasbourg on November 9 and 10, 1918, effectively silencing any calls for self-determination or far-reaching autonomy (Carrol 2018, 45–48). Occupied by French troops and *de facto* a part of France, but not yet *de jure*, there was then a strong push by local inhabitants as well as the new administration to establish facts on the ground and remove any remaining doubts about the region's French character before the conclusion of peace. By the time the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, over 100,000 Germans had been expelled from Alsace-Lorraine, many of whom had lost or left behind their property, personal belongings, and, in some cases, even their family (Prott 2016, chap. 5).

Yet contrary to the acquiescence of the Italian political elite to fascist violence in South Tyrol, the strength of the French authorities and their commitment to liberal and democratic values eventually put a break on the expulsions and allowed for a gradual return to the rule of law. From February 1919, it became clear that the crackdown on the German minority and the swift introduction of the French system were causing serious economic disruption and malcontent among growing parts of the local population (Schmauch 2004, 495–532; Rossé et al. 1936, 543–550, 563–565). From March 1919 and, more markedly, following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, the French government gradually backtracked from its rigid initial policy of rapid and full reintegration of the "lost provinces" into the French state. The initial fervor of classification, deportation, and assimilation gave way to a more accommodating approach. Notably, local authorities began to act more flexibly in allowing "D" and "B" cardholders to be moved to more advantageous categories ("B" and "A") while slowing down the mass expulsion of the German minority (Prott 2016, 156). French policymakers explicitly referred to democratic procedures and a liberal approach as the most effective means to win over those Alsatians and Lorrainers who remained skeptical of the new administration. As early as February 12, 1919, Paul Matter, legal advisor to the French war ministry, argued that French policy in Alsace-Lorraine should refrain

from "acts of violence" and should instead "demonstrate this spirit of liberalism and goodwill that is our honor and our strength."[7] National classification and expulsions came to a virtual halt after the peace treaty had been signed, which meant that about half the population of German origin – predominantly women with Alsatian or Lorrainer spouses, key workers, and senior citizens – was able to stay in Alsace-Lorraine, either as naturalized French citizens or even retaining their German citizenship (Prott 2016, 166–170; Vlossak 2010, chap. 5).

In marked contrast to South Tyrol and Eupen-Malmedy, where the Allies' belated support of the status quo opened the door to more repressive measures, in Alsace-Lorraine, strong Allied commitment to the new border instead facilitated an easing of nationalist pressure and ethnic violence by removing ambivalence and the perceived need to eliminate ethnic diversity. Despite the noticeable degree of ambivalence in Wilson's eighth point and some uneasiness among British and American delegates, Allied support for France's claim to Alsace-Lorraine was comparatively strong. When the war ended with an Allied victory, neither international observers nor the German government, nor indeed local inhabitants, expected anything different than a return of the region to France. This acceptance of the new border is mirrored in the attitude displayed by the German delegation at the permanent inter-allied armistice commission at Spa that handled complaints arising from the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France. While upholding a rhetoric of self-determination and lamenting the injustice of the Allied decision, the German representative quickly focused on practical matters, such as cases of harassment of German citizens, forced separation of families, sequestration of property and furniture, and theft of money and valuables during the journey from Alsace-Lorraine to Germany by French police and military.[8] The Franco-German rapprochement that culminated in the Locarno accords of 1925 contributed significantly to a further easing of tensions in the region by shifting the focus to cultural rights and regional autonomy and away from the more explosive issues of separatism and a territorial plebiscite.[9]

Even so, the Ruhr Crisis of 1923 and later the British policy of appeasement exposed the limits of international commitment to French security and the Versailles Treaty (Jackson 2006). This hesitation to defend the Paris peace treaties was at least partly due to the acknowledgement, notably in Britain, that the peacemakers had frequently given preference to strategic priorities over the principle of self-determination.[10] The "question" of Alsace-Lorraine thus lingered on until the end of the Second World War, when the devastations caused by Nazi Germany irreversibly discredited any German claims to the region.

The Slow Slide into Repression: South Tyrol

Italian propaganda celebrated the victory in WWI as the completion of national unification. However, the victory presented the Kingdom with an unprecedented challenge: integrating populations of different languages and national identifications within the fabric of the Italian state. At the Paris Peace Conference, Italian diplomats defended their claims over South Tyrol on account of security concerns (on Italy and the Paris Peace Conference, see Albrecht-Carrié 1938; Caccamo 2000; Cattaruzza 2016; Suppan 2019; Varsori and Zaccaria 2020). Even so, to bolster the legitimacy of Italy's annexation of the area, in the early post-war months, Italian authorities treated the German-speaking minority in accordance with liberal standards and promised some form of autonomy. By contrast, in Alsace-Lorraine, the authorities' perception of the German minority as a threat to their claim that the region was truly French initially fueled an escalation of repression and expulsion. In South Tyrol, Italian authorities made little effort to argue that the local population was "Italian." Thus, a mix of sincere liberal intentions and fears that the Allies may change their mind if Italian authorities "misbehaved" motivated liberal policies in South Tyrol (Steurer 1980, 52–63). The Treaty of St. Germain, signed on September 10, 1919, finalized the Italian-Austrian border and relieved the Italian government of the pressure to showcase liberal policies. At the same time, the authorities' promises to grant autonomy to the new provinces triggered vociferous protests from radical nationalists and fascists who accused Italian executives of selling out these territories to the

former "enemy." In the following three years, through propaganda and violent action, the fascists progressively forced moderate politicians to resort to more repressive measures. In many ways, the slow slide into illiberal minority polices in South Tyrol between 1918 and 1923 reflects the wider transition from democracy to authoritarianism in the entire country. Indeed, the new provinces became a testing ground in which the fascist *squadre* could probe the resistance of state authorities to their provocations (Gatterer 1968, 416; Klabjan and Bajc 2023).

The Allied decision to grant Italy control over South Tyrol was controversial. It resulted from a mix of strategic considerations, the obligations contracted by France and Great Britain with the 1915 Treaty of London, and the great powers' refusal to accept Italian demands on the eastern border (Cattaruzza and Zala 2011, 141–156; Überegger 2019, 104–136; Wolff 2020, 115–167; Mulligan 2020, 19–39; Desberg 2020, 59–88). The minimum that Italian diplomats aimed to obtain at the Paris Peace Conference was the confirmation of the territorial acquisitions promised to them in 1915. These included the border regions of Trentino-South Tyrol and Venezia Giulia (including Trieste, Istria, and most of Dalmatia). Both annexations, however, were at odds with the principle of national self-determination (Suppan 2019, 80–101). In the north, Italian authorities sought to obtain the best military line to protect the country in case of an attack and argued that fixing the border at the Brenner was required by "the supreme reasons of security and peace" (Albrecht-Carrié 1938, 96–100).[11] At the same time, Italian envoys reassured the Entente that they would treat German speakers liberally and felt hard-pressed to show that they could keep their word (Toscano 1975, 1–14). For instance, when several radical nationalists criticized General Guglielmo Pecori-Giraldi, who ruled the area until July 1919, for being too lenient with the local population, he vigorously replied that any mistreatment of the South Tyroleans would only weaken Italy's position in Paris (Pecori-Giraldi 1985[1919], 30–32; Di Michele 2003, 50–59). With this warning in mind, Pecori Giraldi stuck to an accommodative approach that, until 1921, was followed by the civil administration as well (Steurer 1980, 52–63).

Ethnic divisions in Trentino-South Tyrol ran along linguistic lines between Italian and German speakers. The 1910 Austrian census classified 83% of the 242,502 inhabitants of South Tyrol as Germans, 13% as Ladinians and 3% as Italians (Suppan 2019, 80n120). The region was overwhelmingly monolingual German-speaking, and the linguistic cleavage was relatively sharp. However, identities in South Tyrol were fluid. At the end of the war, people displayed three, in part overlapping, forms of territorial identification: to the Crown Land of Tyrol, which involved a sense of geographical and historical unity with North Tyrol; to Austria as a politico-administrative unit of the former Empire (and, later, as the Austrian Republic); and to the German cultural and linguistic community (Steurer 1980, 37; Cole 1995, 61–83). This complexity notwithstanding, two things were clear. First, most inhabitants of the region wanted to keep North and South Tyrol united and contemplated a wide range of options to reach this goal. Second, autonomy within Italy ranked lowest among the preferences of the South Tyrolean population (Pergher 2018, 52–59).

Following the armistice, most South Tyroleans adopted an attitude of deferential detachment rather than open hostility toward the new rulers, which, as seen above, until 1921 tended to be tolerant. Similarly, minority representatives acted in a pragmatic manner. They never contemplated violent means of struggle and instead focused their energy on lobbying international actors to support their self-determination claims (on this para-diplomacy, see Dalle Mulle and Bieling 2023b). Once these attempts failed, mostly because of the strong international commitment to the border established in Paris, the Tyrolean political elite sought to take advantage of the conciliatory mood of Italian authorities and began negotiations for autonomy. Eduard Reut-Nicolussi, Karl Tinzl, and other Tyrolean nationalists never abandoned their calls for self-determination, but they also declared several times, in Parliament and outside, their willingness to collaborate loyally with Italian authorities (Rusinow 1969, 65–70; Steininger 2016, 29–38).[12] Hence, clear markers of difference, mostly along linguistic lines, existed but were mobilized disruptively only from 1921 onward.

Weak traditions of ethnic conflict facilitated this initial outcome. Until WWI, relations between Italian and German speakers in Trentino-South Tyrol were comparatively peaceful. Apart from a hardening of irredentist positions among Italian political parties at the turn of the century and some occasional clashes, such as the 1904 "Events of Innsbruck" around demands for an Italian university, irredentism remained a minority position. Among the Italian-speaking mass, loyalty to the *Kaiser* and national indifference prevailed (Monteleone 2009, 13–52; Bellabarba 2012, 397–439). The outbreak of the war and Italy's decision to side with the Entente altered this situation. The conflict triggered a centralization of power in the hands of the executive in Vienna and the army, as well as a strengthening of Austro-German nationalism. Military authorities in particular became suspicious of non-German nationalities (Cole 2012, 29–43; Stibbe 2014, 479–499). In Trentino-South Tyrol, imperial authorities began considering Italian speakers as an internal enemy to surveil. After Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary, the Austrian military removed more than 70,000 residents from this area, allegedly to fight Italian irredentism. Most of them were resettled in other areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where they received little support from the state. All associations of an Italian nature were abolished, and dissent was repressed (Livio 2017, 185–99; Frizzera 2017, 11–42). Even so, nationalist tensions remained too weak to erupt in outright ethnic violence after the war, except for isolated events that were mostly the result of external (fascist) intervention. Yet these tensions provided fascist activists with a reservoir of resentment that could be stirred up and mobilized to fuel a policy of aggressive assimilation of the German-speaking minority.[13]

In their mobilization efforts, radical nationalists and fascists profited from the weakness of state institutions and the frail commitment to liberal principles of moderate politicians in Rome and South Tyrol. These were the main factors that caused South Tyrol's slow slide into repression in the years immediately following the end of the war, as Italian political institutions gradually succumbed to fascist violent action and growing demands for repressive measures against minorities. Actually, the willingness of moderate politicians to accommodate minority demands was dubious from the outset. Italian authorities made it clear early on that, although they were open to devolve some powers, they could not contemplate the creation of a "state within the state."[14] Even more so, subsequent governments showed little interest in reaching an agreement on autonomy.[15] Half-hearted support for liberal principles undermined the authorities' attempts at accommodating the minorities' demands and fueled increasingly aggressive efforts by fascist mobs to establish a policy of forced Italianization. In Rome, successive governments, led by liberal, radical, and even socialist politicians, adopted an evasive attitude toward the promises made by several public figures in 1919 to grant autonomy to South Tyrol. Negotiations began shortly after the signature of the Treaty of St. Germain and dragged on inconclusively until the fascist coup in October 1922 (Trafojer 1971, 172–194). The social turmoil of the *biennio rosso* contributed to delaying the process, as it diverted the government's attention away from the resolution of the minority question. Even more so, the liberal political establishment found it convenient to turn a blind eye, or even abet, fascist actions against minorities and trade unions, which in some cases coincided, although much more in Venezia Giulia than in South Tyrol (Klabjan and Bajc 2023, 320–324).

General Civil Commissioner Luigi Credaro, who ruled South Tyrol from July 1919 to October 1922, embodied this ambivalent commitment to liberal principles. Although initially liberal, Credaro's attitude became gradually more repressive, as witnessed by the case of the Corbino Law that he promoted in 1921. The bill forced Italian-speaking parents of the mixed area south of Bolzano/Bozen, who often sent their children to German-speaking schools, to register them in Italian institutions. Although illiberal, in principle, the law did not directly threaten the German-speaking community in the province. Yet the commissions set up to determine whether families were Italian-speaking often decided arbitrarily on the matter, a clear indication that regional authorities sought to change the linguistic makeup of the area. Similar to most of the Italian political elite, Credaro was in favor of the "penetration" of the Italian language and culture into South Tyrol and was ready to adopt strong measures to achieve this aim. Furthermore, Credaro was

not able to contain, and even condoned, fascist violence in South Tyrol, as witnessed by the events of October 1922. On the first of that month, a fascist commando occupied a German-speaking school in Bolzano/Bozen, encountering virtually no resistance from police forces. The fascists made a series of requests, among which to convert the educational institution into an exclusively Italian school. When their demands were accepted, the fascists occupied other buildings in the city and made further requests, including the closure of the office of General Civil Commissioner Credaro, to which the Italian government promptly consented. This submissive attitude of central and regional institutions emboldened fascist activists. The March on Bolzano, as the events described above were called, foreshadowed the successful coup staged by Mussolini less than a month later with the March on Rome (*Nell'anno III della Marcia su Roma* 1925; Steininger 2016, 53; Di Michele 2003, 81–82, 110–111).

In 1919, uncertainty about the final outcome of the Peace Conference and the need to show that Italy could rule these areas as a "civilized" country favored the adoption of a cautious policy. Yet with time the legitimacy of the border consolidated and external pressure ebbed, revealing the cracks in the foundations of Italian promises to treat minorities liberally.

Paradoxically, at Paris, there were few doubts about moving the Italo-Austrian border up to the Brenner in the Alps. Allied resistance mostly focused on Italian claims on Venezia Giulia (Steurer 1980, 52–59; Macmillan 2001, 290–291). Despite asserting that Italian frontiers had to be readjusted along "clearly recognizable lines of nationality" (Wilson, 1918), as stated in the ninth of his Fourteen Points, President Wilson early on accepted Italy's annexation of South Tyrol. In a stormy session at the Paris Peace Conference in May 1919, Wilson clashed with Italian Prime Minister Orlando over the Treaty of London and the drawing of the border with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, all the while defending his decision to award South Tyrol to Italy. Wilson noted, somewhat contradictorily, that the "principle of self-determination" must be applied everywhere, "except where other paramount considerations, such as the existence of the Alps, were introduced" (Hankey 1919, 698; Mantoux 1992, 226).[16] Yet prolonged discussion about the eastern border made uncertainty over the precise outcome of the peace negotiations linger on until the conclusion of talks, which induced Italian authorities to tread carefully in South Tyrol.

After the signature of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, in September 1919, however, Italy had little reason to fear international pressure to modify the Brenner border. This was especially the case as, until at least the mid-1920s, Germany and Austria were too beleaguered by domestic problems to be able to make any meaningful attempts to revise the outcome established at Paris (Steininger 2016, 117–136; Varsori, Zaccaria, and Guiotto 2020, 160–161). Italian authorities began feeling insecure about their hold over South Tyrol only with the rise to power of Hitler in 1933. Henceforth, the region became a thorn in the side of Italo-German relations, which the two countries tried to eliminate once and for all with the 1939 Option Agreement, albeit to no avail (Stuhlpfarrer 1985; Scroccaro 2000; Von Hartungen, Miori and Rosani 2006; Pergher 2018, 203–242; Dalle Mulle and Ambrosino 2023). Contrary to Alsace-Lorraine, where strong international commitment to the new border ultimately helped alleviate tensions, in South Tyrol, it had the opposite effect, liberating authorities from international oversight and ultimately contributing to enabling the fascists to pursue a rigid policy of assimilation. Eventually, the liberal elite's lack of commitment to respecting minority rights and the weakness of state institutions in controlling radical actors on the ground were the key factors explaining Italy's slow slide into authoritarianism and repression. Yet the settlement of the border question and strong international commitment to abide by that decision removed a powerful external brake that had restrained domestic assimilationist dynamics in the immediate aftermath of the war.[17]

Paternalist Tolerance: Eupen-Malmedy

After four years of German occupation, Belgium's restoration had become one of the priorities of the Entente, as is evidenced in Wilson's seventh point, according to which the country "must be

evacuated and restored" (Wilson 1918). At Paris, the Belgian Foreign Minister Paul Hymans formulated substantial territorial claims against the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Germany. The Allies agreed to compensate Belgium's war sufferings only with German areas. Belgium thus received the districts of Eupen, Malmedy, and St. Vith (henceforth Eupen-Malmedy) on the promise to allow a "public expression of opinion" on annexation (Treaty of Versailles 1919, art. 34; Balace 2013). In light of the principle of self-determination, these acquisitions were controversial (Marks 1981, 168; Middelkoop 2010). However, due to the fact that Eupen-Malmedy's population partially spoke French and, arguably, because of the smaller size of its territory, the annexation was not considered as contentious as South Tyrol's attribution to Italy. Learning from the French difficulties in Alsace-Lorraine, Belgian authorities concluded that a liberal policy of recognition of minority rights was the best path toward the integration of the new districts into the Belgian state. Moreover, the existence of another linguistic question in the country, the Flemish question, contributed to the Belgian liberal attitude (Dolderer 2019).

Belgian politicians and civil servants knew that events in Eupen-Malmedy were followed abroad. They quickly realized that the Allies had little desire to change the borders established at Versailles, but the presence of a powerful neighbor with revisionist intentions forced them to avoid offering any pretext to German agents to undermine the legitimacy of Belgian rule. Even so, external pressures were not sufficiently strong to force Belgian authorities to organize a fair plebiscite, as Brussels understood early on that the international request to hold this consultation was only a smokescreen (Brüll 2014). Furthermore, General Herman Baltia, a decorated war hero fluent in German, Flemish, and French who governed Eupen-Malmedy as Royal High Commissioner from 1920 to 1925, was convinced that the state had to be firm and harshly punish pro-German "agitators." Consequently, in the early post-war years, Belgian rule in Eupen-Malmedy oscillated between tolerant and repressive policies toward its new German-speaking minority.

The Allied decision to transfer the districts of Eupen-Malmedy to Belgium fell somewhere in-between the complete disregard of popular will in South Tyrol and the partially more legitimate return of Alsace-Lorraine to France. At the Paris Peace Conference, Belgium's claims on Eupen-Malmedy were based on a combination of national self-determination arguments, strategic considerations, and economic concerns. Belgian national propaganda portrayed Eupen-Malmedy as having belonged to Belgian historical territory until 1815 – even though Belgium was founded as a state only in 1830. Similar to French claims on Alsace-Lorraine, Belgian delegates therefore framed the acquisition of Eupen-Malmedy as a case of "dis-annexation" (Marks 1981, 143–168; Balace 2013, 92–94). However, for the Belgian authorities, economic and strategic considerations were decisive (O'Connell 2018, 34; Brüll 2018; Wenselaers 2008, 13–30).

The Allies deemed Malmedy a predominantly francophone and pro-Belgian area (Marks 1981, 145). The Belgian acquisition of this district was therefore uncontroversial, although in fact German speakers were a majority there.[18] The main dispute arose around the district of Eupen. Its 27,000 inhabitants were overwhelmingly German-speaking, and the area had strong economic ties to the German region of Aachen. Even some Belgian diplomats questioned its incorporation. François Ganshof, a member of the Belgian delegation in Paris, recommended incorporating "the lowest possible number of German people" because they would inevitably cause "serious difficulties" (quoted in Balace 2013, 92–93). Even so, economic and strategic considerations prevailed.[19]

The case of Eupen-Malmedy differs from Alsace-Lorraine and South Tyrol in that the Allies approved of the territorial transfer on the condition of holding a public expression of opinion. Between January and June 1920, the districts' inhabitants who opposed annexation were allowed to convey their opinion by signing registries in the municipalities of Eupen or Malmedy. Overall, only 271 people out of an electorate of 33,726 signed the registries. As we will see below, this mostly resulted from the obstructionism of Belgian authorities and lack of Allied oversight (O'Connell 2018, 127).

Language was the main marker of difference in Eupen-Malmedy. In 1918, among the 64,000 people living in the districts, only 15–20% spoke French, mostly in the city of Malmedy.[20] The vast

majority was German-speaking. As in South Tyrol, the linguistic division was fairly sharp. Linguistic cleavages largely overlapped with preferences over the annexation of the districts, but they did not automatically translate into political activism (Pabst 1964, 220; Brüll 2019, 70). Although all evidence suggests that most inhabitants objected to joining Belgium, there was little by way of open resistance to Belgian rule (Brüll 2019; Rosensträter 1985, 123–148). In part, this hesitant attitude stemmed from the fact that the annexation had still to be confirmed through the public expression of opinion foreseen by article 34 of the Treaty of Versailles. The turbulent situation in Germany, due to a faltering economy and political upheaval, also contributed to the locals' wait-and-see posture (O'Connell 2018, 19).[21] Furthermore, on September 15, 1919, the Belgian government passed a law that guaranteed the maintenance of German as official language in regional administration and education, the protection of religion, and the preservation of other material and political particularities (Rosensträter 1985, 123–148). Thus, in the eyes of most locals, the annexation initially did not seem to vitally threaten their economic security or political and cultural identities.

When it became clear that the public expression of opinion was far from free and fair, however, some locals protested, although not violently. In May 1920, a reporter of the *Manchester Guardian* well captured the general mood. Describing the situation in Malmedy, the journalist quoted a local inhabitant asserting that "the plebiscite is a mere pretense, and no one takes it seriously now. I haven't protested and don't intend doing so, because I know it's dangerous and useless. We have simply been annexed by Belgium, and there's an end to the matter" (*The Manchester Guardian* 1920). Overall, in Eupen-Malmedy, markers of difference along linguistic lines were fairly clear-cut and mostly coincided with national allegiance, whereby German speakers tended to oppose annexation. Yet the linguistic cleavage did not automatically translate into political contestation, even less into violent mobilization.

The comparatively peaceful relationships between linguistic groups prior to the Belgian annexation can further explain the absence of intense ethnic conflict in Eupen-Malmedy. After their transfer to Prussia in 1815, the German monarchy tolerated the use of French in Malmedy until Bismarck's *Kulturkampf.* From 1876 onward, German was imposed in the administration and education. These measures notwithstanding, relations between German and French speakers in the region continued to be peaceful, and the population remained loyal to the monarchy (Pabst, 2014, 71–80). During the war, like in Alsace-Lorraine, German military authorities stepped up their assimilationist efforts in Malmedy, completely banning French from the public space. Yet this policy of Germanization did not escalate into serious inter-ethnic conflict (O'Connell 2018, 35–36). Indeed, while Germanization did erode local support for the Reich, unlike in Alsace-Lorraine loyalty to Berlin was never seriously challenged in Eupen-Malmedy (Pabst 2014, 78–79; Prott 2021a, 2021b). Overall, this persisting allegiance contributed to the absence of major tensions.

In the immediate post-war period, Belgian authorities sought to minimize linguistic divisions by granting protection to the German minority in what appeared to be a policy informed by a general commitment toward liberal principles. However, upon closer inspection, Belgian policy in Eupen-Malmedy in fact oscillated between colonial-style authoritarian rule and a more accommodating approach. Belgium took over the area gradually from July to August 1919, but assumed formal control only after the entry into force of the Versailles Treaty in January 1920. The government led by Prime Minister Léon Delacroix lacked a plan on how to integrate the districts into the Belgian state. Delacroix thus delegated this task to Royal High Commissioner Herman Baltia. When, in January 1920, Baltia asked what the executive expected from him, the Prime Minister replied "see that it goes well and that it doesn't cost too much. You will be like a colonial governor, but a colony directly connected to the Metropolis" (quoted in O'Connell 2018, 89). Baltia had followed the events in Alsace-Lorraine closely and was critical of the repressive French approach. He believed that Eupen-Malmedy's assimilation would be a slow process that could be successful only if the local population was treated in a liberal manner (Brüll 2018).[22]

More in line with the "colonial" approach recommended by Delacroix, and in contradiction with his own liberal attitude to minority rights, Baltia assumed that the "German mindset" of the new Belgians required a firm hand. That meant repressing those individuals that he deemed to be political "agitators." As he wrote in July 1920, "Germans love discipline."[23] Accordingly, Baltia's rule proved to be tolerant and repressive at once. Liberal measures included the public promise, in January 1920, that the Belgian government would respect freedom of religion and expression, as well as equality between German and French. In the realm of education, Baltia divided the territory in two linguistic areas: in Malmedy, French was the language of instruction and German the second language; in Eupen and St.Vith, the opposite relation between the two languages applied. However, Baltia also promoted the penetration of the French language in German-speaking areas through derogations to this rule. Furthermore, from secondary school onward, the system was based on bilingualism, which, in Baltia's mind, would favor assimilation to French in the long term. Finally, Baltia did not refrain from expelling German-speakers, especially teachers and priests, if he deemed them politically unreliable (Boemer and Darquennes 2015).[24]

The despotic aspect of Baltia's rule appeared clearly during the public expression of opinion. The vote was not secret, the rural population had difficulties accessing the registries, and there were frequent intimidations of those opposing Belgian rule (O'Connell 2018, 125–163).[25] Furthermore, Baltia set up a sophisticated system of surveillance of the local population and an informal, albeit effective, press censorship. These measures prompted parts of the German minority to organize a major strike in Eupen in April 1920, which Baltia repressed harshly. Although the event remained an isolated occurrence, discontent with the general's administration grew as a result, both in Eupen-Malmedy and in the rest of Belgium. In 1923, several Belgian members of parliament complained about Baltia's excessive powers and likened his regime to a form of "*Mussolinisme*" (Sénat de Belgique 1923, 355–356). The central government thus began planning the end of the transitory period and a shift to a more democratic form of government in the region. The relatively quick post-war economic recovery in Belgium and the lack of major occurrences of protracted social protest, as for instance was the case in Italy with the *biennio rosso*, facilitated Baltia's policy of accommodation of the two districts. At the same time, the governor did not refrain from quelling social unrest, as shown by the events of April 1920, when economic and national protest partly overlapped.

In contrast to Alsace-Lorraine, where strong Allied commitment to the new border worked to mitigate the authorities' harsh measures toward the new minority, in Eupen-Malmedy it had the opposite effect of encouraging Baltia's paternalistic rule. While Allied commitment to the new border was shaky at first, it became firmer after the signing of the Versailles Treaty. At the Paris Peace Conference, the French and Italian delegates were willing to accept Belgium's demands over Eupen-Malmedy at face value. Their British and American counterparts, however, were less persuaded. They eventually yielded to Belgian claims on the condition that the annexation be validated by a public expression of opinion (Brüll 2018, 38; Marks 1981, 151–152). The hardening Allied commitment to the transfer of Eupen-Malmedy to Belgium became clear when the Council of Four rejected the proposal that the plebiscite should be carried out in a secret ballot under the supervision of the League of Nations, placing the authority over the vote in Belgian hands instead (Headlam-Morley 1972, 164; Haskins 1926, 44). The Allies and the League of Nations subsequently turned a blind eye to Belgian intimidations against opponents of annexation and quickly ratified the result of the vote.[26]

In the following years, Allied commitment to the new border remained strong, to the point where it could even exceed the commitment of the Belgian authorities themselves. The so-called "Belgian marks question" is a striking example of this continued Allied support. In 1925–1926, in a moment when the Belgian economy was under severe pressure, secret negotiations began between Belgian and German representatives on a potential return of Eupen-Malmedy to Germany in exchange for Berlin's guarantee to purchase six billion marks of foreign reserves that the Belgian government had bought from its population at an inflated rate at the end of the war, and that by 1925 had lost much of their value. The major obstacle for these negotiations to succeed was French opposition. For fear

of creating a dangerous precedent of territorial revision, French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré blocked any deal (Bariéty 1974; Grathwol 1975; Ennsle 1980).

Even so, and despite strong Allied support, Belgian civil servants and politicians were aware that their rule in Eupen-Malmedy was closely watched by international observers and that Germany remained a powerful neighbor with revisionist intentions (on this aspect, see Marks 1981, 168). Therefore, the perception that their grip over these districts was, at least to some extent, precarious lingered on. Belgian authorities remained especially concerned with German attempts to recover the lost territories throughout the interwar period.[27] This mixture of strong Allied support for the postwar border with persistent doubts about the hold of the international system established at the Paris Peace Conference contributes to explaining the ambivalent policy adopted by Belgian authorities in Eupen-Malmedy, which oscillated between authoritarian and more liberal approaches.

The Paris System in Western Europe: Conclusions

The impact of Allied decisions at the Paris Peace Conference was highly dependent on how the same set of local, national, and international factors operated in each of the affected regions. Ethnic violence was not an exclusive problem of Eastern European states. Depending on local circumstances, the strong push toward national disambiguation and clear-cut borders that emanated from the "Paris System" affected the allegedly more civilized and tolerant western part of the continent, too.

At a time when the principle of national self-determination loomed large in political debates and dominated public expectations of a "peace without victory," transferring Alsace-Lorraine, South Tyrol, and Eupen-Malmedy to France, Italy, and Belgium was a risky endeavor. The Allies agreed on border changes affecting populations that did not display clear support for such transfers. The degree of "inadequacy" of these border modifications, however, was not the same in the three regions. Alsace-Lorraine had been part of France until 1871, and after four years of war and political repression by the German authorities, most inhabitants welcomed the arrival of French troops in November 1918. This was not the case in Eupen-Malmedy or South Tyrol. In the former, locals displayed very little appetite to join Belgium. In the latter, South Tyroleans first ignored, then openly resisted annexation, albeit passively. In all three cases, however, the transfer of territories without clear popular consent generated incentives for the new rulers to settle the "minority problem" on the ground.

The mostly fluid local identities and multifaceted markers of difference initially escaped simple national categorization (on fluid identities, see Thaler 2001). When the new rulers arrived, however, the existing differences of language and ethnicity, politicized already by the war, lent themselves to become weaponized "national" identities. The most complex situation existed in Alsace-Lorraine. Here, national allegiance was rarely clear-cut and depended on a multitude of factors. When the French authorities introduced an identity card system and triage commissions to classify the population based on descent, they transformed an already tense situation into a conflict between a "French" indigenous population and "German" outsiders.[28] The results were mass deportations and sporadic ethnic violence. In Eupen-Malmedy and South Tyrol, where the authorities at least initially adopted a more cautious approach, relations between the different linguistic and ethnic groups were tense but remained mostly peaceful. In the former, although most German speakers did not identify with Belgium, they adopted a cautious wait-and-see attitude. In the latter, the ambiguous and nested nature of different forms of identification – with the wider region of Tyrol, with Austria, and with German culture – weakened collective resistance and hampered self-determination claims.

In all three regions, traditions of ethnic conflict were weak, although WWI significantly increased tensions between minority groups and state authorities. In South Tyrol, and especially the neighboring area of Trentino, more than 70,000 Italian speakers were displaced during the

conflict because the Austrian military deemed them suspicious. Such displacement and other repressive policies created a reservoir of resentment among Italian speakers that the fascists could easily exploit after the war. Alsace-Lorraine experienced mass evacuations and aggressive policies of Germanization, leading up to ambitious resettlement and expropriation schemes at the end of the conflict. While these efforts hardly came to fruition, they sowed the seeds for deepening ethnic antagonism among the local population. In Eupen-Malmedy, the war brought a similar intensification of Germanization efforts, although there were no plans for extensive resettlement measures.

The key factor in determining minority treatment across our three cases relates to state power and the degree of liberal commitment among key decision makers. The French government's commitment to liberal principles, democratic procedures, and the rule of law, together with its solid control of the region, enabled it to backtrack from mass expulsions and ethnic discrimination as the "Alsatian malaise" (*malaise alsacien*) gained momentum. Policy makers in both Strasbourg and Paris understood that they could not prolong the state of exception and draw on the already fading enthusiasm over the end of the war indefinitely. Sooner rather than later, they would have to bring their policies back in line with their rhetoric of civil liberties and respond to local grievances.

In Italy, by contrast, an initially liberal policy of tolerance and minority rights in South Tyrol gradually collapsed under the violent attacks of fascist militants calling for a policy of forced Italianization. In essence, the breakdown of the liberal approach resulted from an ideologically frail allegiance to enforce liberal principles in the new provinces. Both in South Tyrol and in Rome, most of the Italian liberal elite was unable to accept the prospect that a national minority speaking a different language might continue to exist within the borders of the state. Hence, South Tyrol experienced a transition from tolerance to repression opposite to the trajectory of majority-minority relations in Alsace-Lorraine.

Delegating control over the new provinces to an unelected royal commissioner vested with "colonial" powers, the Belgian government pursued a middle course between liberal and authoritarian measures. While in Alsace-Lorraine and South Tyrol policies changed radically, albeit in opposite directions, the Belgian paternalistic approach ensured minimum liberal standards while simultaneously pursuing a form of soft assimilation, along with the political repression of pro-German agitators (real or supposed). This approach was successful in that it did not cause widespread and intense ethnic conflict. But it also perpetuated a state of exception that by 1923 was perceived as an inacceptable erosion of democratic structures. In different ways, and to a different extent, all three cases indicate that repressive policies toward minorities and legal states of exception, when taken too far or lasting too long, have the potential to erode liberal values and democratic structures, in minority regions, but also, as in Alsace-Lorraine and South Tyrol, in the rest of the state.

While generations of politicians and historians have obsessed over the "flawed" decision-making at "Versailles," our comparative analysis demonstrates that the nature and strength of international commitment to the territorial changes played a crucial role in determining violent or peaceful outcomes. In Alsace-Lorraine, strong public Allied support for the French claim and the region's unclear legal status in the months after the war initially emboldened French authorities and local inhabitants to sort out self-determination by force. Yet in the longer run, the Versailles Treaty of June 1919 and the definitive German acceptance of the border in the Locarno Treaties of 1925 eased the pressure to prove the "national character" of the region. While not removing tensions and centralizing pressures of the French state entirely, the treaty opened the way for a return to democratic procedures and more accommodative policies. In South Tyrol, by contrast, the initially uncertain Allied support for the Italian territorial demands convinced Italian military and political elites to showcase their respect for minority rights to justify their claims over the region. As external pressure decreased from 1920, however, the now unequivocal international commitment to the Brenner border further eroded liberal resistance against growing radical forces. In Eupen-Malmedy, owing to the 1920 public expression of opinion, uncertainty over the annexation lingered longer than in the other cases. Even so, the Belgian authorities understood early on that the Allies had little

willingness to modify the borders established in Paris. However, the Belgian government still pursued a careful policy designed to balance the desire to assimilate the new territories into the Belgian state with the aim of upholding a minimum of liberal standards to avoid fueling German revisionist propaganda.

It is important to note that domestic and international contexts affected the way the five factors operated. The relatively quick post-war economic recovery in Belgium and France, in contrast to Italy, facilitated the choice of more liberal approaches toward minorities by the former two regimes. At the same time, all three governments used popular fears of revolutionary upheaval triggered by the Russian Revolution and the widespread desire of economic stability to justify repressive measures and quell demands for autonomy and self-determination.

Despite such shifting regional and international contexts, we would contend that the comparative framework developed in this article is applicable to other contemporary historical settings of post-war conflict over territories and minorities. In our present age – witnessing the return of twentieth century notions of geopolitics and war coupled with calls for national sovereignty and new territorial borders that threaten to erode liberal values – a fine-grained, systematic comparison of border disputes, ethnic conflict, and minority politics seems timely indeed.

Notes

1 We borrow the term "Paris system" from Eric D. Weitz (2008, 1333).
2 For the purpose of this article, we define "Eastern Europe" as those European countries affected by minority treaties and "Western Europe" as those states unaffected by the minority treaties. For the full list, see Pablo de Azcárate (1945, 94–95).
3 For contemporary commentators confining minority question to Eastern Europe see Macartney (1931). On interwar minority protection, see Fink (1995, 2006), Mazower (1997), Raitz von Frentz (1999), Weisbrod (1992).
4 See also the chapters in Dalle Mulle, Rodogno, and Bieling (2023).
5 Of an estimated 9 million German speakers, approximately 1.5 million inhabited a Western European country (Winkler 1931, 9). For comparative works on German-speaking minorities during the interwar years, see Wolff (2000), Ther and Sundhaussen (2001), Kochanowski and Sach (2006), and Eisler and Göttsch-Elten (2017).
6 See the minutes of the Conférence d'Alsace-Lorraine, 30th session of January 14, 1918, in Conférence d'Alsace-Lorraine (1919, 68–85).
7 Paul Matter, "Note sur le rapport de M. J. Kastler," February 12, 1919, Archives départementales du Bas Rhin, Strasbourg (ADBR), 121 AL 902, 4.
8 For examples, see the records in ADBR, 121 AL 77.
9 It should be noted that the French assimilationist drive continued throughout the 1920s, causing friction with the leaders of an autonomy movement and adding to the sense of a "malaise alsacien." Even so, these conflicts revolved around the respect for regional particularities rather than the region's adherence to the French state. See Carroll (2018, chap. 3) and Fischer (2010, chaps. 5–7).

10 The most prominent British critic of the Versailles Treaty was John Maynard Keynes, whose "Consequences of the Peace" had a tremendous influence on public attitudes toward the new peace order in Britain and abroad. See Keynes (1920).

11 See also Barzilai and Salata (1919).

12 On Tyrolean society more broadly, see Dotter and Wedrac (2018) and Überegger (2019, 137–166).

13 Municipality of Trento to Credaro, May 10, 1920, Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Credaro's papers, box 35, F. 276-281, folder 280.

14 Central Office for the New Provinces, *Relazione sulle conferenze dei delegati dei partiti tedeschi dell'Alto Adige*, ACS, PCM, Ufficio Nuove Provincie, box 58, folder 4.

15 See the speeches of MPs Podgornik, Flor and De Gasperi in Camera dei Deputati, *Atti Parlamentari, Resoconto Stenografico*, March 20, 1922, 3322–37 and March 30, 1922, 3805.

16 For more details on the negotiations, see Überegger (2019, 122–123), Wolff (2020, 150–151).

17 More broadly, the interaction between domestic trends and international, notably diplomatic, pressure never disappeared. In different moments throughout the interwar period, German or Austrian protest influenced the concrete implementation of minority policy in South Tyrol, although often only marginally. Hence, the fascist regime frequently acted strategically and bowed to the exigencies of realpolitik. This was especially the case from the late 1920s, when the Austrian and, especially, the German governments stepped up their lobbying activities in favor of the protection of the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol. On this aspect, see Toscano (1975, 32).

18 German speakers were 26,000 out of a total population of 37,000 (O'Connell 2018, 2; Pabst 1964, 218–219).

19 Belgian authorities considered key to obtain the military camp of Elsenborn, from which the German attack had been launched in 1914.

20 Our calculations on O'Connell (2018, 2–3), Pabst (1964, 218–9) and Haut Commissariat Royal d'Eupen et de Malmédy. 1920. Rapport sur l'activité générale du Gouvernement d'Eupen et de Malmédy, Staatsarchiv Eupen (SE), Baltia Fonds (BF), box 191, 154.

21 See also Haut Commissariat Royal, Rapport, 1920, 159.

22 On Baltia's ideas about the assimilation of Eupen-Malmedy, see Haut Commissariat Royal, Rapport, 1920, 159; Haut Commissariat Royal d'Eupen et de Malmedy. 1922. Rapport sur l'activité générale du Gouvernement d'Eupen et de Malmédy, SE, BF, box 193, 2; Conseil des Ministres. 1922. Compte-rendu succinct du rapport présenté par le Haut Commissaire du Roi, Archives du Palais Royal (ARP), Albert I, 2769.

23 Haut Commissariat Royal, Rapport, 1920, 6.

24 See also Haut Commissariat Royal d'Eupen et de Malmedy. 1921. Rapport sur l'activité générale du Gouvernement d'Eupen et de Malmedy, SE, BF, box 192, 91–93.

25 See also the documents in Auswärtiges Amt (AA), PA, R 76.417–23.

26 See for instance Conseil des Ambassadeurs. 1920. Séance du 28 mai 1920, in Archives diplomatiques (AD), 10.792/5, Dossier général, 1919–32.

27 For examples of these concerns see De Kerchove to Hymans, April 11, 1920, AD, 10.784/1 as well as the reports on German propaganda in the eastern cantons in AD, Folder 10.784/1.

28 For a similar process of escalating ethnic violence due to ambivalent markers of ethnic distinction, see Wilson (2010) on early interwar Upper Silesia.

References

Albrecht-Carrié, René. 1938. *Italy at the Paris Peace Conference*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Azcárate, Pablo de. 1945. *League of Nations and National Minorities: An Experiment*. Washington/New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Balace, Francis. 2013. "Belgien und die Ostkantone im Versailler Vertrag. Irredenta-Gebiet, militärische Pufferzone oder Trostpreis?" In *Zoom, 1920–2010: Nachbarschaften neun Jahrzehnte nach Versailles*, edited by Christoph Brüll, 73–102. Eupen: Grenz-Echo.

Bariéty, Jacques. 1974. "Le projet de rétrocession d'Eupen-Malmedy par la Belgique à l'Allemagne, et la France (1925–1926): Un cas d'utilisation de l'arme financière en politique internationale." In *Les relations franco-belges de 1830 à 1934 : actes du Colloque de Metz, 15–16 novembre 1974*, 325–348. Metz: Université de Metz.

Barzilai, Salvatore, and Francesco Salata. 1919. *Les Révendications de l'Italie sur les Alpes et dans l'Adriatique.* Archivio Storico Dipomatico (ASD), Carlo Galli's Papers, box 21, 5.

Becker, Peter, and Natasha Wheatley, eds. 2020. *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bellabarba, Marco. 2012. "Italiani d'Austria tra Otto e Novecento." In *Minoranze negli imperi: popoli fra identità nazionale e ideologia imperiale*, edited by Paolo Pombeni and Brigitte Mazohl, 397–439. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Berschin, Benno Hartmann. 2006. *Sprach- und Sprachenpolitik: Eine sprachgeschichtliche Fallstudie (1789–1940) am Beispiel des Grenzlandes Lothringen (Moselle)*. Frankfurt a.M.: Lang.

Boemer, Magali, and Jeroen Darquennes. 2015. "Language Conflict in the Educational Realm: Eupen-Malmedy in the Interbellum Period (1920–1940)." In *Past, Present and Future of a Language Border: Germanic-Romance Encounters in the Low Countries*, edited by Catharina Peersman, Gijsbert Rutten, and Rik Vosters, 207–232. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Boswell, Laird. 2000. "From Liberation to Purge Trials in the 'Mythic Provinces': Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918–1920." *French Historical Studies* 23 (1): 129–162.

Brubaker, Rogers. 1998. "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism." In *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, edited by John A Hall, 272–306. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brüll, Christoph. 2014. "Eupen-Malmedy." In *1914–1918 – Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrel, Oliver Janz, Heater Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin.

Brüll, Christoph. 2018. "La référence à l'Alsace-Lorraine dans le rattachement et l'intégration d'Eupen-Malmedy à la Belgique (1918–1925)." *Revue d'Alsace*, no. 144: 29–48.

Brüll, Christoph. 2019. "Vom Dazwischen-Sein. Eupen-Malmedy in Den Deutsch-Belgischen Beziehungen 1918-1949." In *Grenzerfahrungen. Band 4, Band* 4, edited by Carlo Lejeune, Christoph Brüll, and Peter M. Quadflieg, 64–85. Eupen: Grenz Echo Verlag.

Caccamo, Francesco. 2000. *L'Italia e la nuova Europa: il confronto sull'Europa orientale alla conferenza di pace di Parigi, 1919–1920*. Milano: Luni.

Carrol, Alison. 2018. *The Return of Alsace to France, 1918–1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cattaruzza, Marina. 2016. *Italy and Its Eastern Border, 1866–2016*. Basingstoke: Routledge.

Cattaruzza, Marina, and Sacha Zala. 2011. "Wider das Selbstbestimmungsrecht? Wilsons 14 Punkte und Italien in der europäischen Ordnung am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges." In *Die Verteilung der Welt. Selbstbestimmung und das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker*, edited by Jörg Fisch, 141–156. München: Oldenbourg, 2011.

Cole, Laurence. 1995. "Province and Patriotism: German Cultural Identity in Tirol in the Years 1850—1914." *Österreichische Zeitschrift Für Geschichtswissenschaften* 6: 61–83.

Cole, Laurence. 2012. "Questione nazionale e radicalizzazione degli austro-tedeschi." In *Minoranze negli imperi: popoli fra identità nazionale e ideologia imperiale*, edited by Paolo Pombeni and Brigitte Mazohl, 29–43. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Conférence d'Alsace-Lorraine. 1919. *Procès-verbaux, vol.* II. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.

Dalle Mulle, Emmanuel, and Alessandro Ambrosino. 2023. "The 1939 Option Agreement and the 'Consistent Ambivalence' of Fascist Policies towards Minorities in the Italian New Provinces." *The Historical Journal* 66 (4): 887–908.

Dalle Mulle, Emmanuel, and Mona Bieling. 2023a. "Sovereignty and Homogeneity: A History of Majority-Minority Relations in Interwar Western Europe." In *Sovereignty, Nationalism and the Quest for Homogeneity in Interwar Europe*, edited by Emmanuel Dalle Mulle, Davide Rodogno, and Mona Bieling, 85–104. London: Bloomsbury Academics.

Dalle Mulle, Emmanuel, and Mona Bieling. 2023b. "Autonomy over Independence: Self-Determination in Catalonia, Flanders and South Tyrol in the Aftermath of the Great War." *European History Quarterly*: 1–23, DOI: 10.1177/02656914231198182.

Dalle Mulle, Emmanuel, Davide Rodogno, and Mona Bieling, eds. 2023. *Sovereignty, Nationalism and the Quest for Homogeneity in Interwar Europe*. London: Bloomsbury Academics.

Desberg, Frédéric. 2020. "France and Italy in the Making of a New Central Europe, 1918–1922: Cooperation and Rivalry." In *Italy in the New International Order, 1917–1922* edited by Antonio Varsori and Benedetto Zaccaria, 59–88. Cham: Palgrave.

Di Michele, Andrea. 2003. *L'italianizzazione imperfetta: l'amministrazione pubblica dell'Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.

Dolderer, Von Winfried. 2019. "Landsleute Auf Widerruf." In *Grenzerfahrungen. Band 4, Band 4*, edited by Carlo Lejeune, Christoph Brüll, and Peter M Quadflieg, 94–102. Eupen: Grenz Echo Verlag.

Dotter, Marion, and Stefan Wedrac. 2018. *Der hohe Preis des Friedens: die Geschichte der Teilung Tirols, 1918–1922*. Innsbruck: Tyrolia.

Eisler, Cornelia, and Silke Göttsch-Elten. 2017. *Minderheiten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit: wissenschaftliche Konzeptionen, mediale Vermittlung, politische Funktion*. Münster: Waxmann.

Enssle, Manfred J. 1980. *Stresemann's Territorial Revisionism : Germany, Belgium, and the Eupen-Malmédy Question : 1919–1929*. Veröffentlichungen Des Instituts Für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.

Fink, Carole. 1995. "The League of Nations and the Minorities Question." *World Affairs* 157 (4): 197–205.

Fink, Carole. 2006. *Defending the Rights of Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fischer, Christopher J. 2010. *Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism, 1870–1939*. New York: Berghahn.

Fischer, Christopher J. 2014. "Of Occupied Territories and Lost Provinces: German and Entente Propaganda in the West During World War I." In *World War I and Propaganda*, edited by Troy Paddock, 199–221. Leiden: Brill.

Frank, Matthew. 2017. *Making Minorities History: Population Transfer in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frizzera, Francesco. 2017. "Spostamenti forzati, controllo poliziesco e politiche di assistenza. I profughi trentini nel contesto europeo." In *Il Trentino e i trentini nella Grande Guerra: nuove prospettive di ricerca*, edited by Marco Bellabarba and Gustavo Corni, 11–42. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Gatterer, Claus. 1968. *Im Kampf gegen Rom: Bürger, Minderheiten und Autonomien in Italien*. Vienna: Europa Verlag.

Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Grathwol, Robert P. 1975. "Germany and the Eupen-Malmédy Affair 1924–26: 'Here Lies the Spirit of Locarno.'" *Central European History* 8 (3): 221–250.

Grohmann, Carolyn. 2005. "From Lothringen to Lorraine: Expulsion and Voluntary Repatriation." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 16 (3): 571–587.

Hankey, Maurice. 1919. Minutes of the deliberations of the Council of Four, 26 May, in *The National Archives*, London, Cabinet Records 29/38.

Hansi. 1913. *Mon Village: Ceux Qui N'Oublient Pas*. Paris: H. Floury.

Harvey, David Allen. 1999. "Lost Children or Enemy Aliens? Classifying the Population of Alsace After the First World War." *Journal of Contemporary History* 34 (4): 537–554.

Haskins, Charles. 1926. "The New Boundaries of Germany." In *The Intimates Papers of Colonel House*, edited by Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour, 37–66. London: E. Benn.

Headlam-Morley, James Wycliffe. 1972. *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference, 1919*. London: Methuen.

Jackson, Peter. 2006. "France and the Problems of Security and International Disarmament After the First World War." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29 (2): 247–280.

Judson, Pieter M. 2016. *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Keynes, John Maynard. 1920. *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. London: Macmillan.

Kirby, David. 1982. "International Socialism and the Question of Peace: The Stockholm Conference of 1917." *Historical Journal* 25 (3): 709–716.

Klabjan, Borut, and Goradzd Bajc. 2023. *Battesimo di fuoco. L'incendio del Narodni Dom di Trieste e l'Europa adriatica nel XX secolo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Kochanowski, Jerzy and Maike Sach, eds. 2006. *Die "Volksdeutschen" in Polen, Frankreich, Ungarn und der Tschechoslowakei: Mythos und Realität*. Osnabrück: Fibre.

Kramer, Alan. 2002. "Wackes at War: Alsace-Lorraine and the Failure of German National Mobilization, 1914–1918." In *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War*, edited by John Horne, 105–121. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Livio, Alessandro. 2017. "The Wartime Treatment of the Italian-Speaking Population in Austria-Hungary," *European Review of History* 24 (2): 185–199.

Macartney, Carlile Aylmer. 1931. "Minorities: A Problem of Eastern Europe." *Foreign Affairs* 9 (4): 674–682.

Macmillan, Margaret. 2001. *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House.

Manela, Erez. 2007. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mann, Michael. 2009. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mantoux, Paul. 1992. *The Deliberations of the Council of Four*, 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marks, Sally. 1981. *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Mazower, Mark. 1997. "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe." *Daedalus* 126 (2): 47–63.

Middelkoop, Mary-Ann. 2010. "A Wilsonian Moment? Dutch Nationalism and Belgian Territorial Claims in the Aftermath of World War I." *Dutch Crossing* 34 (3): 195–214.

Monaghan, Shannon. 2018. *Protecting Democracy from Dissent: Population Engineering in Western Europe, 1918–1926*. Milton Park: Routledge.

Monteleone, Renato. 2009. "Il Trentino Alla Vigilia Della Prima Guerra Mondiale," *Annali Del Museo Storico Italiano Della Guerra* 17: 13–32.

Mulligan, William. 2020. "Lloyd George, Italy, and the Making of a New World Order, 1916–1922." In *Italy in the New International Order, 1917–1922*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Benedetto Zaccaria, 19–39. Cham: Palgrave.

Naimark, Norman M. 2002. *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nell'anno III della marcia su Roma. 1925. Torino: Argo.

Nolan, Michael E. 2005. *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898–1914*. New York: Berghahn.

Nuñez Seixas, Xose Manuel. 2001. *Entre Ginebra y Berlín: la cuestión de las minorías nacionales y la política internacional en Europa, 1914–1939*. Madrid: Akal.

O'Connell, Vincent. 2018. *The Annexation of Eupen-Malmedy: Becoming Belgian, 1919–1929*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Pabst, Klaus. 1964. "Eupen-Malmedy in der belgischen Regierungs- und Parteienpolitik 1914–1940." *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins* 76: 205–514.

Pabst, Klaus. 2014. "Die preußischen Wallonen – eine staatstreue Minderheit im Westen." In *Nationale Minderheiten und staatliche Minderheitenpolitik in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert*, edited by Peter Kunze and Hans Henning Hahn, 71–80. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Pecori-Giraldi, Guglielmo. 1985[1919]. "La prima relazione al Comando supremo sull'opera svolta dal Governatorato militare di Trento dal 4 novembre al 19 dicembre 1918." *Bollettino del Museo trentino del Risorgimento* 35 (2): 30–32.

Pergher, Roberta. 2018. *Mussolini's Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922–1943*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Preibusch, Sophie Charlotte. 2006. *Verfassungsentwicklungen im Reichsland Elsass-Lothringen 1871–1918: Integration durch Verfassungsrecht?* Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag.

Prott, Volker. 2014. "Tying up the Loose Ends of National Self-Determination: British, French, and American Experts in Peace Planning, 1917–1919." *The Historical Journal* 57 (3): 727–750.

Prott, Volker. 2016. *The Politics of Self-Determination: Remaking Territories and National Identities in Europe, 1917–1923*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prott, Volker. 2021a. "Challenging the German Empire: Strategic Nationalism in Alsace-Lorraine in the First World War." *Nations and Nationalism* 27 (4): 1009–1025.

Prott, Volker. 2021b. "A Stress Test for German Nationalism: Protective Custody in Alsace-Lorraine During the First World War." *German History* 39 (4): 542–559.

Prott, Volker. 2023. "'Assessing the Paris System': Self-Determination and Ethnic Violence in Alsace-Lorraine and Asia Minor, 1919–1923." In *Sovereignty, Nationalism and the Quest for Homogeneity in Interwar Europe*, edited by Emmanuel Dalle Mulle, Davide Rodogno, and Mona Bieling, 85–104. London: Bloomsbury Academics.

Raitz von Frentz, Christian. 1999. *A Lesson Forgotten: Minority Protection under the League of Nations: The Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920–1934*. Münster: Lit-Verlag.

Redslob, Robert. 1931. "Le Principe Des Nationalités." *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law* 37: 1–276.

Rimmele, Eva. 1996. *Sprachenpolitik im Deutschen Kaiserreich vor 1914: Regierungspolitik und veröffentlichte Meinung in Elsaß-Lothringen und den östlichen Provinzen Preußens*. Frankfurt a.M. Lang.

Rosensträter, Heinrich. 1985. *Deutschsprachige Belgier: Geschichte und Gegenwart der deutschen Sprachgruppe in Belgien*. Aachen.

Rossé, Joseph, Marcel Stürmel, Albert Bleicher, Fernand Deiber, and Jean Keppi. 1936. *Das Elsass von 1870–1932*: Vol. I: *Politische Geschichte.* Colmar: Alsatia.

Roth, François. 2010. *Alsace Lorraine: Histoire d'un pays perdu: De 1870 à nos jours*. Nancy: Éd. Place Stanislas.

Rusinow, Dennison. 1969. *Italy's Austrian Heritage, 1919–1946*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Schmauch, Joseph. 2004. "*Les services d'alsace-Lorraine face à la réintegration des départements de l'est (1914–1919).*" PhD diss., École Nationale des Chartes.

Schoenbaum, David. 1982. *Zabern 1913: Consensus Politics in Imperial Germany*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Scroccaro, Mauro. 2000. *Dall'aquila bicipite alla croce uncinata: l'Italia e le Opzioni nelle nuove provincie Trentino, Sudtirolo, Val Canale, 1919–1939*. Trento: Museo storico.

Sénat de Belgique. 1923. "Séance du jeudi 25 janvier 1923." *Annales Parlamentaires de Belgique*, January 25, 1923, 349–366.

Snyder, Timothy. 2018. "Introduction." In *The Balkans as Europe, 1821–1914*, edited by Timothy Snyder and Katherine Younger, 1–10. Rochester: Rochester University Press.

Steininger, Rolf. 2016. *Südtirol im 20. Jahrhundert: Vom Leben und Überleben einer Minderheit*. Innsbruck: StudienVerlag.

Steurer, Leopold. 1980. *Südtirol zwischen Rom und Berlin, 1919–1939*. Vienna: Europaverlag.

Stibbe, Matthew. 2014. "Enemy Aliens, Deportees, Refugees: Internment Practices in the Habsburg Empire, 1914–1918." *Journal of Modern European History* 12 (4): 479–499.

Stillig, Jürgen. 1975. "Das Problem Elsass-Lothringen und die sozialistische Internationale." *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 23 (1): 62–76.

Struck, Bernhard. 2006. *Nicht West – nicht Ost: Frankreich und Polen in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisender zwischen 1750 und 1850*. Göttingen: Wallstein.

Stuhlpfarrer Karl. 1985. *Umsiedlung Südtirol: 1939–1940*. Vienna: Löcker.

Suppan, Arnold. 2019. *The Imperialist Peace Order in Central Europe: Saint-Germain and Trianon, 1919–1920*. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science.

Ter Minassian, Taline. 1997. "Les géographes français et la délimitation des frontières balkaniques à la Conférence de la Paix en 1919." *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 44 (2): 252–286.

Thaler, Peter. 2001. "Fluid Identities in Central European Borderlands." *European History Quarterly* 31 (4): 519–548.

Ther, Philipp and Holm Sundhaussen, eds. 2001. *Nationalitätenkonflikte im 20. Jahrhundert: Ursachen von inter-ethnischer Gewalt im Vergleich*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Ther, Philipp. 2016. *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*. Oxford: Berghan Books.

Throntveit, Trygve. 2011. "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination." *Diplomatic History* 35 (3): 445–481.

Todorova, Mariíǎ Nikolaeva. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Toscano, Mario. 1975. *Alto Adige-South Tyrol. Italy's Frontier with the German World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Trafojer, Karl. 1971. "*Die innenpolitische Lage in Südtirol: 1918–1925*." PhD diss., University of Vienna.

Treaty of Versailles. 1919. signed on June 28, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/versailles_menu.asp. (Accessed September 22, 2023.)

Überegger, Oswald. 2019. *Im Schatten des Krieges: Geschichte Tirols 1918–1920*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.

Uberfill, François. 2001. *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871–1924): La société strasbourgeoise à travers les mariages entre Allemands et Alsaciens à l'époque du Reichsland. Le sort des couples mixtes après 1918*. Strasbourg: Société Savante d'Alsace.

Varsori, Antonio and Benedetto Zaccaria, eds. 2020. *Italy in the New International Order, 1917–1922*. Cham: Palgrave.

Varsori, Antonio, Benedetto Zaccaria, and Maddalena Guiotto. 2020. "Italy and Austria, 1918–1920: Overcoming Hereditary Enmity." In *Italy in the New International Order, 1917–1922*, edited by Antonio Varsori and Benedetto Zaccaria, 160–161. Cham: Palgrave.

Vlossak, Elizabeth. 2010. *Marianne or Germania? Nationalizing Women in Alsace, 1870–1946*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Von Hartungen, Christoph, Fabrizio Miori, and Tiziano Rosani, eds. 2006. *Le Lettere Aperte 1939–43: L'Alto Adige delle Opzioni*. Bolzano: La Fabbrica del tempo.

Wahl, Alfred, and Jean-Claude Richez. 1993. *L'Alsace entre France et Allemagne, 1850–1950*. Paris: Hachette.

Weisbrod, Carol. 1992. "Minorities and Diversities: The Remarkable Experiment of the League of Nations." *Connecticut Journal of International Law* 8: 359–406.

Weitz, Eric D. 2008. "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions." *The American Historical Review* 113 (5): 1313–1343.

Weitz, Eric D. 2015. "Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right." *The American Historical Review* 120 (2): 462–496.

Wenselaers, Selm. 2008. *De laatste Belgen: een geschiedenis van de Oostkantons*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff.

Wheatley, Natasha. 2019. "Central Europe as Ground Zero of the New International Order." *Slavic Review* 78 (4): 900–911.

Wilson, Tim. 2010. *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918–1922*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, Woodrow. 1918. *Fourteen Points*, January 8, 1918. https://www.britannica.com/event/Fourteen-Points. (Accessed September 22, 2023.)

Winkler, Wilhelm. 1931. *Statistisches Handbuch der europäischen Nationalitäten*. Wien: Braumüller.

Wolff, Larry. 1994. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wolff, Larry. 2020. *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wolff, Stefan. 2000. *German Minorities in Europe: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Belonging*. New York: Berghahn.

Young, Robert J. 2004. *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900–1940*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Zahra, Tara. 2008. "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands." *Contemporary European History* 17 (2): 137–165.

Newspapers

The Manchester Guardian. 1920. "Eupen and Malmédy. Opinion in Malmédy of Transference to Belgium." May 21, 1920: 11.

Archival Sources

Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin, Strasbourg, France (ADBR).
Archives diplomatiques, Brussels, Belgium (AD).
Archives du Palais Royale, Brussels, Belgium (ARP).
Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Italy (ACS).
Archivio Storico Dipomatico, Rome, Italy (ASD).
Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, Germany (AA).
Staatsarchiv, Eupen, Belgium (SE).