

Introduction: Contested Minorities in the 'New Europe': National Identities in Interwar Eastern and Southeastern Europe

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Among the many challenges facing the new, or enlarged, nation-states that arose on the territories of the former empires of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe in 1918, few were as vexing or complex as the minorities' question. During the First World War, both the Entente and Central Powers attempted to win the loyalties of various ethnic minorities across the region by exploiting societal discontent and promising recognition or even outright sovereignty. At the same time, political elites had kindled patriotic feeling and nationalistic pride among their fellow countrymen; they embraced the popular slogans of self-determination and demanding independence or unity between their respective territory and national 'homeland' following the war. Despite their idealised vision of a new European order, the successor states established on the ruins of the old Central and Eastern European empires, and those in the Balkan Peninsula which had achieved independence before 1914, remained ethnographically diverse. Across this mosaic of geopolitical boundaries, what the philosopher and first president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Masaryk emphatically termed 'New Europe', thousands of disparate communities suddenly discovered that they now existed as minorities, often in areas adjacent to their politically designated homelands.¹

This special issue explores the various strategies that were available to these minority groups when seeking to develop or preserve their respective sense of national or cultural identity within the new borders. It comprises several papers originally presented at the academic conference '*Contested Minorities in the 'New Europe': National Identities from the Baltics to the Balkans, 1918-1939*' held at Birkbeck, University of London in June 2019. The papers presented at the conference sought to address a significant gap in current Western scholarship that typically oversimplifies this avenue of enquiry by presenting the region as inherently unstable with minorities as perpetual victims of persecution. In addition, history in the region has often been written in retrospect resulting in certain minorities deemed as representing 'a fifth column' and blamed unanimously either for the outbreaks of interethnic violence (as in case of Poland's Ukrainian minority), or collaboration with the Axis during the Second World War (notably ethnic Germans in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). This approach,

strengthened by the populist agendas currently pursued by many of the region's national governments, continues to divert scholarly attention from genuine minorities' experiences.²

In challenging these restrictive narratives, the issue seeks to reorient discussion away from a 'top-down' unidirectional state-focused approach towards a 'bottom-up' perspective, emphasising historical agency among these minority communities, as well as strategies employed as a means of exercising their political and cultural rights within the newly established state borders. Its contributing authors, therefore, consider minorities not as unified homogeneous collectives, but as minorities-in-becoming, whose daily inter-ethnic cooperation, internal conflicts and competing loyalties are examined within particular localised contexts.

Defining national minorities

While general and country specific works focusing on the so-called 'problem of minorities' are plentiful, it is surprising that hardly any conventional definition of a 'national minority' exists in historical literature. Until the end of the long 19th century, understanding of nationality as a cultural and socio-political concept was mostly derived from linguistic and/or religious categories. In Austria-Hungary, for instance, people were expected to determine their national affiliation through one of nine *Umgangssprache* (language of daily use): "German, Bohemian-Moravian-Slovak, Polish, Ruthenian, Slovene, Serbian-Croat, Italian-Ladino, Romanian, and Hungarian" (Stregar and Scheer, 2018, p.580).³ Similarly, the first census to be conducted in the Russian empire in 1897, did not include any direct questions on *narodnost*' (ethnicity) or *natsional'nost*' (nationality). The ethnic make-up of the Tsar's subjects was instead determined by a combination of questions relating to native language (*rodnoi iazyk*), religion (*veroispovidanie*) and social estate (*soslovie*) (Cadiot, 2005). The national awakenings of the mid-19th century however, made such equations obsolete as nationalist activists sought to split the populations of continental Europe's imperial hegemony along ethnic and national lines.

Following wartime amplification, it was the post-war peace negotiations and territorial reorganisations, with some continuing well into the 1920s, which transformed these clear-cut definitions of ethnic groups and minorities into matters of political imperative. The minorities question was further aggravated within the context of the new nation-states, none of whose interwar governments could boast of an ethnically heterogeneous population. Paradoxically, these new governments were vehement in demanding protection for minorities rights in every country other than their own. In turn, the post-war international community was ready to offer

a minimal amount of cultural protection to minorities in the hope that it would make such peoples less likely to pursue separate nationalist aspirations and instead become contented and loyal citizens of the existing polities (Preece, 1998, p.68). Nonetheless, despite paying a great attention to the issue of minority rights, by 1939 a codified universal definition still did not exist. The League of Nations, an international organisation established in 1919, limited its terminology to a descriptive formula of persons who “differed from the majority population in race, language, and religion” (Macartney, 1934, p.505). A more comprehensive definition was coined by the Permanent Court of International Justice in 1930:

by tradition...a group of persons living in a given country or locality, having a race, religion, language and tradition of their own and united by this identity of race, religion, language and traditions in a sentiment of solidarity, with a view to preserving their traditions, maintaining their form of worship, ensuring the instruction and upbringing of their children in accordance with the spirit and tradition of their race and rendering mutual assistance to each other. (Thornberry, 1991, p.165).

Even in the current post-Cold War era, international organisations concerned with the minority question have yet to establish a commonly accepted legal definition. The ‘Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities’, as approved by the Resolution 1992/16 of the Commission on Human Rights of 21 February 1992, for example, simply echoed earlier descriptions of “persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities” (Minority Rights Group, 1993, p.2).

Despite the absence of an officially agreed definition, international historians, lawyers and practitioners often refer to formulations introduced by those recognised as the leading academic commentators on the subject of minority rights. The most comprehensive attempt at establishing a concise legal definition was made by the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur Francesco Capotorti in his *Study of the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (1977). According to this widely cited definition, a minority is:

a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the state—possess ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Thornberry, 1991, p.6; Preece, 1998, p.20).

Since the turn of the twenty-first century however, further interpretations have arisen based on analysis of changing historical and contemporary global circumstances. Jennifer Preece, for example, maintains that “minorities are none other than ethnonations who have failed to secure the ultimate goal of ethnic nationalism—independence in their own nation-state—and consequently exist within the political boundaries of some other nation’s state” (Preece, 1998, p.29). From a sociological perspective, Roger Brubaker suggests that ‘national minorities’ should be studied in conjunction to the newly nationalising states in which they lived and external national ‘homelands’ to which they belong, or can be construed as belonging, by ethnocultural affinity though not by legal citizenship.⁴ In this model, a national minority is defined not as “a static ethnodemographic condition” but “a dynamic political stance” characterised by the public claim to membership of an ethnocultural nation different from the numerically and/or politically dominant ethnocultural nation; the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethnocultural nationality; and the assertion, on the basis of this ethnocultural nationality, of certain collective cultural and/or political rights (Brubaker, 1996, p.60).

Historiographical approaches to studying minorities

International and diplomatic history

Scholars studying diplomatic or international history, as well as those dealing with the history of international law and human rights, have often focused on the protection of the rights of minorities in a historical perspective. In his study on *International Law and the Rights of Minorities* (1991), Patrick Thornberry argues that the shift from protecting religious communities to that of national minorities occurred in the wake of the 1815 Congress of Vienna. Prior to this, interstate treaties had mostly served to defend the rights of religious groups. The Treaty of Nijmegen of 1678 between France and the Dutch Republic, for instance, guaranteed freedom of worship for the Roman Catholic minority living within the mainly Protestant Republic; similarly, the Treaty of Paris of 1763 stipulated that the British Crown agree “to grant the inhabitants of Canada the freedom the Catholic religion” (Thornberry, 1991, p.28). Later international agreements, drawing inspiration from the French and American Revolutions, adopted a more universal, secular understanding of minority rights. As a partial response to the proposed partition of the independent Duchy of Warsaw between Prussia and Russia, the Congress of Vienna’s *Final Act* proposed certain guarantees for national groups, including provisions guaranteeing the preservations of the Polish nation: ‘The Poles, who are

... subjects of Russia, Austria and Prussia, shall obtain a Representation and National Institutions, regulated according to the degree of political consideration, that each of the Governments to which they belong shall judge expedient and proper to grant them' (Thornberry, 1991, p.30). Based on this legal precedence, recognition of the status of national minorities gained further prominence during the Congress of Berlin in 1878, as the newly recognised independent Balkan states of Serbia, Romania and Montenegro, and a *de jure* independent Bulgaria, were forced to guarantee the rights to their diverse populations. Preece summarises that 'national minority undertakings included in international treaties from the late nineteenth century were no longer voluntarily assumed by states as gesture of international goodwill [...] but were externally dictated preconditions for the new nation-states' membership in international society' (Preece, 1998, p.62). Nonetheless, as observed by Carole Fink, the lack of any form of supranational organisation meant that 'before World War I, the history of minority protection had produced a dismal legacy of unfulfilled promises, oppressed peoples, and ambitious outside defenders' (Fink, 1995, p.197).

The context surrounding the outbreak of the Great War marked another point of departure, with the protection of minorities coming to be recognised as a form of deterrence for any future conflicts. A new international organisation, the League of Nations, quickly took up the role of defending minorities alongside guaranteeing Europe's new state borders. Since its founding, international lawyers, historians and political scientists have relied on treaties, proceedings of international congresses and conferences, and the League's own prodigious internal correspondence to study minorities in the interwar period. Early research into its institutional history mostly focused on its lofty ambitions, and ultimate failure, to protect minority rights.⁵ Following the Second World War, as argued by Matthew Frank, the status of national minorities in Europe was irreversibly changed with the rise of universal human rights as the primary metric for international moral norms. However, this new system of global values also oriented the newly established UN's attention towards protecting individual rights while making those of specific national minorities a non-issue in international politics (Frank, 2017).⁶ As a result, scholarly interest to the League waned significantly during the Cold War, only to be revived in the 1990s.⁷ In contrast to earlier studies, this revival of interest in the history of minority issues as an international challenge was spearheaded by scholars who had adopted the newly emerging perspective of 'transnational history'. While their predecessors had questioned the League's success in protecting of minority rights in the context of the nascent Second World War, research conducted from the 1990s onwards approached its stated commitment from a

more objective position that emphasised its actions and stated intent during the interwar period (Pederson, 2007). For our purposes, we are mostly interested in those studies that consider the League as a key agent in regulating interwar inter-ethnic relations.⁸

The League of Nations was established to deal with nation-states, the rise of ethnic nationalism and irreconcilable territorial claims. The so-called 'Committee on New States' was formed in 1920 to prevent ethnic dissatisfaction with the new territorial status quo and its potential escalation into domestic and even international violence. The Committee developed legal instruments of 'adjudicating, delineating and managing relations of sovereignty' (Pederson, 2007, p.1099); that were incorporated into the peace settlements imposed on Germany's former wartime allies, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey; or prescribed in the edicts of treaties that the new or enlarged nation-states, specifically Greece, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929), were forced to accept as a precondition for their recognition by the League. The first of these treaties that dealt with minority rights - The Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Poland - was signed on 28 June 1919, despite bitter protests from Warsaw, and served as a template for subsequent agreements. Each of these treaties included similar stipulations guaranteeing full and complete protection of life and liberty; equality of treatment under the law; full religious and cultural freedoms, including the unrestricted use of any national minority language in public as well as private life; and the right to certain forms of collective organisation in the educational and cultural spheres. Besides these commonalities, each settlement contained various provisos dealing with specific minorities, such as Mount Athos's non-Hellenic monastic communities, Szeklers and Saxons in Transylvania (following its union with Romania), or the Ruthenians of eastern Czechoslovakia.⁹

The majority of recent studies highlight the League's inability to balance its commitment to safeguarding minority rights while accepting the nation-states as subjects of international relations (Frentz, 1999; Scheuermann, 2000; Fink, 2004). Mark Mazower summarises that the League 'came to stand for a system that, on the one hand, accepted the nation-state as the norm in international relations and, on the other, made a considered effort to tackle the minority issues that were thus created' (Mazower, 1997, p.51). Fink suggests that the League faced the twin impossibilities of championing the creation of ethnically homogenous nation-states on the ruins of the former multi-ethnic empires while promising to satisfy the claims for national self-determination for all of Europe's minorities. Thus, in a broader sense, 'the Polish Minority Treaty represented the culmination of almost six months of equivocation over the widespread

nonfulfillment of self-determination in Eastern Europe and the political dangers resulting therefrom' (Fink, 2004, p.261).

General scholarly consensus emphasises the League's inability to practically enforce the treaties and guarantee their implementation as its primary weakness. Preece maintains that the new system embodied by the League could only work thanks to 'a combination of collective decision-making and the moral approbation of international public opinion', which was hard to achieve since the international goodwill it relied upon was not forthcoming (Preece, 1998, pp.72-73). The new supranational regime lacked universal implication and, in the eyes of those governments subject to the new minorities treaties, promoted double standards among member states, with countries outside of Central and Eastern Europe having seemingly no obligations towards protecting their own minorities (Fink, 1995, p.199). As the example of Turkey suggests, those weak but expansionist and irredentist states often saw new provisions for minority rights as a form of interference in their domestic affairs. Lerna Ekmekcioglu shows that the Turkish political and military elite, regarded the 'Protection of Minorities' clauses of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) as more than simply an annoyance: in their eyes it threatened the new country's external as well as internal security. Particular animosity was reserved for the Turkish Republic's Christians, who were perceived as genuine enemies who, following the war, had collaborated with the victorious Entente powers and against whom the united Ottoman Muslim majority, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, had triumphed in the Turkish 'war of independence' from 1919 to 1922. Although Turkey was eventually forced to acquiesce to Lausanne's edicts, its representatives continuously tried to renegotiate the clauses covering its minority rights obligations (Ekmekcioglu, 2014, p.658).

In addition to a lack of universal goodwill and the new nation-states' negative attitude towards the post-war arrangements, scholars have also underlined the ineffectiveness of the procedures put in place to solve ethnic conflicts. As envisaged, minorities could petition the executive League Council in relation to rights violations by their respective governments. Such cases were to be reviewed confidentially by a specially appointed 'committee-of-three'. Nonetheless, the Council often failed to act upon these complaints. Every petition was judged under restrictive conditions and even those deemed 'receivable' were treated as informational, rather than juridical documents. Fink notes that the petitioners themselves were excluded from every stage of these investigations, as the 'committee-of-three' attempted to resolve the matter through direct discussion with the state. Consequently 'the League officials guarded the minority states' interests and dismissed all but the most politically explosive complaints' (Fink,

2004, p.282). Christian Raitz von Frenzt and Martin Scheuermann, however, dispute Fink's assessment, arguing that the League took all such complaints seriously. Indeed, as Raitz von Frenzt has observed, out of a total of 950 petitions received between 1921 and 1939, 550 were judged 'receivable' (Frenzt, 1999). Both scholars assert that the League took great effort in reviewing the petitions even from those minorities who did not have a strong lobbying presence at Geneva, as, for instance, the Ukrainians in Poland. Nonetheless, Scheuermann concedes that the League's preeminent goals were political and not humanitarian, with defending the prestige of the organisation per se and the 1919 settlements often taking precedence over meaningful relief for petitioners (Scheuermann, 2000; Pederson, 2007, p.1102). Overall, as summarised by Fink, the League's failure to establish an effective system of minority protections reflected the economic, social and political problems of the interwar period: 'the failure of democracy and the rule of law to take root in the new and enlarged states; the failure of the Great Powers to establish a system of security and disarmament; the "illusion of peace" in the 1920s, which masked Europe's structural, ideological and human divisions that would erupt after 1933' (Fink, 1995, p.204).

Minority Identity through the Lens of Authoritarianism

From the perspective of Western historical scholarship, few factors have arguably codified the study of interwar Central and Eastern Europe than political authoritarianism and the repression of minority rights. Such an assessment is hardly surprising given the rapid political and socio-economic changes that swept across the region during and immediately after the First World War. Despite a formal cessation of hostilities in November 1918, the war's formal conclusion was marked by continued violence and social fragmentation in much of Central and Eastern Europe and the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. Even as the Paris Peace Conference sat in session, competing ideological and ethno-national groups fought across the former imperial borderlands to secure political advantages or vaguely defined ethno-national borders, the so-called 'shatterzone of empires' (Eichenberg & Newman, 2010, pp.183-189).¹⁰ Societal fragmentation and the collapse of much of the former imperial state infrastructure coincided with rising revolutionary and anti-bourgeois sentiment, manifesting in paramilitary violence and sporadic programs against larger and more visible minority communities. In Ukraine, Belarus, Hungary and eastern Poland especially, militant anti-Semitism served as a principle driving force for this while in Turkey, much of the nationalistic ire saw an acceleration in the ongoing persecution of certain Christian groups, namely Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians.¹¹

While these new boundaries would eventually stabilise however, the supposed triumph of a harmonic combination of liberal democratic values and what the British historian and regional expert R. W. Seton-Watson termed the ‘rise of nationality’ proved short-lived (Seton-Watson, 1917). From as early as 1920, ingrained economic and social unrest and lingering fears of revolutionary Communism (and later Fascism) among reactionary elites, saw a gradual erosion or curtailing of democratic pluralism. By 1939, most parliamentary institutions, alongside judicial independence, had been abolished, suspended, or weakened by executive interference. This is frequently paired with a reductionist propensity for geographical determinism. The presence of three major powers to the immediate east, west and south has perpetuated assumptions of the regions’ countries being ultimately subordinate – later coming to serve as vast killing fields upon which Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union ‘did their most murderous work’ (Snyder, 2010, p.xviii).

From an international perspective, these growing authoritarian impulses are generally considered as having amplified nineteenth-century political fixations on creating homogenous national identities and cultures, often by excluding or forcibly assimilating minorities. As Mazower opines, for political elites outside of the Soviet Union, legitimising post-war territorial acquisitions or revising the edicts of the peace settlements often came before their citizenries’ political and cultural freedoms. Moreover, the precipitous spread of reactionary political dogmas, catalysed by anti-Bolshevism and the rise of Fascism in Italy, and persistent socio-economic unrest emboldened political strongmen to seize full control of the state, or consolidate their existing power (Mazower, 1999, pp.2-3).

While this often manifested in outright dictatorship as in Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and the Baltic states, authoritarianism and the concentration of power in the hands of single leader or party did not necessarily equate to an absence of the democratic process. The fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 for example, saw the country re-established as a monarchy under the authoritarian regency of Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya. Horthy’s enthronement in 1920 granted him sweeping powers of prerogative while subsequent parliamentary elections became monopolised by the nationalistic Unity Party, negating any need for a full dictatorship (Lee, 1987, p.265; Mann, 2004, pp.241-242). Even in the case of Czechoslovakia, interwar Europe democratic poster child, ethnic pluralism was, at best, a secondary importance. As Andrea Orzoff has argued, throughout the 1920s and 30s Czechoslovak state propaganda elevated Bohemian and Moravian Czech culture and heritage above that of the Slovaks and minority groups. Much of this was, in no small part, tied to the

figure of Masaryk around whom a cult of personality, similar to his authoritarian counterparts, quickly developed. For Czechoslovakia's founder, terms such as democracy were always loosely employed in reference 'to an idealized state and society, rather than to legal or formal characteristics such as universal suffrage and free elections.' The Communist Party's success in the 1925 parliamentary elections, even led him to consider establishing his own military dictatorship (Orzoff, 2009, p.30, p.100).

This slide into authoritarianism is also commonly conflated with a perceived fragmentation of post-war internationalism and legal frameworks established to protect minority rights. Nazi Germany for example, withdrew from the League of Nations following Adolf Hitler's rise to power, in October 1933, with Fascist Italy following suit in December 1937. Such developments are construed as proving inimical to the international status of minorities across the region, reinforcing assumptions that early twentieth century European history can only be understood in terms of catastrophic events such as the Holocaust (Gerwarth, 2007, p.3).

From a recent historiographical perspective, scholarly consensus on early twentieth century Central and Eastern Europe has seen a welcome pivot away from an assumed 'East-West dichotomy' and the region's relocation within the same historical global frameworks as Western countries. Joshua Sanborn's *Imperial Apocalypse* (2014), assesses the collapse of the imperial Russian state in 1917 as reflecting a general European 'trajectory of decolonization' beginning in the Ottoman Balkans and amplified by the Great War. This process of imperial retreat not only culminated in Finland, Poland and the Baltic states gaining independence, but engendered a political atmosphere in which notions of nationality and local identity were 'radicalized' through associations with ideological extremism (Sanborn, 2014, p.224). Indeed, the move to independence was often accompanied by the promised removal of political and socio-economic privileges for minorities popularly characterised as parasitic vestiges of the old imperial states, such as the Latvian German and Bosnian Muslim landed aristocracies (Gerwarth, 2007, p.243, p.284).

Significant attention has been paid to developments in the former Ottoman Empire. Scholars working in this area have increasingly come to stress that the purported climate of repression and integralist nationalism symbolised an evolution in state formation and a perceived relationship between identity and geopolitics relationship that emerged during the late-1800s. Key to this has been an emphasis on the 'era' of the Great War: a prolonged series of historical transition and modernisation lasting, approximately, from the Congress of Berlin to Lausanne. Building on nationalistic energies from the early to mid-nineteenth century, this period, in

certain respects, consolidated the homogenous nation-state as the European political ideal (Lee, 1987; Gerwarth, 2007; Drace-Francis, 2013; Bianichi, 2015; Gallant, 2016). Given that such a perspective crystallised in tandem with a rising expectations in the domestic role of the state (previously assigned to religious institutions) it is unsurprising that it also came to be seen as a guarantor of national identity. The outcome of these developments was not only a growing prevalence of officially sanctioned violence. Mark Biondich argues that even before 1918, the use of violence as an essential feature of the modern nation-state had been wholly demonstrated during the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Although, effectively representing a land grab of the Ottoman's remaining Balkan holdings by Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro, both were framed as 'people's wars' aimed at liberating historic national territories and removing indigenous minorities 'deemed to represent the progeny of the Ottoman state' (Biondich, 2016, p.389). The 'ethnic cleansing' of groups such as Albanians and the descendants of Muslim converts that followed, were mirrored by the Ottoman government's policies towards its own Armenian, Assyrian and Greek minorities after 1914.¹²

By 1923, the ensuing humanitarian crisis and ongoing tensions between Greece and Turkey, solicited international attempts to achieve a non-violent resolution. Thus, the concept of direct 'population exchange', proposed by the League at Lausanne, ushered in a radical new phase in the nation-building process. The forced resettlement of approximately 1.5 million Greeks and 500,000 Greek Muslims under Lausanne, normalised international population exchange as a means of resolving or diluting perceived internal unrest by simply removing the unwanted minority element (Hirschon, 2003; Frank, 2017). Following the Serb-dominated Yugoslavian government's repeated failure to 'colonise' the kingdom's Albanian-majority province of Kosovo, in 1937 the historian Vaso Čubrilović proposed the expulsion of Yugoslavia's entire Albanian population. Such an act would, Čubrilović argued, 'reestablish' Kosovo's Slavic demographic hegemony while severing the Bosnian Muslim Slavs' principle geopolitical link to the wider Islamic world (Čubrilović, 1937).

Although less outwardly radical, repression by authoritarian-regimes was no less widespread. Despite forming only five per cent of the national populace, the prominence of Jewish intellectuals in the Hungarian Communist revolt of 1919, prompted a gradual stream of anti-Semitic government legislation, increasingly inspired by Nazi Germany, designed to marginalise Jews from Hungarian cultural and economic life (Gerwarth, 2007, pp.222-223). Likewise, the appointment of the extreme nationalist Ioannis Metaxas as Prime Minister of Greece in 1936, was followed by the suspension of civil liberties, including a ban on the

Macedonian Slavic language in public and private (Shea, 1997, pp.111-112). Echoing the Third Reich and Soviet Union, education as a means of reshaping society through the indoctrination of future generations was a prominent feature of this trend (Lee, 1987, p.66, pp.180-181).

Nevertheless, interwar state-led attempts at social engineering should not be overstated. Indeed, minorities were frequently a minor or secondary importance in such programmes. Stefano Bianchini contests that regional tensions mostly stemmed from ingrained economic stagnation and inequality that intensified with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. As Bianchini notes, despite minorities, notably Jews, being routinely targeted as a ‘Constitutive Other’, the political pre-eminence of Agrarianist parties construed authoritarian narratives around a cultural antagonism between their, largely rural, supporters and a generalised perception of urban cosmopolitanism (Bianchini, 2015, pp.68-70).

While minorities could be easily drawn into these narratives as deviating from the presumed national norm, the absence of a ‘standard’ political, societal and demographic model for the regime ultimately frustrated these efforts or called the very fundamentals of the national projects into question. Christian Axebow Nielsen and Pieter Troch’s analyses of King Aleksandar I of Yugoslavia’s royal dictatorship and its attempts at creating a single national identity - in a country largely comprising minorities - reveal how such ‘top-down’ authoritarian efforts at nation-building often proved disastrous. Institutional corruption and limited state resources worked to frustrate these efforts while hardening opposition (Nielsen, 2014; Troch, 2015). In Czechoslovakia, German perceptions of Prague’s ethnic-favouritism during the Depression, had an almost inverted impact by precipitating the rise of the Sudeten Germany Party, one of the largest Fascist groups in Europe by 1938 (Gerwarth, 2007, p.232). Conversely, the supposed fulfilment of nationalist aspirations often resulted in radical cultural and demographic change. As Thomas Gallant observes, the resettlement of over a million Anatolian Greeks in their respective ‘homeland’, culturally transformed Hellenic society and politics irreparably, while also engendering domestic tensions (Gallant, 2016, pp.206-209). Despite the continued prevalence of the authoritarian lens, the position of national minorities was rarely just a matter of persecution and victimhood, often being deeply enmeshed in localised contexts.

Vying nationalisms in post-Cold War Europe

The gradual collapse of Communism as the region’s principal political paradigm in the late 1980s and early 1990s marked a critical departure in how the position of national minorities

has come to be understood in a historical and legal sense. This was brought into particular focus with the outbreak of ethno-nationalistic conflicts in the former Yugoslav Republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1991 to 1995, and Serbia's formerly autonomous province of Kosovo from 1998 to 1999; parallel to this were a series of secessionist conflicts in the former Soviet Caucuses, namely the Nagorno-Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan (1988-1994), the East Prigorodny Conflict in North Ossetia-Alania (1992), the War in Abkhazia (1992-1993) and the First Chechen War (1994-1996).¹³ Although this latter set of regional conflicts garnered less attention internationally, both exhibited similar traits in the form of widespread ethnic cleansing. As with the conflicts of the 1910s and 1920s, civilians from specific communities were deliberately targeted in systematic campaigns of murder, torture, rape and forced deportation in order to expel them from contested territories.

This escalation in violence proved especially complex from a minority rights-perspective. International bodies struggled to establish conclusive verdicts in the absence of a universal definition of minority rights or the lack of clarity on whether the UN's own legal definition of genocide could be applied, especially in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁴ The very nature of the conflicts themselves, in which war crimes were often perpetuated by armed minority groups, such as the Army of Republika Srpska, had 'little in common with those that arose during the heyday of fascism or communism'. As the international lawyer Gideon Gottlieb observed, having been established 'in an age when the scourge of war arose between states rather than within them':

The dominant norms of international law and diplomacy are ill adapted to coping with a kind of strife that has erupted in Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus and that could become common elsewhere in Eurasia (Gottlieb, 1993, p.ix).

Having clarified these legal inadequacies, Gottlieb also highlighted how the outpouring of nationalist violence across the ex-Communist world appeared unique to the late-twentieth century, emerging from a non-colonial context predicated on politically exploitable abstractions such as 'ethnicity' and 'the nation':

From Bosnia to Azerbaijan the stakes for the warring sides are expressed in terms of independence, of statehood, of homeland, of boundaries, of autonomy, and of sovereignty [...] nations and ethnic groups are those collective entities in which prominent political spokesmen and personalities voice their claims in terms of independence, of self-determination, of minority rights, of autonomy, or of secession. Rather than identifying

these collective entities in subjective, objective or other terms, they are identified as groups on whose behalf claims of a particular nature are made (Gottlieb, 1993, p.xii).

Gottlieb's summation of the legal and historical ambiguities exposed by the historical events of the 1990s, was conducive to the rising influence of 'nationalism studies' that crystallised as an interdisciplinary academic field during this period. Established through, among others, the work of Anderson, Anthony D. Smith, Ernst Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, contemporary nationalism studies emphasise the deconstruction of core concepts which, prior to the 1960s, were deemed naturally recurrent historical phenomena.

In his seminal study on *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Gellner articulated the latter concept's central conceit as 'primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent'. Rather than a natural part of identity formation, nationalism serves as a functional element of state modernisation being the 'general imposition of a high culture on society' that seeks to replace 'the complex structure of local groups' with a ubiquitous sense of national identity (Gellner, 1983, p.57). Smith elaborated on this in arguing that nationalism itself is usually constructed around an inherently flawed, or fabricated, interpretation of a country or people's past while remaining flexible enough to ground itself in specific local cultures and belief systems (Smith, 1991, pp.65-66). Exploring this concept in a global sense, he further observed that such mythologizing is usually necessary to obscure social contradictions, noting that less than ten percent of the world's countries fulfil the essential criteria of actually being homogenous nation-states (Smith, 1995, p.86). Although agreeing with Gellner that nationalism is always constructed from above, Hobsbawm cautioned against defining it as rigid or unchanging. To fully understand the nature of its manifestation, Hobsbawm concluded that scholars should strive to study nationalism 'from below' where it will establish itself in a local context and pre-existing social tensions (Hobsbawm, 1991, p.10).

Nationalist histories and absent minorities

Following the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellite regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, regional governments encouraged a revisiting of earlier historical periods in order to legitimise their countries' post-socialist political and socio-economic transformations. In most cases, the nationalist approach prevailed, whereby a dominant ethnic group became the only agent of state-building. Many historians in the region contributed to this utopian view, arguing that their respective national histories should be seen as a long-term struggle for either the restoration of

past glory, or the creation of an independent and united country. As Mark von Hagen states in relation to independent Ukraine, this new historical metanarrative replaced the familiar dogmatic approach of Cold War Marxist-Leninism and dialectical materialism with a national teleology (Hagen, 1995).

Georgiy Kasianov defines ‘nationalised history’ as a ‘way of perceiving, understanding and treating the past that requires the separation of ‘one’s own’ history from an earlier ‘common’ history and its construction as the history of a nation’ (Kasianov, 2009, p.7).¹⁵ He outlines basic features of this metanarrative that, although distilled from the Ukrainian case-study, can be easily applied to any other country in the region and beyond.¹⁶ First, the nationalist canon is ‘teleological’, with its sole aim being to trace the formation of a nation and a state as a natural, ‘objectively determined’ historical process. Second, it is based on ‘essentialism’, presenting the nation (in its various hypostases) as ‘a constantly (actually or potentially) present community that needs only to be properly identified and characterized with the aid of a well-chosen set of cognitive instruments’. Third, this canon is ‘ethnocentric’, marginalising or excluding minorities and other non-dominant groups from its narrative. As such, nationalised history is ‘ethnically exclusive’, making the history of Ukraine the history of ethnic Ukrainians. Finally, this canon is characterised by ‘linearity and absolutization of the historical continuity of the “ethnos-people-nation”’ with clear periodisation reflecting the process of nation-building and a nation-state as the end goal (Kasianov, 2009, pp.16-18). Philipp Ther enhances this evolutionary historical model by adding another characteristic – that of ‘territorialised’ thinking that necessarily results in neat unchallenged borders and mutually exclusive histories (Ther, 2009, pp.83-84).

In this contemporary post-national age, this focus on ethnonational issues, nation-states and exclusive borders appears increasingly outdated and retrograde, as well as ethically dubious following the wars of Yugoslav succession. Recent critiques of these nationalist historiographies have also come to influence new perspectives in history-writing. The French historian Michael Werner has played a pivotal role in this new wave of scholarship introduced the idea of *histoire croisée* - ‘crossed’, ‘entangled’ or ‘divided’ history, through his study of the Franco-German border.¹⁷ Werner maintains that many such borderland areas and their resident populations became so integrated and mixed that they cannot be assessed within the limits of national history. This approach can be easily applied to the study of the heterogeneous German-Polish or Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, or such regions as Transcarpathia (Ther, 2009, p.94).¹⁸

Transnational history offers yet another means of moving beyond the restrictive national frameworks and boundaries when attempting to account for specific minority practises. Historians who adhere to this methodology often focus on the entangled histories of certain regions and peoples, as well as cross-border experiences and cultural transfers and intercultural exchange.¹⁹ Ther and Kasianov define transnational history as an approach that ‘concentrates on the relations between cultures and societies, [...] compares sending and receiving cultures, highlighting agents of cultural exchange, and is thus oriented toward agency’ (Kasianov & Ther, 2009, p.3). Researchers working within this transnational paradigm often favour the study of smaller political units than the nation and nation-state, producing new exciting multinational ‘microhistories’ histories the typically focus on ethnically mixed and disputed cities, such as Vilna/Wilno/Vilnius or Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv.²⁰

Imagined communities and beyond

In 1983, Benedict Anderson proposed a radical new historical interpretation of the nation as socially constructed ‘imagined political communities’, composed of the people who perceive themselves as part of a specific national group (Anderson, 1991, pp.6-7). This approach became one of the most widely cited in the study of nationalism. More recently, however, historians have started to question whether ethnic groups can even be defined as self-evident entities. Instead, of heterogeneous communities, analytical consensus has started to recalibrate around the concept of such groups as ‘nations-in-becoming’, emphasising the historical process rather than the end result. In this, they often follow Brubaker, who’s essay *Ethnicity without Groups* (2004) proposes that analyse of ‘groupness’ as an ‘event’ rather than ‘nations’ as historical actors be granted priority, since groupness ‘may not happen; [it] may fail to crystallize, despite the group-making efforts of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, and even in situations of intense elite-level ethnic conflict’ (Brubaker, 2004, p.12).

Winson Chu applies these two theories in his study of the German minority in interwar Poland (Chu, 2012). According to Chu, what is generally perceived as a single unified collective, comprised three distinct cultural groups originating from the Russian, Habsburg, and German empires. Chu challenges the ‘trajectory of growing unity’ introduced by various German and Polish historians suggesting that the uniform experience of repression, the struggle for minority rights, and a National Socialist renewal have transformed what had been a loose

and heterogeneous German-speaking minority into a tightly bound and homogeneous *Volksgruppe*.²¹ Instead he argues that these attempts at ‘minority building’ failed. Moreover, Chu challenges Anderson’s approach by asking what happens when those ‘imagined communities’ come into close contact with each other and are obliged to cooperate (Chu, 2012, p.12). Coming from diverse, region-specific contexts, minority leaders had different ideas regarding the shape of the German community in Poland resulting in complex inter-communal loyalties, or even deep political conflicts within the German minority itself.²² In reflecting on this, Chu promotes the notion of regionality when studying minorities and discusses how regions translate into political factors within the minority, when a common ideology could divide as much as unite.²³

Parallel to this is an increasing body of work focused on the role of popular indifference to nationalism in the era when the nation-state came to be viewed as the political norm. Groups with undefined national affiliation had long existed in Central and Eastern Europe, yet they have been ignored by nationalist historians as inconvenient subjects that could not be easily absorbed within their metanarratives. Moreover, most sources available to historians tend to hide this ambivalence or indifference and leave no room for bilingualism, national flexibility, or national opportunist behaviour.²⁴ With the decline of nationalist historiography, however, scholars have increasingly rejected conventional approaches of ethnicising the past in favour of histories of nationhood that, as Jeremy King describes, ‘does not *have* to be national, and has not always been national in the same ways’ (King, 2002, p.8).

Historians within this emerging school of thought argue that many ‘ordinary people’ tended not to see themselves as members of a national community and remained nationally indifferent. At the same time, nationalist activists in contested lands perceived such indifference as a threat to their nationalist projects and tried to deny or minimise its presence. Among the scholars who advocate this approach are Tara Zahra and Pieter Judson, working respectively on schooling and language frontier in Bohemia; Gary Cohen’s research into the community history of lower-middle class German speakers in late nineteenth-century Prague; Jeremy King’s examination of local and regional identities among Bohemian ‘Budweisers’; and Chad Bryant’s study of German/Czech ‘amphibians’ who switched public nationalities depending on circumstances.²⁵

In her book *Kidnapped Souls* (2008) and a seminal article from 2010, Zahra focuses on what she terms ‘imagined non-communities’, emphasising those individuals who stood outside, or on the margins, of national groups. Her study of the bilingual German-Czech borderlands challenges the idea of essential differences between national communities, suggesting that

preferred everyday language was often the only distinctive feature. Zahra presents 'national indifference' as a new category of analysis and driving force behind historical change in Central Europe's eastern provinces. This 'nationally indifferent' behaviour manifests itself in three patterns: 'national agnosticism' when more individuals identify more with religious, class, local, regional, professional, or familial communities rather than national ones; nationally ambivalent, opportunistic 'side-switching'; and bilingualism and openness to inter-communal marriages that transcend ethnic borders (Zahra, 2008; 2010). This concept, originally applied to Bohemia, has since been expanded to other parts of Austria-Hungary, as well as the German-Polish and Franco-German borderlands.²⁶

Recently however, a number of scholars challenged 'national indifference' as a conceptual framework that might potentially be applied to other areas and minority experiences in Central and Eastern Europe. As demonstrated in the case-studies of the Baltic Germans and Bessarabia, this notion quickly loses its relevance if understood as 'national unawareness'. Instead, more malleable terms as 'national ambiguity', 'national ambivalence', 'a-nationalism', or 'hybridity' appear better suited to these varied regional and localised contexts (Wezel, 2017; Cusco, 2019). In her assessment of national affiliation and loyalties towards nationalising states among the Baltic Germans, Katja Wezel maintains that this elitist minority occupied a well-established German cultural sphere. As a result, its members never even considered giving up their culture and language, although it remained a rather 'reluctant' actor in the national conflict that erupted at the turn of the twentieth century. It was this ambiguity surrounding their national belonging that 'enabled Baltic German entrepreneurs to become loyal citizens of the newly created state of Latvia, and together with their Latvian counterparts work toward the reconstruction of a stable economy and trading system' (Wezel, 2017, pp.52-53). Per Bolin and Christina Douglas are equally sceptical towards Zahra's claim of 'indifference' since it suggests inactivity and an assumed cultural passiveness that deprive these communities their historical agency (Bolin & Douglas, 2017). Neither of the three behavioural patterns outlined by Zahra can be applied for Baltic Germans who, using Brubaker's definition, composed an ethnic group with a very strong inner cohesion and elaborate boundary-drawing procedures yet without any developed nationalist movement.²⁷ Finally, David Feest suggests broadening the usage of Zahra's concept to examine the ascriptions of one's identity in a functional sense. By examining national behaviour of different social groups in the Baltic region - peasants, members of the landed gentry and the urban elites, Feest concludes that the function of a national self-image often depended on the situation. To account for those circumstantial meanings of nationality, he

introduces the term ‘spaces of national indifference’. Rather than fixating on labels of identification that define ‘who or what the respective people *were*’, Feest contests that ‘the question should be what ascriptions of this kind *achieve* in a functional sense’ whereby, ‘the function of a national self-image for instance differs depending on the situation.’ (Feest, 2017).

In light of these recent interpretive shifts, the editors’ and contributors to this special issue seek to build upon these recent scholarly trends. Additionally, in focusing on the period 1918 to 1939, its seek to offer a fresh challenge to enduring narratives that essentialise the history of the ‘New Europe’ through the rigid prisms of violence and authoritarianism or privilege the historical rise of the nation-state.

Notes

¹ See T.G.Masaryk, *The New Europe (the Slav Standpoint)*, (London, 1918). The term also served as the title for a weekly political magazine that Masaryk had helped establish in 1916 while living in exile in London during the First World War. Masaryk’s philosophical ethos of national self-determination as a fundamental human right was adopted as the title’s central political stance. Despite playing an influential role in swaying Western opinion, diminishing interest in the region after 1919 led to *The New Europe* fold in 1920.

² Poland’s German minority, for example, were blamed for the *Bromberger Blutsonntag* (the massacre of several hundred people in Bromberg on the first Sunday after the German invasion of Poland in 1939). See Winston Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge, 2012). In addition, the discussion surrounding the German political loyalties is frequently linked to the Nazi occupation and the subsequent expulsions of these diaspora communities from across Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia. R.M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven, 2012); Eagle Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh, 2016); John J. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands, 1939–1951* (Cambridge, MA., 2016); Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919–1989* (New York, 2015); Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing After the Second World War* (New York, 2013); Mirna Zakić, *Ethnic Germans and National Socialism in Yugoslavia in World War II* (Cambridge, 2019). In the case of Poland’s Ukrainian minority, a key example would be the Volhynia massacre of 1943, see A. J. Motyl, ‘Ukrainian Nationalist Political Violence in Inter-War Poland, 1921-1939,’ *East European Quarterly* 19:1 (1985): 45-55.

³ See also Alexander Pinwinkler, *Historische Bevölkerungsforschungen: Deutschland und Österreich im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2014); Wolfgang Göderle, ‘Administration, Science, and the State: The 1869 Population Census in Austria-Hungary,’ *Austrian History Yearbook*, 47 (2016): 61-88.

⁴ Brubaker introduces the term of ‘a nationalising state’ to define ‘entities that are ethnically heterogeneous yet conceived as nation-states, whose dominant elites promote (to varying degrees) the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of a nominally state-bearing nation’ (57)

⁵ Selected publications from the period: Ifor L. Evans, ‘The Protection of Minorities,’ *British Year Book of International Law*, 4 (1923-1924): 95-123; Baron Heyking, ‘The International Protection of Minorities. The Achilles’ Heel of the League of Nations,’ *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 13 (1927): 31-51; Macartney, *Nation States*; Joseph Chmelař, *National Minorities in Central Europe* (Prague, 1937); Oscar Karbach, Max M. Laserson, Nehemiah Robinson, and Marc Vichiniak, *Were the Minorities Treaties a Failure?* (New York, 1943); Oscar Janowsky, *Nationalities and National Minorities* (New York, 1945)

⁶ See also: Mark Mazower, ‘The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950,’ *The Historical Journal* 47:2 (2004): 379-398.

⁷ Selected publications from the Cold War-era include I. Bagley, *General Principles and Problems in the International Protection of Minorities* (Geneva, 1950); Inis Claude, *National Minorities: An International Problem* (Cambridge, MA, 1955); Carole Fink, ‘Defender of Minorities: Germany and the League of Nations,

1926-1933,' *Central European History* 5:4 (1972): 330-357; Christoph Giitermann, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Völkerbundes* (Berlin, 1979); J. Laponce, *The Protection of Minorities* (Berkeley, CA, 1960); Raymond Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe, 1848-45* (London, 1983).

⁸ On the international aspect of the minority question see, for example: J. Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge, 1990); D. Moynihan, *Pandaemonium; Ethnicity in International Politics* (Oxford, 1993); Thornberry, *International Law*; Mark Mazower, 'Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe,' *Daedalus*, 126:2 (1997): 47-63. Preece, *National Minorities*; Christian Raitz von Frenzt, *A Lesson Forgotten. Minority Protection under the League of Nations: the Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920-1934* (New York, 1999); Martin Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung? Die Minderheitenpolitik des Völkerbundes in den zwanziger Jahren* (Marburg, 2000); Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge, 2004); Eric Weitz, 'From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions,' *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008): 1313-43.

⁹ On the minorities treaties see: Theodore S. Woolsey, 'The Rights of Minorities Under the Treaty with Poland,' *American Journal of International Law*, 14:3 (1920): 392-396; Blanche E. C. Dugdale and Wyndham A. Bewes, 'The Working of the Minority Treaties', *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* 5:2 (1926): 79-95; Macartney, *National States*; Giuseppe Motta, *Less than Nations. Central-Eastern European Minorities after WWI*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2013).

¹⁰ See also Bartov, O., & Weitz, E.D. (Eds.), (2013). *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

¹¹ On anti-Christian violence in the late and former Ottoman Empire, and the numerous controversies surrounding it, see, for example, Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.), *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*. (Detroit, 1998); Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek & Norman M. Naimark (Eds.), *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*. (Oxford, 2011); Vahagn Avedian, 'State Identity, Continuity, and Responsibility: The Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey and the Armenian Genocide', *European Journal of International Law*, 23:3 (2012): 797-820; Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*. (Princeton, 2012); Hannibal Travis (Ed.), *The Assyrian Genocide: Cultural and Political Legacies*. (Abingdon, 2017).

¹² Several iterations of the term 'ethnic cleansing' existed in Central and Eastern Europe since the late nineteenth century however, it only came into wider usage in the West during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s.

¹³ The literature covering the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia is extensive however, some significant contributions include the following: Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (London, 1992); Mark Thompson, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* (New York, 1992); Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Laura Silbur & Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London, 1994); Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley, 1998); Sabrina P. Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo* (Cambridge: 2005); Charles W. Ingrao & Thomas A. Emmert (Eds.), *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholars' Initiative* (Washington D.C., 2009). On the Caucasus see Thomas de Wall, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York, 2003); Emil Souleimanov, *Understanding Ethnopolitical Conflict: Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia Wars Reconsidered* (Basingstoke, 2013); Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh* (Abingdon, 2014); Emil Souleimanov & Huseyn Aliyev, *How Socio-Cultural Codes Shaped Violent Mobilization and Pro-Insurgent Support in the Chechen War* (Basingstoke, 2017) See also Cerwyn Moore, *Contemporary Violence: Postmodern war in Kosovo and Chechnya* (Manchester: 2010).

¹⁴ The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina filed a case at the International Court of Justice in 1993 alleging that the Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) had committed genocide within its borders by attempting to exterminate the Bosnian Muslim population. Given the ongoing and disparate nature of the conflict, a final verdict was not delivered until 2007 with the ICJ ruling that Serbia (now Yugoslavia's legal successor) had not committed genocide but had violated its international obligations to prevent it from happening. Croatia also filed a genocide suit to the ICJ in 1999 however, numerous court delays and a later counter-suit filed by Serbia in 2010, resulted in both cases being dismissed in 2015.

¹⁵ See also, Georgiy Kasianov, and Olekhii Tolochko, 'Natsional'ni Istorii ta Suchasna Istoriohrafia: Vyklyky i Nebezpeky pry Napyysani Novoi Istorii Ukrainy,' *Ukrains'kyi Istorychnyi Zhurnal*. 6 (2012): 4-21.

¹⁶ On nationalist history and its limitations see John Coakley, 'Mobilizing The Past: Nationalist Images of History,' *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10:4 (2004): 531-560, On German history see Philipp Ther, 'Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe', *Central European History*, 36:1 (2003): 45-73.

¹⁷ Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Penser l'histoire croisée: entre empirie et réflexivité,' *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 58 (2003): 7–36; In English: 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,' in *History and Theory*, 45 (2006): 30–50; On *histoire croisée* see Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. der Ansatz der *Histoire croisée* und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 607–36; Jürgen Kocka, 'Das östliche Mitteleuropa als Herausforderung für eine vergleichende Geschichte Europas,' *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 49 (2000): 159–74; Philipp Ther, 'Deutsche Geschichte als transnationale Geschichte: Überlegungen zu einer Histoire Croisée Deutschlands und Ostmitteleuropas,' *Comparativ* 13:4 (2003): 156–81.

¹⁸ For a historical overview of the general region encompassing Poland, Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, see Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Heaven, 2003). Prof. Julia Richers from the University of Bern's current project '*Amidst Multiple Border Shifts: Carpatho-Ukraine, 1918–1946*' expands on this by exploring the complex entangled history of the Eastern Carpathians. For south-east Europe see Marie-Janine Calic, *The Great Cauldron: A History of Southeastern Europe*

¹⁹ The transnational approach to history originated in American historiography. See Ian Tyrrell, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,' *American Historical Review*, 96 (1991): 1031–55, and Michael McGerr, 'The Price of the "New Transnational History,"' *ibid.*: 1056–67; *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley, 2002); For the European context see Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism,' *Contemporary European History*, 14 (2005): 421–39. Michael David-Fox, 'The Implication of Transnationalism,' *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, 4 (2011): 885–904. The main forums for the debate on transnational history in Europe are the journals *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* and *Comparativ* in Germany and *Annales* in France.

²⁰ On Vilnius, see: Theodore R. Weeks, "A Multi-Ethnic City in Transition: Vilnius's Stormy Decade, 1939–1949," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 47 (2006): 153–175; On Lviv, see Yaroslav Hrytsak, 'Lviv: A Multicultural History through the Centuries,' in *Lviv: A City in the Crosscurrents of Culture*, ed. John Czaplicka (Cambridge, MA, 2000): 47–74; Lutz Henke, Grzegorz Rossolinski and Philipp Ther, eds., *Eine neue Gesellschaft in einer alten Stadt. Erinnerung und Geschichts-politik in Lemberg anhand der Oral History* (Wrocław, 2007); Tarik Cyril Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv. A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Ithaca, 2015).

²¹ Richard Breyer, *Das Deutsche Reich und Polen, 1932–1937. Außenpolitik und Volksgruppenfragen* (Wurzburg, 1955); Theodor Bierschenk, *Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Polen, 1934–1939* (Wurzburg, 1954). Joachim Rogall, 'Einheit in Vielfalt der Deutschen aus Polen,' in *Archive und Sammlungen der Deutschen aus Polen. Erlebte Geschichte, bewahrtes Kulturgut*, ed. Peter E. Nasarski, 13–18 (Berlin/Bonn, 1992); Wilfried Gerke, 'Auf dem Wege zur Einheit. Die Deutschen in Polen zwischen den Weltkriegen,' *Germano-Polonica. Mitteilung zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Polen und der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen*, 2 (2002/2003): 10–17; Beata Lakeberg, *Die deutsche Minderheitenpresse in Polen 1918–1939 und ihr Polen- und Judenbild* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2010). See also Beata Lakeberg, 'Identitätsfragen in der deutschen Minderheitenpresse während der ersten Jahre der Zweiten Polnischen Republik,' in *Grenzdiskurse. Zeitungen deutschsprachiger Minderheiten und ihr Feuilleton in Mitteleuropa bis 1939*, ed. Sibylle Schonborn, 81–93 (Essen, 2009); Mathias Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze. Deutsche und Polen in den Kreisen Flatow (Złotow) und Zempelburg (Sepolno Krajeskie) 1900–1939* (Wiesbaden, 1997).

²² Another case of cross-cutting loyalties within the minority group is the Ukrainians living in Galicia and Volhynia in the interwar Poland. See Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Kresowy Kalejdoskop. Wędrowki przez Ziemię Wschodnie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939* (Warsaw, 2018)

²³ On regionalism see Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918–1939* (Lexington, 1993); Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials. The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Nancy R. Reagin, 'Recent Work on German National Identity: Regional? Imperial? Gendered? Imaginary?' *Central European History* 37:2 (2004): 273–289; Siegfried Weichlein, *Nation und Region. Integrationsprozesse im Bismarckreich* (Dusseldorf, 2004); Michael B. Klein, *Zwischen Reich und Region. Identitätsstrukturen im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871–1918)* (Stuttgart, 2005).

²⁴ Some examples of historical studies based on these sources: Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA., 2005); Peter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists of Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA., 2006); Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review*, 69:1 (2010): 93–119.

²⁵ Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review*, 69:1, 93–119; *Ibid.*, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, 2008); Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor, 2009). King, *Budweisers*; Jeremy King, "The Nationalization of East Central Europe: Ethnicism, Ethnicity, and Beyond," in *Staging the Past: The Politics*

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²⁶ See Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*; Andrzej Michalczyk, *Heimat, Kirche und Nation: Deutsche und polnische Nationalisierungsprozesse im geteilten Oberschlesien, 1922–1939* (Cologne, 2010); Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*; Elizabeth Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania? Nationalizing Women in Alsace, 1870–1946* (Oxford, 2010). Alison Carrol and Louisa Zanoun, ‘The View from the Border: A Comparative Study of Autonomism in Alsace and the Moselle, 1918–1929,’ *European Review of History* 18:4 (2011): 465–86.

²⁷ Roger Brubaker, ‘Beyond Ethnicity,’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37:5 (2014): 805; Bolin and Douglas, *National indifference*, 20.

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