

# Historicising the Normative Boundaries of Diversity: The Minority Treaties of 1919 in a *Longue Durée* Perspective

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The article accounts for the specific form a certain legal and, indeed, normative understanding of diversity informed the so-called Minority Treaties of 1919 by historicising the evolution of certain interlocking discourses over the remit of ‘rights’, as well as the identity of their holders. It seeks to account for why certain groups (national minorities) rather than others were singled out for protection and why the rights they were given took the form they did (cultural and linguistic) by positioning them in the context of broader debates within which they were embedded. I thus argue against reading the Minority Treaties from a ‘presentist’ perspective that not only retrojects a certain teleological narrative that tends to read them along the familiar lines of ‘progress’, but bears the danger of naturalising certain categories – such as ‘the nation’, ‘the nation-state’, or ‘nationalism’ – in light of their *subsequent* prominence, which consequently acquires a certain air of inevitability. To do so, the article first discusses normative conceptions of ‘diversity’ in a *longue durée* perspective, arguing for the emergence and contestation of hybrid and combined models of managing ‘difference’ during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, prompted by the opposing tractions of efforts at homogenisation and hierarchisation. Second, it places the Minority Treaties in their immediate 1919 context, arguing that the form they took was significantly influenced also by contingent and extraneous contemporary factors, such as the expansion of the franchise after World War I or the sustained attempts to contain socialist revolutionary activity. The paper illustrates these developments by making specific reference to the situation of the Jewish minorities in Central and Eastern Europe as a case study.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, imperialism, minorities, diversity, Eastern Europe

## Introduction

The legal codification of ‘rights’, however conceived, is necessarily arbitrary, just like any attempt to standardise and codify the inherent diversity of society is bound to be. While the task of legal experts and political philosophers is to argue over such arbitrariness from the perspective of its correspondence or incongruity to either practical considerations regarding consistency or ideal notions of ‘fairness’, it is the job of the historian to account for its specific evolution by placing it in its proper historical context. As such, the present article aims to account for the specific form a legal and, indeed, normative understanding of (certain forms of) diversity informed the so-called Minority Treaties of 1919 by historicising the evolution of certain interlocking discourses over the remit of ‘rights’, as well as the identity of their holders. In doing so, it seeks not only to account for why certain groups (national minorities) rather than others were singled out for protection and why the rights they were given took the form they did (cultural and linguistic), but also to position them in the context of broader debates within which they were firmly embedded. Examples of such debates span the entire range of what Holly Case has recently called ‘the age of questions’ – which included, just in the title of her work, *The Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions*. The age’s defining feature, in addition to the proliferation of such ‘structuring ideas about society, politics, and states [...] influencing the range of actions considered possible and desirable’, was that such questions were at once ‘highly contentious and competitive’ and raised simultaneously, or ‘bundled together’.<sup>1</sup>

A century after the sea-change of 1919, the Minority Treaties are mostly viewed looking backwards, as precursors or antecedents. Authors who hail Versailles – ‘the Wilsonian moment’ – and the League of Nations as the apogee of liberalism,<sup>2</sup> and those who lament their abysmal failure to

provide international security or protect the minorities they were designed to protect<sup>3</sup> are united in reading the treaties from a footing in the twenty-first century that is informed by contemporary human rights and minority protection regimes.<sup>4</sup> My argument here is that such a 'presentist' perspective<sup>5</sup> not only retrojects a certain teleological narrative that tends to read them along the familiar lines of 'progress', but bears the danger of 'naturalising' certain categories – such as 'the nation', 'the nation-state', or 'nationalism' – in light of their *subsequent* prominence, consequently acquiring a certain air of 'inevitability'. In contrast, I argue that such prominence was far from certain even as the architects of the peace sat down to give precedence to a (partial and very narrowly defined, yet posing as 'universal') idea of national 'self-determination' as the primary organising principle of international relations. This becomes even more tenuous when we turn to the nineteenth century, where the contest, interplay, and overlap between nation and empire as the dominant forms of political organisation by no means pointed to a decisive 'winner'. As such, my article places normative conceptions of 'diversity' in a *longue durée* perspective, arguing for the emergence and contestation of hybrid and combined models of managing 'difference' during this period, prompted by the opposing tractions of efforts at homogenisation and hierarchisation. Furthermore, it places the Minority Treaties in their immediate 1919 context, arguing that the form they took was significantly influenced not only by the long-term history of discourses balancing rights and notions of sovereignty, but also by contingent and extraneous contemporary factors, such as the expansion of the franchise after World War I or the sustained attempts to contain socialist revolutionary activity. Finally, on the basis of this double historical context that acts as its overarching framework, my article will turn to the unintended consequences of the 'politics of difference' designed in Paris in 1919 and their impact on the turn toward an authoritarian, right-wing form of nationalism during the interwar period, making specific reference to the situation of the Jewish

minorities in Central and Eastern Europe as a case study. With the understanding that the very broad scope my presentation seeks to cover in the space of a short article will necessarily render it schematic, even skeletal, I believe the value of historicising ‘questions’ related to normative definitions of alterity holds not only historical, but also political potential, pointing to the many ‘roads not taken, the ideals that were not realized’,<sup>6</sup> which hold within them the promise of change.

## **Strangers, Subjects, and Citizens – Recognising Difference in the Long Nineteenth Century**

Seeking to trace the roots of the legal and normative conceptualisations of diversity in 1919 brings us to two related and interlocking discourses prominent among the ‘questions’ that marked the nineteenth century: the ‘rights of man’ associated with the revolutionary era; and ‘humanitarianism’ and its associated practice, ‘humanitarian intervention’.<sup>7</sup> While the two are frequently conflated in interpretations that see them as ‘precursors’ of the contemporary ‘human rights’ regime,<sup>8</sup> the terminological confusion<sup>9</sup> masks a radically different scope. While the former were pursued as political projects that coalesced around liberal nationalism and were mostly concerned with defining the boundaries of the body politic, the latter (mostly) targeted and sought to improve the fortune of humans in faraway lands. The first involved co-members of an ‘imagined community’,<sup>10</sup> increasingly but not yet exclusively national, citizens, ‘us’; the other was geared at strangers, ‘slaves, sinners [and] savages’,<sup>11</sup> ‘them’. While both these notions were marked by the tension between the individual and the collective, the universal and the particular,<sup>12</sup> politically they could be at loggerheads, with the former associated with the revolutionary nation and the latter with the counter-revolutionary empire. And while nations promoted notions of popular sovereignty, empires sought to contain them and

increasingly found in 'humanitarianism' the legitimation for external intervention.<sup>13</sup>

That these were competing idea(l)s is a given, according to the all-too-familiar story of the nation-empire dichotomy and the former's liberation struggle from the latter. They were also espoused by different groups, with liberals calling for the accomplishment of the universal within a sovereign national community with the corresponding rights, and conservatives, especially Catholic, reclaiming the legacy of the 'universal church' for a notion of 'collective humanity' they shared with some unlikely allies in their anti-liberal ethos, including romantic socialists.<sup>14</sup> However, painting the picture of a mere dichotomy between nation and empire as competing forms of statal organisation blinds us to their pervasive and complex imbrication throughout the nineteenth century. First off, the immediate thing to consider is that the 'model nations' of the nineteenth century, of which France was the most prominent, were simultaneously vast and expanding colonial empires. As such, processes of national homogenisation in the metropolis ran parallel to the colonial hierarchisation of subject populations predicated on notions of civilizational superiority, with liberalism equally informing both.<sup>15</sup> The German unification process was undertaken not just in the name of cultural nationalism but also under the aegis of empire, just as unified Italy came to exhibit imperial ambitions of its own.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile the Eastern land empires that had long been ignored by the vast literature on imperialism and colonialism were at this time engaged in nationalising projects of their own, from the nation-building efforts in the Romanov Empire after the Crimean War, through the separate paths taken by the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the Dual Monarchy after the 1867 *Ausgleich*, to the 'messy process of experimentation aimed at holding together, and indeed nationalizing, the far-flung [Ottoman] empire.'<sup>17</sup> As Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller argue, 'whether we think of sea-based empires in the west or contiguous empires in Central and

Eastern Europe, imperial imaginations had been vital for state formation and continued to be the dominant imaginations during the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

Second, the national and imperial imaginations of the nineteenth century and the attending notions of 'rights' shared multiple common origins, including their mutual genealogy in the Enlightenment. The nineteenth century was a 'progressive age', and 'if there was a word that ruled the age of questions, it was *emancipation*'.<sup>19</sup> Whether this translated into the gradual emancipation of social groups (women, peasants, workers) within national or imperial boundaries, of 'oppressed nations' from their imperial overlords (as in the Greek, Italian, or Polish 'questions'), or of slaves everywhere (as with the anti-slave trade and anti-slavery abolitionist campaigns that are widely regarded as the first cases of transnational humanitarian intervention),<sup>20</sup> the commitment to improvement bore with it moralising tones that were characteristic of the age. On the side of empire, they translated into notions of 'civilising mission' which provided the much-needed moral legitimation for colonial expansion in the name of future improvement rather than historical origins in conquest.<sup>21</sup> The futural orientation of such arguments legitimated domination in the present in the name of future emancipation and was deployed globally in the well-known idea of 'stages of development', with its attendant notions of the alleged 'immaturity' of colonial subjects and their ensuing 'need' for tutelage.<sup>22</sup> In an argument familiar at least ever since Edward Said's *Orientalism*, if

Enlightenment universalism [...] asserted the unity and fundamental equality of all humankind and its uniform capacity for civilization [...] in practice, it constructed knowledge about non-Western cultures that insisted how different from, and therefore inferior to, the West they were; the knowledge acquired in this manner, tainted by the unequal power relation it inscribed, actually created the very 'Orient,' or 'Africa,' or 'Asia' that it

purportedly only reflected. It was *this liberal production, and constant re-production, of difference*, rather than outright force or even naked greed, that enabled colonial hegemony in the modern era.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the global deployment of this production of difference was meant to some extent to mask the heterogeneity of the core, the persistence of ‘internal peripheries’ (e.g. of peasants yet to be made into Frenchmen) in its midst.<sup>24</sup>

The latter aspect points both to the abovementioned entanglement of nation-building processes and imperial expansion characteristic of nineteenth-century ‘nationalizing empires’, and to a third aspect accounting for this entanglement. This resided in a nexus of simultaneous structural transformations that fundamentally altered the material conditions of modernity: the global penetration of capitalism,<sup>25</sup> the technological revolution in media, travel and communication,<sup>26</sup> and, most importantly for the present argument albeit informed by both previous elements, the processes of standardisation that it set in motion, including the establishment of a universal time regime.<sup>27</sup> The synchronicity resulting from these processes was central both to modern nationalism, as Benedict Anderson has shown, and to what Sebastian Conrad has termed ‘the globalization of the imagination’.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the homogenisation associated with the ‘first great wave of globalization before 1914’ reinforced similar tendencies playing out on the national level, and for similar reasons,<sup>29</sup> just as the imperial production of difference translated into patterns of inclusion and exclusion that were enacted both globally and within national polities. Standardisation and centralisation were characteristic during this period not just of ‘modern’ nation-states but also of (allegedly ‘backward’) empires, as Pieter Judson’s superb history from below of the Habsburg Empire shows, just as colonial racial hierarchies could be mirrored in Vienna’s linguistic policies resulting in an ‘emerging and unintended hierarchy of languages

and by extension, as could be argued, of the people who spoke them.’<sup>30</sup> As such, the processes of standardisation and codification that Ernest Gellner identified as essential to modern nationalism appear more pertinently understood along the lines of James Scott’s account of modern *states* and their attempts to render their populations ‘legible’.<sup>31</sup> In multi-linguistic, multi-confessional and multi-ethnic polities such as the Habsburg Empire, the terms of such classification, in all their arbitrariness, became crucial political factors in determining the boundaries of future ‘nationalities’, themselves staking a claim to their own nation-states.<sup>32</sup>

The ‘Eastern Question’ was central to the intersection of several of the aspects briefly touched upon earlier pertaining to the delineation of ‘difference’ in nineteenth-century Europe. Notions of civic and political rights, humanitarian intervention, sovereignty, the ‘standard of civilization’,<sup>33</sup> the many ‘national questions’ it encompassed, the interplay between nations and empires, doubled by geopolitical considerations and commercial interests, all met in what was one of the ‘aggregates that encompassed a variety of the aforementioned “smaller” emancipatory questions’<sup>34</sup> and perhaps the most important one for the present argument. Jews as a group also stood at the heart of such debates. Discussions of their status proceeded from and in all directions mentioned above, ranging from interventions in the name of humanity, through religious rights – with the role played by religion constituting a marked absence from most narratives of nineteenth-century ‘rights’ discourses, as well as from a lot of the literature on nationalism and empire<sup>35</sup> – and issues of citizenship, to their existence as a nation or their ambiguous status in the overseas colonies.

In a setting where processes of inclusion and exclusion proceeded simultaneously on national, imperial, and global scales, the position of Jews as ‘citizens who combined spectacular success with irredeemable tribal foreignness’<sup>36</sup> was constantly negotiated, ‘oscillating between that



of the prime candidates for assimilation to their radical exclusion on the basis of categories as rigid as those employed to identify “racial difference”.<sup>37</sup> The tension between the universal and the particular entailed in the ‘Jewish question’, whose paradox was famously explored by Marx in the homonymous 1843 essay,<sup>38</sup> thus threw into light both the global entanglement of nation-state-empire and its multifarious articulations in different spaces. Following Yuri Slezkine, we can see Jews as ‘model moderns’, ‘the nation’ as a secular rendering of Jewish ‘chosenness’, and modernity as ‘the Jewish age’ – albeit in a global framework of similar diaspora groups, whereby Jews are rendered paradigmatic merely by virtue of modernity’s origins in Europe.<sup>39</sup> Tracing the ‘Jewish question’ all the way to colonial India and its displacement in the minoritisation of Muslims by Hindus, we can alternatively follow its identification by Amir Mufti ‘as an early, and *exemplary*, instance of the crisis of minority that has accompanied the development of liberal-secular state and society in numerous contexts around the world.’<sup>40</sup> What emerged in this crisis was ‘a set of paradigmatic narratives, conceptual frameworks, motifs, and formal relationships concerned with the very question of minority existence, which are then disseminated globally in the emergence, under colonial and semicolonial conditions, of the forms of modern social, political, and cultural life.’<sup>41</sup> We can then read these conceptual frameworks, with Dorian Bell, as the production of ‘racial scalarity’, where liberal imperial notions of ‘stages of development’ dovetailed with the distinct but mutually reinforcing economic scales (e.g. the national, the imperial, the global) entailed by the global deployment of capitalism during the late nineteenth century. Along these lines, Jews appear as ‘a privileged figure of scalarity’, as ‘in their presumed racial liminality – classified somewhere between Occident and Orient, Europe and Africa, white and black – Jews perhaps offered a suitably elastic device for mediating between domestic and imperial varieties of difference.’<sup>42</sup>

This liminality or in-betweenness is acutely visible in Eastern Europe, where it holds a mirror to the self-perceptions of nation-building anti-Semites regarding their own positionality in the international order and the European colonial project. On the one hand, in emphases on their 'backwardness' and associations with 'Orientals', they performed the function of colonised non-White groups in reinforcing a sense of the 'Europeanness', 'whiteness', and modernity of East European elites. On the other, for nationalists engaged in struggles for independence from East European empires, Jews' occasional loyalties to the imperial crown were turned into accusations of their acting as agents of the 'colonisers', a feature complete with self-victimisations that compared the fate of, for example, Romanians, to that of colonial Algeria, or, at the very least, the 'white colony' of Ireland.<sup>43</sup> 'Caught in the crossfire of the attempts to reproduce Western Europe's colonising thrust and the fear of seeing it applied to themselves, Jews (and other select internal "others") could be portrayed alternatively by peripheral nationalising states as *standing for* both: as "backward" populations to be colonised and agents of colonisers aiming to subvert and undermine national aspirations.'<sup>44</sup>

Turning from process to agency and from the external constructions of 'Jewishness' by anti-Semites and philo-Semites alike to Jewish interventions on behalf of their coreligionists, their nuanced articulation in diverse spaces points to the multiple possibilities open to conceptualising alterity in the nineteenth century and responding to it in the framework of the intersecting discourses of 'rights' mentioned above. One example are the religious controversies surrounding the so-called 'Damascus Affair' of 1840 and the 'Mortara Affair' of 1858, both involving not modern, secular anti-Semitism, but 'perennial' issues (blood libel and forced conversion, respectively) in Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>45</sup> As Jonathan Frankel has argued, the international Jewish solidarity that emerged in the wake of these crises led to the crystallisation of processes of nationalisation that eventually culminated

in the development of Zionism following another crisis, the pogroms of 1881-1882 in the Russian Empire.<sup>46</sup> According to Abigail Green, this provides the 'global religious context' necessary for understanding 'the relationship between international Jewish solidarity and the pre-history of Jewish nationalism.'<sup>47</sup> Instead of an opposition between religion and nationalism as the bases for identification, or the latter's supplanting of the former, this example reveals their mutually reinforcing entanglement, as well as the interlocking of the national and international.

The Jewish interventions on behalf of their coreligionists in Romania for example mutated from humanitarian outrage over the drowning of four Jews expelled by the Romanian authorities at Galați in 1867<sup>48</sup> to a call for civil and political rights in the campaign led by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) and Gershon von Bleichröder before the 1878 Congress of Berlin, as a condition for international recognition of Romania's independence.<sup>49</sup> This example shows the entanglement of the otherwise distinct strands of humanitarian intervention and citizenship rights mentioned above, as well as the apparent motion from one toward the other. However, that such a mutation was a preferred option only in certain contexts is shown by a comparison of the interventions related to the 'question of Jewish minority rights' in Romania (as addressed at the Congress of Berlin in 1878) and Morocco (as addressed at the Conference of Madrid in 1880).<sup>50</sup> The Jewish advocacy efforts diverged widely, despite the fact that the Jewish community in Morocco was much longer-standing, dating back to the Spanish expulsion of the fifteenth century and earlier still, compared to Romania, where the majority of the Jews were first or second generation Ashkenazi migrants to the principality of Moldova.<sup>51</sup> As such, while in Romania they aimed at coercing the government to accept Jews as 'natives with full citizenship rights', in Morocco they sought 'to preserve Jews from the disadvantages of local citizenship by maintaining the pre-modern system of consular

protection.<sup>52</sup> The notable discrepancy of these policy preferences, as they occurred more or less simultaneously and as a result of advocacy by the same groups, not only demonstrated the nuanced grasp of the diversity of forms the protection of minority rights could take, but also flew in the face of the evidence that ‘the overwhelming majority of Jews had far deeper roots in Muslim Morocco than they had in Christian Romania, where many had immigrated within living memory’. Consequently, such choices are ‘highly revealing of the very different positions Morocco and Romania occupied internationally.’<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, they revealed the pervasiveness of the notions, consistent with liberal imperialism, of ‘stages of development’, whereby a Christian European periphery was seen as having the potential – albeit with Western tutelage – for meeting a higher civilisational standard than a Muslim non-European state. Moreover, they are also indicative of the transformation occurring at the end of the nineteenth century from a universalist language of progress and moral improvement to racially-inspired beliefs in the immutable ‘inferiority’ of certain cultures as a legitimation for the European colonial project.<sup>54</sup>

A further example confirming such a reading is that of the so-called ‘Crémieux decree’ of 1870, named after Adolphe Crémieux, founder of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, at the time acting in his capacity as Justice Minister in France during the Franco-Prussian War. The decree conferred citizenship to the 35,000 Jews in French Algeria, with the result that ‘the category of indigènes became split along ethno-religious lines: Jews were made citizens, and Islam became the singular impediment for those who were not.’<sup>55</sup> Unlike the previous case comparing the diverging interventions on behalf of the Jewish minorities in Romania and Morocco, this is an instance that shows the politics of difference at work in distinguishing between indigenous populations within the same colonial polity with regard to their relative ‘value’ to the metropolitan elite, and their perceived potential for being ‘civilised’.

Furthermore, the Crémieux decree did not only engender a wave of antisemitism in both metropolitan France and French Algeria, underpinned by different rationales – the former translating into Édouard Drumont’s Arabophile denunciation of the decree as an act of treason in a time of war, contrasted with the valiant contribution of the Arabs to the French war effort, the latter into the far right ‘Latinist’ movement in Algeria which held it responsible for blurring ‘the hierarchy of colonizers and colonized that underpinned the imperial enterprise’ while considering the indigenous population of Algeria as primitive and barbaric irrespective of religion.<sup>56</sup> It also ‘provoked a definitive “rupture” between Jews and Muslims in Algeria’ that some authors link to the roots of the Muslim anti-Semitism still visible in France today.<sup>57</sup>

Even this brief excursus into issues related to the ‘Jewish question’ in different nineteenth-century contexts shows the diversity of modalities of addressing it, from humanitarian intervention to enfranchisement, sensitive to local contexts as well as the specific interests of imperial powers. The space these diverse but certainly related (at the very least by the fact that the agents intervening on behalf of the Jews formed a well-identifiable distinct group involved in all these cases) stories share, however, was a well-defined one, by and large corresponding to the ‘Eastern Question’ and its fringes. This shows not only its ‘centrality [...] for understanding the history of humanitarian intervention’, as Davide Rodogno has argued,<sup>58</sup> but also how it acted as a nexus for the articulation of discourses centred on a common humanity, geared at the protection of ‘strangers’, with those seeking to define the boundaries of the – national and imperial – body politic. The status of the Jews in Romania after 1878, as subjects but not citizens, with none of the benefits and many of the obligations associated with citizenship, complete with an individual naturalisation law that opened a door to ‘deserving’ or ‘useful’ Jews, finds an interesting parallel further afield,

beyond the borders of the 'Eastern Question', in the similar status of the indigenous subjects in the French West African Federation, where such a law was proposed in 1907 and passed in 1912 by the Dakar administration.<sup>59</sup> Not only are such similarities in two otherwise patently different situations indicative of the general tension between the universalising claims of liberalism and its attendant hierarchies, but the two individual paths to naturalisation bore striking resemblances in their emphasis, in addition to 'moral rectitude', on property and 'good financial standing', as well as in their exclusion of women from their remit.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, by situating the Jewish minorities in Eastern Europe within or at the periphery of land empires in a common framework with overseas colonial subjects, it becomes apparent that these hierarchies, often read exclusively as racial, could be at once more and less than just that, drawing as they did on historical patterns of exclusion on grounds of religion, gender, or class. In turn, as Alice Conklin notes, the project of the French republicans to forge 'a new African humanity – one cast as much in their own moral image as marked by indelible difference' had its parallels, both ideational and logistic, in the Freycinet plan of 'building railroads throughout rural France in a conscious attempt to integrate another group of "savages," its own peasants, into both the marketplace and the nation.'<sup>61</sup>

To conclude, for all their dissimilarities, 'nation' and 'empire' and the corresponding '-building' processes proceeded in tandem during the long nineteenth century. While they produced and managed 'difference' in ways that varied across space and time, they certainly drew on each other, the liberal ideology that underpinned both, the dynamics of global capitalism, and the forms of social control characteristic of the modern state and its population politics.<sup>62</sup> Rather than a dichotomy between empire and nation or a teleological narrative that sees the (allegedly more 'modern') nation replace the (less modern) empire gradually over the course of the nineteenth century, it seems more productive to focus

on their coexistence, and acknowledge that ‘there was and is no single path from empire to nation – or the other way around [...] and both empires and nation-states could be transformed into something more like the other.’<sup>63</sup> The internal homogeneity that nationalism proclaimed failed to materialise, and hierarchies of minority (or minoritized) groups remained prominent. However, such differentiated recognition of difference allowed for a certain degree of flexibility, where in many cases, as shown above, the boundaries of the polity and the attendant ‘rights’ were not yet rigid, and constantly negotiated. Jane Burbank’s argument for the nineteenth-century Russian Empire, that ‘inclusion and difference were not antagonists but partners in the habitus of empire based on differentiated rights’<sup>64</sup> would thus seem a fitting summary of a century where ‘empire, and not yet the nation-state, remained the dominant form of territorial organisation globally.’<sup>65</sup>

### **Making the Nation Normative: Self-Determination, Minority Rights, and the ‘Wilsonian Moment’**

The two interlocking but distinct strands of conceptualising rights over the long nineteenth century were fused into a joint normative framing of difference at the Paris Peace Conference. On the face of it, what Erez Manela has termed the ‘Wilsonian moment’ ‘launched the transformation of the norms and standards of international relations that established the self-determining nation-state as the only legitimate political form throughout the globe.’<sup>66</sup> The normative emphasis on national sovereignty, interpretable as a culmination of the nineteenth-century emancipatory drive geared at citizenship rights, conferred it an internationally recognised status as *the model* for international relations and was rendered more meaningful domestically by a significant expansion of the franchise that however stopped short in most cases from recognising women as equals in this respect. The principle of self-

determination had its complement, and apparent limit, in the formalisation of minority rights, granting recognition to *national* communities that, for various reasons, were not seen as meeting the necessary prerequisites of statehood or were separated from their kin-state as a result of the most comprehensive redrawing of borders undertaken in history. Encompassing both within its remit, the League of Nations was established as an international organisation meant to act at once as a guarantor of the international order based on self-determination and of the protection of minorities within state borders.<sup>67</sup> With members such as ‘Abyssinia, Siam, Iran and Turkey’, the League was ‘already something with a very different global reach to the old European conference.’<sup>68</sup>

Prompted as they were by the collapse or defeat of the Central and Eastern European empires (Austro-Hungarian, German, Ottoman, and Russian), the geographical scope of the newly formalised ‘rights’ was limited however for the most part to the area they covered. As such, recognition of the nation-state and of national minorities continued to be circumvented by empire, the prerogatives of the victorious ones remaining largely untouched. Although empires’ ‘alibis’ became more sophisticated out of necessity, especially due to Wilson’s opposition to an annexationist peace and to colonialism more generally, rendering ‘imperialism’ a bad word even among the prime imperialists, the British,<sup>69</sup> the ensuing tension was mostly solved through cosmetic adjustments, such as the mandates system which ‘granted administrative control but not formal sovereignty to [the] victors, on the understanding that [...] “the well-being and development of [those territories] peoples form a sacred trust of civilization”.’<sup>70</sup> In fact, the prominent nineteenth-century notion of the ‘standard of civilisation’ was as prominent a factor in shaping the post-war peace settlement as the ‘messianic Wilsonian liberalism’<sup>71</sup> and it was their combination rather than the latter which rendered the Versailles Treaty a legal innovation in



international law. The imperial hierarchies it entailed were clearly visible in the mandates system, with its distinction between type A, B, and C mandates, where the latter two were according to Jan Smuts 'inhabited by barbarians, who not only cannot possibly govern themselves but to whom it would be impracticable to apply any ideas of political self-determination in the European sense.'<sup>72</sup> This echoed the Social Darwinist notions of the late nineteenth century, as expressed for example in James Lorimer's division of humanity 'into three zones or spheres – civilized humanity, barbarous humanity, and savage humanity.'<sup>73</sup>

Once more, the discrepancy in the treatment of the vestiges of the 'Eastern Question' in Eastern Europe and the Middle East through the two distinct prominent 'legal innovations of the League, [...] its mandates and minorities regimes'<sup>74</sup> reveals the endurance of the civilisational hierarchies that were briefly addressed in the previous section in the comparison of the Jewish interventions in Romania and Morocco. This is also well illustrated by the case of a petition from Western Samoa discussed by Susan Pedersen: 'bearing the signatures of 7982 Samoan taxpayers (out of a total native tax-paying population estimated at 8500 adult men)', it clearly demonstrated political agency and capacity for self-government, a transition to which was the stated purpose of the mandates system.<sup>75</sup> Despite this, the petition was dismissed according to the familiar paternalism that projected immaturity and incapacity unto subjects who were meant to be protected only insofar as their claims did not challenge the system's 'assumptions of racial and civilisational difference' meant 'to legitimize the perpetuation of imperial (that is, alien and non-consensual) rule in a Wilsonian age.'<sup>76</sup> This helps explain why, seen through the lens of a non-European, peripheral perspective, the Paris Peace Conference 'appears as a tragedy of a different sort, as the leading peacemakers, Wilson foremost among them, failed to offer the populations of the non-European world the place in international

society that Wilson's wartime speeches had implied that they deserved. At the Wilsonian moment, Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, Koreans, and others glimpsed the promised land of self-determination, but enter into it they could not.<sup>77</sup>

Placing some non-European territories beyond the pale of a narrowly-defined, European notion of 'civilisation' was doubled by the secondary status of both those new states where the principle of self-determination did apply, and of minority groups in the international legal order. As such, while Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Romania, Greece, Turkey, Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Bulgaria, and Hungary had to acquiesce to minority protection, Finland was exempt, as were 'The Big Four', Belgium, Denmark, and, most notably, defeated Germany.<sup>78</sup> That the 'minority states' as they occasionally came to be called scoffed at their second-rank status – with Poles celebrating the end of 'international servitude' by lighting bonfires throughout the country when Poland left the League in September 1934<sup>79</sup> – should come as no surprise, insofar as the Minority Treaties marked their alleged need for tutelage on the path to 'civilisation'. Similarly, 'many German communities in the new states of Eastern Europe, long accustomed to a dominant social position, were wont to bristle at the designation "minority", which to them carried the stench of marginality.'<sup>80</sup> As for the Ukrainians, Ruthenians, and Belarusians, their unheard claims for self-determination and their status as 'minorities' seemed to sanction what appeared in their eyes as unfairly-drawn borders. Reflecting as they did 'some mix of strategic calculation, ethnic considerations, and victors' bounties', those borders were bound to appear arbitrary and unfair to some, although 'no demarcation line could have unscrambled the ethnic mix of Eastern Europe'<sup>81</sup> – especially, I would add, since the respective 'ethnic mix' was as much the product of defining 'minorities' and 'majorities' in an area characterised by a

significant degree of national indifference and fluidity as it was the cause of such definitional efforts.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, beyond the disappointment of some groups or states, as Natasha Wheatley shows, the very category of ‘minority’, as that of mandated populations, was inherently marginal in legal terms: ‘most jurists argued that to the extent that they possessed international personality (if they did at all), this personality was limited or qualified in significant ways.’<sup>83</sup> As new subjects of international law, they were ‘fringe dwellers’, ‘straddling the line between legal visibility and invisibility, between international agency and its absence’, likened to ‘human embryos, slaves, and silhouetted specters [...], linguistically birthed into damaged and disenfranchised bodies that signposted their secondary status. The implied opposite of these images – the normal, enfranchised, seemingly unmetaphorical legal person against which these deficiencies were visible – was the state.’<sup>84</sup> If the very existence of minority rights conjured up the old juridical debate of whether the locus of sovereignty was the nation or the nation-state, the specifics of the procedure for minority petitions clearly answered it by pointing toward the latter. Consequently, the status of the individuals and communities enjoying this hybrid legal personality could be seen, in the words of the interwar jurist Alfred Verdross, as ‘similar to those people in a state who are subjects [...] without political rights.’<sup>85</sup> The formulation recalls two of the examples provided earlier, the status of the Jews in Romania after 1878 and that of the native population in the French West African Federation, allowing us to trace its *longue durée* roots in similar hybrid forms developed in domestic contexts in the course of the long nineteenth century and putting a dent on interpretations that emphasise the ‘modernist’, ‘experimental’, or ‘avant-garde’ nature of interwar international law.<sup>86</sup>

## Protecting Jews, Preserving Hierarchies, Containing Revolution – The Liberal Response to the Socialist Challenge

As was the case during the nineteenth century, the ‘Jewish question’ loomed large on the agenda of the Committee on New States that met in Paris in 1919 to draft the Minority Treaties. Both the immediate ‘daily reports of violent pogroms in Poland’ and the legacy of ‘the failure of the 1878 protections in Romania’ were invoked as grounds for urgently addressing the protection of the Jewish minorities, of which the one in Poland emerged as ‘the paradigmatic’ one.<sup>87</sup> As a paradigmatic minority group for whom being part of a multi-national, multi-lingual, and multi-confessional empire was much more convenient, ‘from a Jewish point of view’, as Mark Levene argues, ‘the fragmentation of the empires, even the former tsarist Russian empire, in favour of a series of nation-states thus aroused not so much enthusiasm as sheer horror.’<sup>88</sup> While positions on the form such protections and rights should take varied between the different Jewish lobby groups – from the Zionism of the French *Comité des Délégations Juives* (CDJ) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to the assimilationist stance of the Joint Foreign Committee (JFC) of British Jews and the AIU – it is indisputable that their commitment and access to the inner sanctum of the peace conference rendered them highly influential. ‘There were so many Jews in the delegations at Versailles that even Lithuania tried to include Jews in its delegation to maximise its influence.’<sup>89</sup> In turn, this helped fuel antisemitic sentiment in the ‘new states’, appearing as it did to confirm conspiratorial accounts of a concerted Jewish action dictating the terms of the peace agreement.

However, as Liliana Riga and James Kennedy note, the importance of the Jews went beyond their ‘elite influence [...] because of their perceived association with Bolshevism.’<sup>90</sup> This was certainly a new development in the dynamic of the ‘Jewish Question’: previously perceived exclusively as

victims in need of protection, their association with the socialist Revolution had rendered them 'dangerous'. This association led to the emergence of the 'Judeo-Bolshevism' myth in Central and Eastern Europe in 1918-1920, antedating its 'mainstreaming' in the 1930s as a result of Nazi propaganda. It harped both on previous notions linking Jews to left-wing revolutionary activity and drew on the contemporary experience of the turmoil of the Russian Civil War and the 1919 revolutions in Central Europe, from Hungary to Germany.<sup>91</sup> As Dan Diner and Jonathan Frankel pointed out, 'the images of Leon Trotsky standing at the head of the Red Army, and of the Jewish Chekist in leather jacket with a Mauser pistol carrying out mass liquidations, conjured up an existential threat of demonic proportions.'<sup>92</sup> While certainly lacking the conspiratorial elements characteristic of the myth of 'Judeo-Bolshevism' – which both drew on the already existing *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and helped to popularise them (with 1920 marking a boom in the text's global spread) – the association, not only of Jews but of national minorities generally with the Bolshevik Revolution is well-documented, and its 'class universalism' was, according to Liliana Riga, prompted in part by 'particular imperial experiences of (socio)ethnic exclusion.'<sup>93</sup> As a result, 'ethnic Russians were a significant minority, but Jews, Latvians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Poles, and others comprised nearly two-thirds of the revolutionary elite.'<sup>94</sup>

On the one hand, Riga's account, seeing the emergence of class universalism as the consequence of the nation- and empire-building processes at work in the nineteenth-century Tsarist Empire and their attendant hierarchisations, illustrates once more the importance of *longue durée* perspectives for understanding the structuring of difference, even for the avowed enemies of 'nationalism'. On the other hand, it explains why Wilson – and many other architects of the Versailles peace and its minority protection regime – thought that 'the Bolshevik movement had been led by the Jews' and that this was 'partly

due to the fact that they had been largely treated as outlaws.<sup>95</sup> In the context of the fear of the spread of Bolshevism and especially of the establishment of a bridge between revolutionary Russia and Germany, the attempts of the Western Allies to prevent any ties between the two prominent outcasts of the post-war international order ranged from direct intervention in the Russian Civil War to the well-known policy of *cordon sanitaire* whose two pillars were Romania and Poland, ‘the “Thermopylae of Western civilization,” as an article in the French press put it in the spring of 1919.’<sup>96</sup> If this resulted in a redrawing of borders that favoured both large states (Czechoslovakia or Poland, over potential divisions that would have seen Slovaks, Ukrainians or Belarusians enjoy their own ‘right’ to self-determination) and ‘white nations’ over ‘red’ ones (Romania over Hungary in the drawing of a border highly favourable to the former as a prize for its intervention against the Soviet Republic of Béla Kun), it also translated into a minority regime that sought to make Jews (and other minorities) loyal to their new states by granting them protection.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, the ‘Jewish Question’, always transnational, also acquired a geopolitical dimension at Versailles. In turn, the myth of ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’ not only performed an important external function in post-1918 nation-building processes in Central and Eastern Europe, helping to carry over former suspicions of the Russian imperial agenda to the Soviet Union, but was also pivotal internally for ‘delegitimizing working-class socialist activism in an age of mass politics and universal (male) suffrage [...], displacing class antagonisms and offering national alternatives for working-class mobilisation to international workers’ solidarity.’<sup>98</sup>

As such, the specific form the minority rights designed at Versailles took can also be accounted for by seeing them in light of liberalism’s opposition to socialist notions of self-determination. Both antedating Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’ and much more radical in scope in their inclusion of a call for ‘the unconditional and immediate liberation of the

colonies without compensation',<sup>99</sup> the socialist language of self-determination had however far less traction in 1919 even among colonial intellectuals, its foremost beneficiaries, let alone in Central and Eastern Europe. The explanation for this is to be found in the vast power differential between the United States, on the one hand, which 'was a leading world power whose intervention in the war had appeared to tip the scales in favor of the Allies', and 'the Bolsheviks, on the other hand, [who] were struggling for control of a land that was devastated by the war and were engaged in a brutal civil war whose outcome was far from certain.'<sup>100</sup> However, as the opening story of Erez Manela's *The Wilsonian Moment* – featuring 'Nguyen Tat Thanh, a twenty-eight-year-old kitchen assistant from French Indochina' who came to Paris in 1919 petitioning Wilson and seeking a personal audience with him, only to be disappointed, turning subsequently to Lenin as his inspiration, and becoming known to the world by the name of Ho Chi Minh – shows, the disillusionment of non-Europeans seeking independence from colonial empires with the Versailles peace was later translated into the popularity of Soviet socialism among anti-colonial movements 'after the collapse of the Wilsonian moment and the stabilization of the Soviet state.'<sup>101</sup>

Whether or not we choose to follow Arno Mayer's account of the post-war 'new diplomacy' as a result of the clash between Wilson and Lenin,<sup>102</sup> it is clear that the challenge socialism posed to the liberal order in 1919 was salient, at least in its *perception* as such. As shown above, the spectre its revolutionary potential invoked significantly influenced not only the reorganisation of space on the territory of the collapsed empires, but also acted as a catalyst for the establishment of a system of minority protection in an attempt to prevent minorities' 'defection' to Bolshevism. This factor further contributed to the minority rights' statist bias – they could consequently appear as 'directed more to protecting the states against their minorities than the minorities against oppression by the

state.<sup>103</sup> The challenge posed by socialism also shaped the form these rights took: limited to cultural recognition, to linguistic, religious, or cultural rights, in no way did they address economic inequalities or long-term, intergenerational cases of social exclusion, even while ‘culture’ or ‘ethnicity’ often overlapped with class and status for many of the populations falling under their remit. As Riga and Kennedy emphasise, ‘without access to labor markets, advanced education, and professional and bureaucratic hierarchies, cultural rights could not convert into social access. Yet these were the social locations where nationalising states did most of the excluding.’<sup>104</sup> This was true for the ‘ethnic reversals’ they discuss, which entailed rapid loss of status for former imperial elites in the new nationalising states, as it was for groups that had long been marginalised in societies (one need only think of the Roma, who did not even register as a ‘minority’ at this time) and whose very socio-economic exclusion translated into an absence of cultural representation. By eliding any economic considerations, the focus on ‘national’ or ‘cultural’ markers of difference artificially excised the ‘national question’ from the nexus of ‘questions’ with which it was inextricably bound, rendering it at once more salient than all others and more removed from the social realities it purported to reflect.

## **Conclusion**

The story of the normative inscription and selective production of difference at Versailles was shaped by its circumstances, some of which were (or appeared as) immediate, urgent, and novel, while others demonstrated long-term continuities with earlier patterns of negotiating alterity in the long nineteenth century. The prioritising of certain categories over others had less to do with what minority groups ‘did or did not demand for themselves’ and more with ‘the international arena in which those demands were made. The key issue in Paris, in other



words, was *context* not *content*.<sup>105</sup> It was the multiple contexts of the 1919 politics of difference that this article has concerned itself with, projected in their intersections and incomplete overlaps over a *longue durée* that, even if it perhaps only serves to complicate matters rather than 'settle' them, hopefully opens up a space not only for questioning its failures and trying to account for them, but also for imagining alternatives. Starting from the premise of the period's many 'questions' and their entanglements, the narrative also aimed at accounting for the receding into the background of some of them (the 'social question', the 'woman question') and the privileging of a disentangled 'national question', which was to have fateful consequences.

If in the different treatment of the territories that came under its consideration (e.g. the mandates system vs. minority rights) the Paris Peace reflected the global hierarchies it eventually came to preserve, the diversity of forms of dealing with difference was replaced by a 'simple' binary scheme of majority-minority within the 'new states' where the Minority Treaties applied. This not only had the effect of reifying identities which cut across national lines, or combined national identifications with other factors (linguistic, confessional, territorial), but also of reinforcing the opposition between the groups as a result of the enforcement of a clear-cut dichotomy. This binary structure was complete with an implicit hierarchy whereby the majority group appeared as the primary repository of national rights, with minorities placed in a 'tolerated' position, while the selective applications of the respective provisions to certain states – where they constituted a 'badge of the new states' secondary status<sup>106</sup> – but not others both reflected earlier notions of the 'standard of civilisation' and reinforced them. Given that their 'underlying premise was that assimilation into the civilized life of the nation was possible and desirable',<sup>107</sup> as well as the statist bias visible in the petition procedure, one can argue that they delivered a picture familiar already from the debates on Jewish emancipation during

the French Revolution, opening up the mutually exclusive possibilities of emancipation and assimilation as individuals or a tolerated existence as a distinct group. Meanwhile, the interstitial status of minority groups in international law, akin to subjects without full political rights, reproduced on an international level earlier provisions deployed on a national scale (e.g. Jews in Romania after 1878, colonial subjects in the French West African Federation after 1912).

The 'minority states' found compensation for their subaltern status in the international order in the affirmation of their majority status within their own borders, reproducing the normative logic of hierarchy that determined their own position internationally. With the state constituting the ultimate measure of sovereignty, prevailing legally over both sub-state groups and the supra-national League, as well as with an expansion of the franchise that rendered it more pliable to popular pressure, the legal framework developed at Versailles thus helped set the stage for the more radical form of nationalism characteristic of the interwar period. Replacing the more nuanced (if hierarchical) and fluid imperial notions of difference with a neat normative distinction between majority and minorities, this framework facilitated ever stronger associations of the state with the titular nations, translating in turn into the *denationalisation* of minority groups, their symbolic exclusion from a homogeneously imagined nation. And if 'ethnic nationalism as practiced in Warsaw or Bucharest had limited scope for assimilation', 'racial nationalism of the kind that spread across Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s allowed none.'<sup>108</sup> Adding to this context the prevalent anti-communism of the interwar period, especially in the area under consideration here, as well as the ever more pronounced association of the Jews with it, especially after Hitler's coming to power, this helps explain the revolution from the right that swept the region in the 1930s, with catastrophic consequences for the Jews of Europe. Always at the centre of debates about rights, their content, scope, and

limits, that sought to prevent their victimisation, Jews (and other minority groups) would ultimately become the main victims of the consequences of a system purposely designed for their protection.

The starting and end points of this narrative, i.e. the early nineteenth century and the Paris Peace Conference, also hint toward an interesting commonality. If humanitarian interventions associated with the former arose from the 'conservative venues of the old Concert of Europe's diplomacy',<sup>109</sup> and if 'it was really after the defeat of Napoleon that the concept of a European civilization became fundamental to new understandings of international order and new techniques of international rule',<sup>110</sup> the anti-Bolshevik impetus of the Versailles Peace and its minority provisions provide a twentieth-century counterpart. With liberalism the revolutionary force to be contained in 1815 and the conservative force containing its revolutionary challenger of 1919, what these otherwise very distinct moments appear to share then is a profoundly conservative, counter-revolutionary logic. Within this logic, a universal humanity could be invoked to exorcise the spectre of national revolutions, just as, later, national self-determination could be propped as a bulwark against a socialist universalism that had grown roots in its very cracks, in the complex articulations of nation and empire with 'difference'.

Without making any claims for the relevance of this account to contemporary human rights and minority protection regimes, it should become clear that historicising their evolution in their proper contexts allows a different vantage point than the one provided by presentist assumptions and the story of 'progress' they tend to retroject. Long-term continuities appear as important as ruptures, watersheds that are held to inaugurate novel forms of conceptualising alterity. Along these lines, more remains to be said about the eventual failure of the interwar system of minority rights and the suspicions of it (according to the notion that 'every protected minority will ultimately find its Henlein'<sup>111</sup>) that led

to the establishment of a human rights regime whose scope was broader only insofar as its content was thinner, more abstract, and more difficult to enforce. More can be said from this *longue durée* perspective also for the return of minority protection after the end of the Cold War, designed for an area that insistently recalls the ‘Eastern Question’ and with a statist bias reminiscent of the one that had plagued the League of Nations in the interwar period. While such issues remain beyond the scope of this article, it might hopefully provide a platform inspiring studies of the complex and fluid articulations of ‘diversity’, across time and space and at the meeting points of global processes and local geographies of difference, to consider the endurance of echoes of their origins in the ‘rights’ discourses of the nineteenth century and their attendant hierarchies: colonial, racist, hegemonic.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> H. Case, *The Age of Questions: Or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton NJ, 2018), xv, 4, 6.

<sup>2</sup> J. Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> C. Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. M. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca NJ, 2011); S. Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity: Equality and Cultural Difference in World History* (Cambridge MA, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> These “presentist assumptions” when dealing with such subjects of high contemporary political relevance are also noted by Abigail Green in her review article on nineteenth century humanitarianism. See A. Green, ‘Humanitarianism

in Nineteenth-Century Context: Religious, Gendered, National', in: *The Historical Journal* 57/4 (2014), 1157-1175.

<sup>6</sup> J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, Amsterdam 2006, 18.

<sup>7</sup> See S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge MA, 2012), especially 11-43.

<sup>8</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 57-94.

<sup>9</sup> In French and German, the eighteenth-century terms 'droits de l'homme' and 'Menschenrechte' remain applicable to contemporary human rights. See A. Green, 'Humanitarianism in Nineteenth-Century Context', 1161.

<sup>10</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 57-75.

<sup>12</sup> As Samuel Moyn notes, the emblematic figure of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Mazzini, had emblazoned "Liberty, Equality, Humanity" on one side of the banner of Young Italy, and "Unity, Independence" on the other side. Of the two, the latter took precedence, as Mazzini proclaimed that "the epoch of individuality is concluded" and outside of the nation-state "you have no name, token voice, nor rights, no admission to the fellowship of the peoples. You are the bastards of Humanity". Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 29; Y. Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton NJ, 1993), 124.

<sup>13</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 49-94; D. Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914: The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice* (Princeton NJ, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> The similarities between two otherwise very different groups, Catholic conservatives and romantic socialists, and the degree to which the latter were indebted to the "universal community posited by Christianity" was noted by the liberal opponents of both. N. Andrews, 'The Romantic Socialist Origins of Humanitarianism', in: *Modern Intellectual History* (2019), 13, 17-22.

<sup>15</sup> J. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton NJ, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. S. Conrad and J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871-1914* (Göttingen, 2014); N. Labanca, *Oltremare: La storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna, 2002), especially 15-56.

<sup>17</sup> D. Moon, 'Peasants into Russian Citizens? A Comparative Perspective', in: *Revolutionary Russia* 9/1 (1996) 43-81; P. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge MA, 2016); H. Eissenstat, 'Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire', in: A. Miller and S. Berger (eds.), *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest, 2015), 429.

<sup>18</sup> S. Berger and A. Miller, 'Building Nations in and with Empires – A Reassessment', in *Nationalizing Empires*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Case, *The Age of Questions*, 72.

<sup>20</sup> L.C. Jennings, *French Antislavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802–1848* (Cambridge, 2000); C.L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, 2006); H.T. David, 'Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century: Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement', in: *Global Networks* 7/3 (2007), 367-382.

<sup>21</sup> K. Matena, 'The Crisis of Liberal Imperialism', in: D. Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order* (Cambridge, 2007), 113-135; K. Matena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton NJ, 2010). Of course, notions of 'civilising mission' helped legitimate unspeakable violence – as the French jurist Charles Salomon who read it as "pure hypocrisy that sought only the advancement of commerce" put it in his 1889 book on the subject, "no word is more vague and has permitted the commission of more crimes than that of civilization". Cited in M. Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960* (Cambridge, 2004), 106.

<sup>22</sup> J. Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York, 1983).

<sup>23</sup> A. Conklin, 'Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914', in: *American Historical Review* 103/2 (1998), 422 (emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup> H. Harootunian, 'Remembering the Historical Present', in: *Critical Enquiry* 33/3 (2007), 471-494; E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London, 1977).

<sup>25</sup> T. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', in: *American Historical Review* 90/2 (1985), 339-361; 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2', in: *American Historical Review* 90/3 (1985), 547-566.

<sup>26</sup> The importance of print capitalism for the emergence of nationalism is emphasised by Benedict Anderson, in his landmark *Imagined Communities*. For an argument about the importance of the novel and new media technologies in the development of a humanitarian sensibility, see L. Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> S. Conrad, "'Nothing is the Way it should be": Global Transformations of the Time Regime in the Nineteenth Century', in: *Modern Intellectual History* 14/1 (2017), 1-28. See also J. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Conrad, "'Nothing is the Way it should be"', 9.

<sup>29</sup> J. Osterhammel, 'Nationalism and Globalization', in: J. Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2013), 705. See also E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 88.

<sup>31</sup> J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven CT, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> R. Stergar and T. Scheer, 'Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification', in: *Nationalities Papers* 46/4 (2018), 575-591 (especially 579-584).

<sup>33</sup> See G.W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization'*, in: *International Society* (Oxford, 1984) for the classic account on this topic.

<sup>34</sup> Case, *The Age of Questions*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> A. Green, 'Nationalism and the "Jewish International": Religious Internationalism in Europe and the Middle East c. 1840-c. 1880', in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50/2 (2008), 535-558.

<sup>36</sup> Y. Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton NJ, 2004), 12.

<sup>37</sup> R. Cârstocea and É. Kovács, 'The Centre Does Not Hold: Antisemitisms in the Peripheries between the Imperial, the Colonial and the National', in: R. Cârstocea and É. Kovács (eds.), *Modern Antisemitisms in the Peripheries: Europe and its Colonies, 1880-1945* (Vienna, 2019), 34.

<sup>38</sup> K. Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in: R.C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1978), 26-52.

<sup>39</sup> In Slezkine's interpretation Jews are seen as part of a broader category of "Mercurians" or "service nomads" to be found across the globe, "permanent strangers" among the sedentary, agrarian societies in the midst of which they resided, "performing tasks that the natives were unable or unwilling to perform". If they eventually came to epitomise 'Mercurianism' everywhere, it was because they were the foremost such group in Europe. As such, modernity as "the Age of Universal Mercurianism became Jewish because it began in Europe". Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, 11, 14, 47. See also A.D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> A. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton NJ, 2007), 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> D. Bell, *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Evanston IL, 2018), 28.

<sup>43</sup> A. Sorescu, *Visions of Agency: Imagining Individual and Collective Action in Nineteenth-Century Romania* (PhD Dissertation, London 2018), 188-189.

<sup>44</sup> Cârstocea and Kovács, 'The Centre Does Not Hold', 34.

<sup>45</sup> Green, 'Nationalism and the "Jewish International"', 540-541.

<sup>46</sup> J. Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder,' Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge, 1997), 2-5.

<sup>47</sup> Green, 'Nationalism and the "Jewish International"', 541.



<sup>48</sup> S. Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews: Britain and Eastern Europe's 'Jewish Question,' 1867-1925* (Basingstoke, 2011), 16-23.

<sup>49</sup> R. Cârstocea, 'Uneasy Twins? The Entangled Histories of Jewish Emancipation and Anti-Semitism in Romania and Hungary, 1866-1913', in: *Slovo* 21/2 (2009), 64-85.

<sup>50</sup> A. Green, 'The Limits of Intervention: Coercive Diplomacy and the Jewish Question in the Nineteenth Century', in: *The International History Review* 36/3 (2014), 473.

<sup>51</sup> With the exception of a small Sephardic community in Wallachia.

<sup>52</sup> Green, 'The Limits of Intervention', 483.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> K. Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.

<sup>55</sup> J. Katz, 'An Imperial Entanglement: Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism', in: *American Historical Review* 123/4 (2018), 1201. See also L. Blévis, 'Les avatars de la citoyenneté en Algérie coloniale ou les paradoxes d'une catégorisation', in: *Droit et société* 2/48 (2001), 557-580.

<sup>56</sup> Katz, 'An Imperial Entanglement', 1197-1198. See also L.M. Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 2006), 207-228; J. Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick NJ, 2010).

<sup>57</sup> See Bell, *Globalizing Race*, 14.

<sup>58</sup> Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> C. Iordachi, 'The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of "Non-Citizens" in Romania, 1866-1918', in: *European Review of History* 8/2 (2001), 157-186; W.A. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia, 1991); Conklin, 'Colonialism and Human Rights', 434-442.

<sup>60</sup> Conklin, 'Colonialism and Human Rights', 434-435.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 430, 432. See Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 209-211, 471-496.

<sup>62</sup> S. Conrad, 'Rethinking German Colonialism in a Global Age', in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41/4 (2013), 553-558. Conrad refers to Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan's identification of colonial practices at work also in metropolitan contexts (as evident in the use of the terms *colonie* and *colon* for institutions as diverse as penal colonies – be they metropolitan or overseas – orphanages, state institutions for paupers, agricultural colonies of education, etc.) and their general focus on the practices of empire as 'imperial formations'. See A.L. Stoler, C. McGranahan and P.C. Purdue (eds.), *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe NM, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton NJ, 2010), 9.

<sup>64</sup> J. Burbank, 'The Rights of Difference: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire', in: Stoler et al. (eds.), *Imperial Formations*, 78.

<sup>65</sup> J. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung*, 615.

<sup>66</sup> E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007), 5.

<sup>67</sup> For a history of the Paris Peace Conference, see M. MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> M. Mazower, 'An International Civilization? Empire, Internationalism and the Crisis of the Mid-Twentieth Century', in: *International Affairs* 82/3 (2006), 559.

<sup>69</sup> Mazower quotes a conversation between Arthur Balfour and Robert Cecil in December 1918 where the French and Italians are pejoratively identified as 'imperialists'. Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> S. Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', in: *American Historical Review* 112/4 (2007), 1103.

<sup>71</sup> Mazower, 'An International Civilization?', 559.

<sup>72</sup> Cited in A.W. Brian Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire: Britain and the Genesis of the European Convention* (Oxford, 2001), 146. Type A mandates comprised the Ottoman Middle East, type B mandates most of German Africa, and type C mandates the former German colonies in the Pacific, as well as South West Africa. Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', 1103.

<sup>73</sup> Gong, 'The Standard of 'Civilization', 49.

<sup>74</sup> N. Wheatley, 'New Subjects in International Law and Order', in: G. Sluga and P. Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017), 267.

<sup>75</sup> S. Pedersen, 'Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations', in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40/2 (2012), 231.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 253.

<sup>77</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 225.

<sup>78</sup> H. Rosting, 'Protection of Minorities by the League of Nations', in: *The American Journal of International Law* 17/4 (1923), 647-648; J. Preece, *National Minorities*, 73-74; C. Fink, 'The Paris Peace Conference and the Question of Minority Rights', in: *Peace and Change* 21/3 (1996), 280-281. Although Finland was together with Sweden party to the Åland Islands Agreement of 1921, hailed as one of the few successes of the interwar system of minority protection, this "was not a condition of Finland's admission to the League of Nations and does not appear in the treaty series of the League of Nations but only in the Council minutes of 27 June 1921". J. Jackson-Preece, 'Minority Rights in Europe: From Westphalia to Helsinki', in: *Review of International Studies* 23/1 (1997), 83.

<sup>79</sup> Fink, 'The Paris Peace Conference', 284.

<sup>80</sup> Wheatley, 'New Subjects', 282.

<sup>81</sup> Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', 1099.

<sup>82</sup> See e.g. J. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor MI, 2008); T. Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', in: *Slavic Review* 69/1 (2010), 93-119.

<sup>83</sup> N. Wheatley, 'Spectral Legal Personality in Interwar International Law: On New Ways of Not Being a State', in: *Law and History Review* 35/3 (2017), 756.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 756, 765.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in *Ibid*, 781 (emphasis added).

<sup>86</sup> See N. Berman, “‘But the Alternative Is Despair’: European Nationalism and the Modernist Renewal of International Law”, in: *Harvard Law Review* 106/8 (1993), 1792-1903.

<sup>87</sup> L. Riga and J. Kennedy, ‘Tolerant Majorities, Loyal Minorities and “Ethnic Reversals”: Constructing Minority Rights at Versailles 1919’, in: *Nations and Nationalism* 15/3 (2009), 470-471.

<sup>88</sup> M. Levene, ‘Nationalism and Its Alternatives in the International Arena: The Jewish Question at Paris, 1919’, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 28/3 (1993), 516.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 513-514, 521-522. Riga and Kennedy, ‘Tolerant Majorities’, 469.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>91</sup> E. Ablovatski, ‘The 1919 Central European Revolutions and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth’, in: *European Review of History* 17/3 (2010), 473-489; P. Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge MA, 2018).

<sup>92</sup> D. Diner and J. Frankel, ‘Jews and Communism. The Utopian Temptation’, in: J. Frankel (ed.), *Dark Times, Dire Decisions. Jews and Communism* (Oxford, 2004), 5.

<sup>93</sup> L. Riga, ‘The Ethnic Roots of Class Universalism. Rethinking the “Russian” Revolutionary Elite’, in: *American Journal of Sociology* 114/3 (2008), 650; L. Riga, *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire* (Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Lloyd George, cited in Riga and Kennedy, ‘Tolerant Majorities’, 474.

<sup>96</sup> D. Diner, *Cataclysms. A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe’s Edge* (Madison WI, 2008), 68.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 64-76. Riga and Kennedy, ‘Tolerant Majorities’, 474-476.

<sup>98</sup> Cârstocea and Kovács, ‘The Centre Does Not Hold’, 39-40.

<sup>99</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Marxism and Nationalism* (Melbourne, 2002 [1916]), 140.

<sup>100</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 3-4, 7.

<sup>102</sup> A.J. Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918* (Cleveland OH, 1964).

<sup>103</sup> A. Cobban, *The Nation State and National Self-Determination* (New York, 1970), 88.

<sup>104</sup> Riga and Kennedy, 'Tolerant Majorities', 478. This is further proven by the fact that "appeals to the League in the interwar years were not cultural, but economic". Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Levene, 'Nationalism and its Alternatives', 514.

<sup>106</sup> Mazower, 'An International Civilization', 560.

<sup>107</sup> M. Mazower, 'Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe', in: *Daedalus* 126/2 (1997), 53.

<sup>108</sup> Mazower, 'Minorities', 54.

<sup>109</sup> Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 16-17.

<sup>110</sup> Mazower, 'An International Civilization', 554.

<sup>111</sup> I. Claude, *National Minorities: An International Problem* (Cambridge MA, 1955), 57.