

## Abstracts

### **Ethnic Violence and International Politics**

**Carole Fink (Ohio State University, USA)**

After the First World War, when Poland used force to extend its borders eastward, its troops committed atrocities against local Jewish communities. Within hours of their capture of Lemberg on November 22, 1918 Polish legionnaires rampaged through the Jewish quarter leaving scores and dead and injured and widespread physical devastation; after entering Pinsk on March 5, 1919 Polish troops summarily executed thirty-four Jews for an alleged Bolshevik conspiracy; and on April 19, 1919 after seizing Vilnius Polish soldiers killed some fifty-four Jews, took hundreds of prisoners, and plundered and burned numerous homes and synagogues.

These three incidents (and numerous others), labeled pogroms, were widely reported in the press. Jews throughout the world scored this display of Polish antisemitism and demanded that the World War I victors guarantee minority protection to their people. The Polish leadership, blaming the Jews for their disloyalty and accusing them of Bolshevik sympathies, disputed the number of casualties and resisted any attempt to intervene in Poland's internal affairs.

At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 Great Britain, France, and the United States were forced to deal with conflicting reports from a distant and embattled region. In response to the violence and in an effort to stabilize Eastern Europe, they imposed an unprecedented minority protection treaty on Poland and on all the other new and enlarged states between Germany and Soviet Russia; but they also rejected the Jews' claim for extensive political and cultural rights, fearing to weaken the new governments, to encourage German irredentism and Soviet inroads, and to thwart what they considered an essential process of national reconciliation and integration.

The paper will analyze impact of local violence on international decision making and in producing an outcome that neither the perpetrators nor the victims expected or accepted.

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### **A Culture of Complaining? Germans Internees and US and Swiss Consular Visitors in the British Empire, 1914-1919**

**Panikos Panayi (De Montfort University, UK)**

During the First World War the British Empire interned tens of thousands of Germans throughout its domains. They included not simply migrants but also Germans who found themselves in British ports and people taken off ships in seas throughout the world in the summer of 1914. Hundreds of camps emerged on a global scale, from New Zealand through Africa and India to Great Britain and Canada.

As the conflict progressed claims emerged in Germany about the mistreatment which Germans faced within these camps, both through the publication of memoirs and as the result of interviews carried out by a committee set up by the German government to look into the treatment of Germans abroad upon their return (Reichskommissar zur Erörterung von Gewalttätigkeiten gegen deutsche Zivilpersonen in Feindesland). Within the camps themselves, Germans regularly complained about their confinement and the conditions within them to US and then Swiss

Embassy officials who visited the camps on behalf of the German government as part of their role as intermediaries between Britain and Germany.

This paper will dissect the interaction between German internees and US and Swiss consular officials. Some of these officials displayed much sympathy for the prisoners, including A. L. Vischer, who popularised the idea of barbed wire disease based on his visits to the Isle of Man camps, especially Knockaloe. On the other hand, some of those inspecting camps established by the Empire throughout the Pacific displayed less sympathy for Germans interned here who often continued the elite European lifestyle to which they had become accustomed before 1914. Whether confined behind barbed wire on the Isle of Man or having virtually free reign in various Pacific locations, the internees regularly complained to their Swiss and US visitors about their confinement. Did a culture of complaining emerge in British internment camps because middle class men, forbidden to work under The Hague Convention, had excess time to contemplate their plight? Or did the British Empire carry out systematic mistreatment? The paper will contextualise the experience of German internees against the background of other German and minority experiences during the Great War.

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## **White, or not quite? The issue of skin colour in the British armies on the western front, 1914-1920**

**Dominiek Dendooven (In Flanders Fields/University of Antwerp, BE)**

In the First World War and the immediate post-war period tens of thousands were brought from all corners of the British Empire to Western Europe in order to fight or toil. They included Indian Infantry, Cavalry and Labour, a British West Indies Regiment, a South African Native Labour Corps and a Chinese Labour Corps. Whether hailing from a subordinate - and thus minorized - majority or from an ethnic minority properly speaking, in the British armies it was ultimately the colour of one's skin that determined how one was seen and how one was treated.

This paper takes a broad view on the non-white minorities present on the western front, exploring similarities and differences in the British policy towards their 'coloured recruits', as well as the differing attitudes of local populations towards the non-European 'Other'. It also questions how 'non-whites' reacted to manifestations of discrimination and what the impact of their war experiences on the longer term could have been.

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## **History and evolution of minority rights until the First World War**

**Corinne Triolet (Université Libre de Bruxelles, BE)**

The presentation aims to trace the evolution of the protection of ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities, intrinsically linked to the definition of the term "minority" in opposition to a majority within a state. The term "minority" – defined as ethnic, religious or cultural – emerges in the 19th century. It is used for the first time in international Law in the context of the minority treaties included in the Versailles Treaty. The conception of "minority" varies depending on authors and periods but also on the historical context in which the definition is forged.

The meaning and understanding of the term "nation" by an author or a politician also plays a role in their understanding of the terminology of "minority". Therefore, the term "minority" shall be analysed through the ideological and political term "nation".

The evolution of the protection of “ethnic or religious minorities” had no practical effect until after the First World War, even if some dispositions had already been made towards religious minorities in 1648 at the Peace of Westphalia, thus ending the European wars of religion. The treaties of Osnabrück and Münster were the starting point of a process that led to the modern understanding of minorities’ rights. These treaties established a form of legal and historical precedent, leading to the abandonment of the rule set in the Augsburg Settlement: *cujus regio, ejus religio*. Gradually, through international agreements, the protection of religious minorities expanded to other minorities, such as linguistic minorities. It was only the creation of the League of Nations in 1920 that truly created a legal protection system for minorities, both religious and linguistic. This presentation will trace this evolution through various international agreements until the demise of the League of Nations, focussing on the perception of the definition of “nation” by the concerned States and thereby influencing the normative protection of minorities.

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## **War and minorities in the former Ottoman Empire: 1914-1922**

Hamit Bozarslan (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, FR)

According to the official discourse in Erdogan’s Turkey, the WW1 was not a European war but a war aiming solely at the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. In this presentation, we will first underline that the Ottomans entered the war on the decision of their own government, without being attacked by any Allied power. We will, in the second place, insist on the price that the civilians, namely the non-Christian and non-Turkish communities, paid during this war. With some major exception as the Sarikamis and Dardanelles’ battles, in fact, the “Ottoman war” was characterized by its extreme violence against the non-Muslim, and immediately after, non-Turkish populations defined as “internal enemies”. The Armenian community has become the main, but not the only victim of a genocidal praxis which has been followed by the instauration of a “rule of terror” in the Arab provinces and the beginning of the deportation of the Kurds and Jews of Palestine.

Thirdly, we will insist on the end of the Ottoman war which took place gradually between 1919 and 1922 and led, on one side, to the division of the Arab provinces of the Empire between France and Great-Britain, on the other side, to the foundation of modern Turkey by the cadres of the former Committee Union and Progress many of whose had actively participated to the organization of the genocide of the Armenians. The Christian and Jewish minorities in Turkey, as well as the Kurds in this country and in Iraq and Syria, would become the new victims of the “Westphalian state system” established in the Near-East in the 1920s.

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## **Learning from failure: reappraisals of minority protection, 1933-1948**

Pieter Lagrou (Université Libre de Bruxelles, BE)

In October 1933 Germany withdrew from the League of Nations, a decision approved by plebiscite one month later, with a monster-score of over 95%. The League and its system of minority protection had failed beyond possible redress and until - and for some even beyond - September 1939 many Europeans shared the approval by the German electorate of the alternative solutions advocated by Adolf Hitler: border change and population transfer. The fact that these recipes finally resulted in defeat and collapse for Nazi Germany in 1945 delegitimised neither the diagnosis on minority protection nor the solutions most vocally promoted by the country that initiated and lost this war, quite on the contrary. Allied negotiations on the post-war order shared

the premises of a wholesale repudiation of the system and endorsed border change and population transfers on a scale comparable to Nazi demographic engineering. Even Jewish exiles in New York were divided over the issue in their war-time and immediate post-war discussions over which kind of European order would offer the most adequate response to the impact of genocide and thus, ultimately, to the failure of minority protection.

This contribution proposes outline the contours of the diagnosis of failure shared by both Axis and Allied powers and probe some of the dissenting opinions in the margins, pleading against all odds for a post-war order offering a glimmer of hope for the survival of diversity in European societies.

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## **Great Achievement, Toxic Heritage: the Minorities Treaties and Polish-Jewish Relations, 1919-1939**

**Gershon Bacon (Bar-Ilan University, IL)**

At the time, the signing of the Minorities Treaty by the reborn Polish Republic was regarded as a major achievement (or source for blame, depending on one's viewpoint) of Jewish lobbying efforts at the Paris Peace Conference. The subsequent struggle for ratification of the treaty and, more importantly, its implementation, proved to be a persistent irritant in relations between the Jewish minority and the Polish government. An examination of both the rhetoric and the actions by Jewish representatives and individuals reveals, however, that for the most part the Minorities Treaties and the League of Nations as their guarantor would not be a major avenue in the struggle of Polish Jews for political and national rights. The lecture will examine this issue from the perspective of Jews, Poles and the Minorities Affairs office at the League of Nations, based in part on contemporary archival sources.

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## **Language Learning policies in Interwar European Borderlands (1919-1925)**

**Machteld Venken (University of Vienna, AT)**

With the demise of four multinational empires at the end of the First World War, nationalist forces all over Europe claimed the right to a territory for what they considered to be their own people. The peace treaties resulting from the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 caused a major redrawing of the map of Europe. As a result of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany handed over a considerable amount of its territory at its Western, Northern and, most significantly, Eastern borders, to neighbouring states. This contribution focuses on two regions lying in what one could call a ring around Germany, that were lost by Germany after the First World War: Polish Upper Silesia and Eupen-Malmedy. They joined nation-states finding themselves geographically located between the Great Powers: respectively Poland (between the Soviet-Union and Germany) and Belgium (between France and Germany).

My talk will start from the research findings of borderland scholars, who found that borderlands were not marginal, but central sites of power struggle, and of childhood scholars, who delineated how precisely states expressed their plans in their programs for children. It will unravel how various national authorities considered schools the main vehicle to integrate borderland children and realize the homogeneous nation states they had in mind, but that the results of their language learning policies were at the very best only marginal, and often did not meet their objectives at all. Despite the different imaginations of East and West that had influenced the decisions of peace

negotiators after both World Wars, this affected borderland children in strikingly similar ways on the Eastern and Western halves of the European continent.

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## **Jews under Nansen, or the Incompatibility of the Interwar Minority and Refugee Regimes**

**Jaclyn Granick (University of Oxford, UK)**

This paper interrogates two developing and intersecting international legal frameworks after the Great War by focusing on the experiences of the international humanitarian relief workers and political advocates for Jewish refugees. The communitarian logic of the Minorities Treaties was significantly at odds with the state-oriented logic of the Nansen refugee regime, especially given that the international order fundamentally operated around the principle of the sovereignty of nation-states. Neither system was able to provide an adequate response to the collective, transnational Jewish crisis manufactured by wars and revolution and to prevent it from escalating. Yet, though the League of Nations order as a whole did not recognize Jews as a cohesive minority or political polity, it expected that when Jews did approach international bodies, they would do so with the coherency of a state. From refugee settlement to child welfare to stopping the spread of disease, Jewish organizations, humanitarian relief workers, and political actors increasingly sidestepped the social interventions of the international legal order and instead took the burden of Jewish relief collectively upon themselves.

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## **Empires, Nation-States, and the Problem of Difference in International Society circa World War I**

**Erez Manela (Harvard University, USA)**

## **Engineering Majority: Mass Violence, Territoriality and Nationality in the Context of the Armenian Genocide**

**Mehmet Polatel (Boğaziçi University, TK)**

In this presentation, I will examine the ways in which the recognition of the need for reform and communal rights of Armenians at the level of international diplomacy affected the vulnerability of Armenian people living in the Ottoman Empire. First, I will analyze the internationalization of the Armenian Question, which started in the late nineteenth century, and elaborate on the demographic understanding and approach that this process brought with on the part of the state. Then, I will examine the policies of genocidal violence, dispossession and re-configuration of the demographic characteristics of population in the Ottoman Empire during the World War I. In the final part of my presentation, I will examine the policies and debates regarding the issues of the return of Armenian refugees in the post-War period. My main argument is that the Armenian Genocide was embedded at the intersection of the rise of Turkish nationalism and efforts for exclusionary identity formation and the emergence of an international context in which demographic characteristics of populations was fundamental for territorial claims and sovereignty.

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## **Violence towards Jewish foreigners in the post-World War I period in Belgium**

**Yasmina Zian (Technische Universität Berlin, DE – Université Libre de Bruxelles, BE)**

Fritz Norden is a perfect illustration of the *judeo-boche* stereotype. This lawyer, already living in Belgium before the war, became in 1915 the target of a controversy due to his book, which

legitimised the German occupation of Belgium. However, most of the allegations against Norden concerned his mixed Jewish and German identity. He fled the country in 1918 with the German troops: it was too dangerous for him to stay in Belgium. But what about other people who were also linked to the occupiers? Did Jewish foreigners become victims of the *judeo-boche* stereotype? Were they targeted more often than other minorities? According to the Foreigners' Police's archives, it is highly doubtful.

Historians have highlighted evidence of violence directed towards minorities at the end of the war in Belgium. A. Vrints showed the difficulties suffered by the German minority in Antwerp, T. De Meester demonstrated how the law became a way for the State to build a nation and to exclude strangers, while L. van Ypersele, H. van Nimwegen, F. Caestecker and E. Debruyne analysed violence against *les femmes à boches*. This non-exhaustive enumeration of historians' works proves that all kind of minorities could become targets of violence.

I complete this research with mine, which focuses on the Foreigners' Police's perception of Jewish foreigners. To do so, I will establish a definition of "minority" in terms of power and compare different types of minority: national, religious and gender-based. Using different biographies, I shall illustrate how violence was used against women, Jewish and non-Jewish foreigners at the end of the war. Using this approach, it is possible to discern different dynamics of exclusion, but also to demonstrate that violence against Belgian women and Jewish foreigners had similarities. By analysing and comparing new forms and new targets of violence in the post-war period in Belgium, I will describe the modalities of expression of anti-Jewish stereotypes.

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## **Being minority in theory and practice: East Central Europe, 1914-1923**

**Maciej Górny (Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena, DE)**

To the three empires of East Central Europe: Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany – ethnic minorities were a negligible, if incidentally disturbing, problem. In formal terms many did not possess a minority status; as a matter of fact none of the nationalities of Austria did. The Great War in many ways changed this in parallel processes of dissolution of imperial power, recognition of nationalities' rights and mobilization of local nationalisms. Yet, with a notable exception of the Folkists, it did not lead to the establishment of a concept of minority or national autonomy. Most of the national programs aimed at sovereignty and domination; hardly any imagined a minor status. Within this maximalist discourse the region's ethnic complexity was ritually ignored. The decision of the great powers to regulate the status of minorities proved to be at best partly answer to the problem of interethnic violence. Although it gave minorities forum to express their complaints (albeit only with help of the states) minority treaties awoke extremely critical reactions in East Central Europe's societies and did not immediately stop ethnically biased violence. In the early post-war period, however, this rather grave picture demands a corrective look upon local interethnic relations.

This presentation will discuss individual and group strategies of dealing with the new realities. First, some examples of 'nationality compromises' in the region will be discussed. Then, transgressions of law will be analyzed as a particularly widespread way of escaping the pressures of an (alien) nation state. Finally, states' reactions to these strategies will be dealt with on several examples.