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Sovereignty and Homogeneity: A History of Majority-Minority Relations in Interwar Western Europe

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At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the Great Powers set up a new international order whose priority was to maintain peace in Europe. This system was centered around the principle of self-determination for all peoples and "focused on populations and an ideal of state sovereignty rooted in national homogeneity."[1] The new order opposed the dynastic principles that underpinned multi-ethnic empires, but it was hampered because the creation of homogeneous nation-states was not realistically possible. Conscious of this problem, the Great Powers resorted to a new system of minority protection whose objective was to shield minorities from a wide range of homogenizing and discriminatory policies that varied from genocidal violence to milder forms of linguistic assimilation and socioeconomic discrimination.

Notwithstanding some major shortcomings, the minority protection system introduced during the peace treaties and supervised by the League of Nations represented a fundamental change with respect to nineteenth-century international practices. The Great Powers were inconsistent in applying this system since it was enforced only in the newly independent states of Eastern Europe and within some older states in the region such as Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania. Western European countries, as well as most non-European ones, remained outside the jurisdiction of the League's Minorities Section. More powerful Western European states preferred this solution, as this inconsistency allowed for less interference within their own sovereign territories. Furthermore, in accordance with lingering civilizational stereotypes, Western politicians considered the populations of Eastern Europe to be less civilized and therefore in need of a lesson in "international deportment."[2]

The Great Powers cast the minority issue as an Eastern European problem.[3] This political decision was clearly reflected in contemporary studies on the subject. In a work that became a standard reference on the topic, the French ambassador Jacques Fouques Duparc located the origins of the minority problem in differences of language, race, and religion that, he stressed, were immense in Eastern Europe. In contrast, he claimed that Western Europe was "more stable in its political organization" and "had

lost even the memory" of such "barriers" between groups.[4] A decade later, in an article that appeared in *Foreign Affairs* with the telling title "Minorities: A Problem of Eastern Europe," Carlile Aylmer Macartney, one of the most influential interwar experts on the subject, consolidated this idea by claiming that "the minorities question" originated in large-scale national migrations that had ended in Western Europe in the Middle Ages, whereas they were still taking place in the East.[5]

Contrary to the widespread view of contemporaries that the minority question concerned Eastern Europe alone, in this chapter we argue that Western European political elites did confront salient minority issues and sometimes behaved in more repressive ways than their Eastern European counterparts. This is relevant for the study of minority questions in interwar Europe because most of the current historiography focuses on the system that the League of Nations supervised and, therefore, on the states located in the strip of land that stretches from the Baltic states to Turkey.[6] The purpose of our contribution is to shift the historiographical focus from East to West through comparatively examining majority-minority relations in interwar Belgium, Italy, and Spain.[7]

As we employ a top-down comparative approach, for the sake of simplicity we use the terms minorities and majorities to describe segments of the population. However, with these expressions, we do not intend to suggest that these were monolithic entities. Identities in minority regions were often fluid and many of the people that nationalist leaders claimed to represent, or that state authorities deemed as belonging to a minority, did not identify with the alleged minority group.[8] However, political elites in all three countries perceived the minority question as entailing two key elements: a claim of difference in national terms[9] voiced by a sizable share of the population identified as a minority, and an asymmetric power relation between the supposed minority and the rest of the inhabitants of the state whereby the minority would be in a non-dominant position. This claim of difference was of course a political stand rather than an objective reality, but it still had very real consequences for a number of political actors and, by extension, an impact on ordinary people.

Between the two World Wars, the countries in our study, Belgium, Italy, and Spain, underwent important processes of sub-state national mobilization which posed a formidable challenge to state authorities. The governments that ruled these states during the interwar years adopted different policies to deal with national heterogeneity within their borders. Generally, liberal regimes granted minority populations greater protection than authoritarian governments, which often implemented harsh assimilative policies. Yet, even liberal regimes that remained democratic throughout the period, such as Belgium, did show homogenizing tendencies. These, however, unfolded at the local, rather than state, level.

When compared to the countries subjected to the League of Nations' minority protection system, overall, Belgium, Italy, and Spain do not stand out as having been particularly tolerant. On the contrary, they fit into a pattern of behavior that goes beyond a simplistic East-West divide. Despite not providing a systematic comparison with Eastern Europe, this chapter juxtaposes our cases with some Eastern European experiences. We show that on one end of the spectrum repressive policies were enforced

in fascist Italy to a degree similar to those in Poland. On the other, more tolerant, end of the spectrum, Belgium and Republican Spain could be compared to Estonia before the 1934 putsch that turned the latter into a dictatorship.

Before examining our case studies in greater detail, we briefly describe the workings of the minority system and introduce the context of majority-minority relations in Belgium, Italy, and Spain.

The League's Minority System and Majority-Minority Relations in Belgium, Italy, and Spain

The minority treaties granted a mix of positive and negative rights to persons "belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities."[10] These included basic rights extended to all residents, such as the right to life and liberty, religious freedom and equality before the law as well as some minority-specific clauses relative to the establishment and control of private charitable, religious, social, and educational institutions, the right to use minority languages in court, and an adequate supply of public primary schools in the minority language.[11] The general rule with regard to minority education was that public schools (or classes) in minority languages would be established if the parents of a minimum number of pupils (usually between twenty and forty) in a municipality requested it. The League of Nations supervised the application of the treaties and accepted petitions from individual members of minorities or minority organizations, although these documents were only informative in nature.[12]

The application of these treaties was limited to fifteen countries (along with the territories of Memel and Upper-Silesia), almost exclusively in Central and Eastern Europe.[13] Although minority activists and Eastern European diplomats made several attempts to promote the extension of the system to all the members of the League, the Great Powers consistently thwarted such efforts. The only victory obtained by supporters of a generalization of minority protection was a symbolic one. It consisted of a resolution passed by the League's Assembly in 1922, and reaffirmed in 1933, that expressed the hope that the League's members not bound by the minority treaties would "observe, in the treatment of their own racial, religious or linguistic minorities, at least as high a standard of justice and toleration as is required by any of the treaties."[14] We shall assess the attitude of Western governments toward their minorities against the background of the minority treaties focusing on education in minority languages (a highly contested issue throughout the interwar period), the use of languages in court and public administration, as well as on forms of repression violating basic rights of life and liberty, religious freedom, and equality before the law.

Although majority-minority relations in Belgium, Italy, and Spain originated in specific historical and contingent contexts, they shared some common elements. In all three countries, minority questions were brought about or intensified by two factors: the annexation of new territories inhabited by people speaking a different language and democratization processes that channeled the demands of new political actors, including minority nationalist representatives. Furthermore, in all three countries,

political elites voiced concerns about the state and the nation's cohesion. The presence of alternative forms of national identification in some regions, different from the identity promoted by state institutions, only made these elites more anxious about their legitimacy.[15]

Belgium, Italy, and Spain were faced with two main types of minorities. On the one hand, there were populations that lived in territories annexed by Italy and Belgium at the end of the War from the Austro-Hungarian and German Empire. These included about 200,000 German speakers in South Tyrol, 460,000 Slovenian and Croatian speakers in Venezia Giulia (both regions were annexed by Italy), and 60,000 German-speaking inhabitants in the cantons of Eupen, Malmedy, and St. Vith in Belgium. These communities could, at least in principle, count on the support of kin-states and minority organizations mostly advocated joining such states. On the other hand, in the regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country, as well as in Belgium's Flanders, endogenous processes of mobilization led to the rise of sub-state nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Political leaders representing this type of minority were keener on defining their group as a nationality or minority nation, rather than a national minority. Furthermore, such minorities could not profit from the support of any kin-state and minority representatives mostly campaigned for autonomy or independence.

The Flemish population of Belgium is a peculiar case that can be considered a sociological minority despite constituting a demographic majority.[16] Belgium was founded as a francophone state led by a francophone elite, although the majority of the population spoke several Flemish dialects. Furthermore, with Flanders being the poorer region of the country, the linguistic divide between Flemings and Francophones partly coincided with a social divide. As a consequence, a strong social process of French assimilation began, causing part of the Flemish population to resist and establish a movement to promote linguistic equality between Flemish and French called the Flemish Movement.

A key factor accounting for the different evolution of majority-minority relations in Belgium, Italy, and Spain is the political regime ruling these states at any point in time. While Belgium remained democratic throughout the interwar period, Mussolini's dictatorship governed Italy from 1922 to 1943. Spain, in turn, experienced frequent regime changes. General Primo de Rivera carried out a putsch in 1923, but democracy was reestablished with the founding of the Second Republic in 1931. Yet, the democratic regime eventually collapsed at the end of the civil war, in April 1939, when General Francisco Franco took over the country.[17]

In the next section, we will take these different political regimes as our units of analysis and comparatively discuss their policies toward the respective states' minorities. We will look first at Liberal Italy (1918–22) and Restoration Spain (1918–23) before Primo de Rivera's putsch; then we will shift our focus to the dictatorships that ensued in both countries (from 1922 to 1943 in Italy and between 1923 and 1931 in Spain). Finally, we will examine the most tolerant regimes in our sample, Republican Spain (1931–9) and Democratic Belgium (throughout the interwar years). In each case, we offer some comparative reflections related to the situation in Eastern Europe that help to locate these Western European experiences in the broader continental context.

Belgium, Italy, and Spain: Assimilation, Recognition, and Homogenizing Tendencies

Even within the same state, different political regimes adopted diverging policies toward their minorities. Liberal governments tended to be more tolerant than dictatorships, but they still displayed homogenizing tendencies. In some cases, minority demands gathered stronger popular support only late in the interwar period, which suggests that national consciousness was not as strong as nationalist leaders claimed immediately after the Great War and points to the existence of nation-building projects within minorities as well. In many of the situations explored in the following sections, what was at stake for members of minority groups was the possibility to freely speak their native language and openly practice their culture. What changed from regime to regime was the degree to which central governments were willing to accommodate the minority culture and the one to which minority nationalist leaders resisted assimilationist attempts and promoted the standardization (i.e., homogenization) of the minority culture.

Liberal Italy (1918–22) and Restoration Spain (1918–23): Inaction and Resistance

In the period between the end of the Great War and Mussolini's and Primo de Rivera's coups in October 1922 and September 1923, respectively, state authorities in Italy and Spain had to address the requests for autonomy presented by different minority nationalist organizations.

For the Italian liberal regime this was an absolute novelty. When the Italian political elites were confronted with the task of integrating the "new citizens" annexed from the Habsburg Empire, they were unprepared. Opinions on what approach to take ranged from the support for a self-determination referendum proposed by some members of the Socialist Party, to an extreme assimilationist program advocated by nationalist activist Ettore Tolomei, who would later advise Mussolini on the matter.[18]

There were considerable differences between the way in which Italian authorities treated the inhabitants of South Tyrol (200,000 German speakers) and Venezia Giulia (460,000 Slovenian and Croatian speakers). While in the former military governors were more respectful of the rights of locals and schools in minority languages were left in place, in the latter several schools that taught in Slovenian and Croatian were closed.[19] With the onset of civilian rule, in mid-1919, two governors with wide-ranging powers were appointed by the central government to administer the two regions. The governor of South Tyrol, Luigi Credaro, continued the liberal policy adopted by the military authorities, although he progressively implemented more repressive measures in 1921–2. Except for a mixed language area south of Bolzano/Bozen, schools remained in German and residents were allowed to communicate with the administration in German as well.[20] Assimilationist attempts were stronger in Venezia Giulia. The region's governor, Antonio Mosconi, refused to reopen the schools in minority languages that had been closed during the military occupation and more generally tolerated, sometimes even exploited, fascist violence against

minority organizations. Additionally, even though public administration in these provinces was officially bilingual until 1922, local authorities often refused to use the language of the minority.[21]

Despite repeated reassurances from several authorities that the rights of minorities would be respected, Italian liberal elites pursued an ambivalent policy. While aiming toward a middle ground between assimilation and respect for minority languages and cultures, in practice this policy often condoned, sometimes even tacitly approved of, fascist violence against minorities. This violence, especially in Venezia Giulia, became a daily occurrence causing several casualties in 1920–2. Furthermore, the hesitant attitude of Italian politicians during the negotiations for autonomy with members of the South Tyrolean minority organization *Deutscher Verband* (DV) reflects this ambivalent policy. As late as March 1922, three years after the beginning of these negotiations and despite reassurances that autonomy would be granted quickly, the Socialist MP from South Tyrol, Silvio Flor, asked the government in Parliament whether "it intended to persist with the wavering policy until then followed."[22] Prime Minister Facta's following reassurances did not turn into any concrete measures.

Contrary to Italy, Spain did not take part in the Great War and did not annex any new territory inhabited by populations speaking a different language. However, between 1917 and 1923, minority nationalist parties in the Basque Country and Catalonia submitted proposals for regional autonomy to the central government. The defense of the Basque and Catalan languages was at the core of these parties' programs.[23] Plans for regional autonomy, the Catalan one in particular, were met with strong resistance in Parliament and conflict spilled over into the streets of Barcelona in January 1919. The Spanish government repressed these protests and later used the excuse of mounting social protests in the Catalan capital as an opportunity to close Parliament and end discussions concerning autonomy. In the following four years, labor protests took center stage in Spanish politics and overshadowed demands for autonomy from minority nationalist actors until the beginning of General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923.[24]

The Basque and, even more so, Catalan languages were widely used in their respective regions, although mostly in oral form. Yet, the use of these two languages was not officially recognized in schools or in public administration. Spanish remained the official language of state education and bureaucracy, although its superior status was only made formal later under the dictatorship.[25] However, teaching in minority languages in private education, which catered to the overwhelming majority of students, was not forbidden. Hence, lack of education in minority languages was also a reflection of its low demand. Despite the strong rhetoric of Basque and Catalan nationalist parties, who promoted their languages, the local middle classes, for reasons such as improved social mobility, kept sending their children to private schools whose language of instruction was Spanish. Furthermore, the Basque and Catalan nationalist movements were only then beginning the process of homogenization of their respective languages. Hence, demands for schools in minority languages were formulated mostly from the early interwar period onward and, until the 1930s, they remained limited to a narrow elite.[26]

The immediate postwar years were also a time of experimentation. In Catalonia, the local language was taught in some professional schools promoted by the *Mancomunitat*—the union of the four Catalan provinces created in 1914—and in a few municipal schools in Barcelona.[27] In 1919, the provincial administration of Biscay (in the Basque Country) passed an ambitious project aimed at creating 100 schools, called *escuelas de barriada*, within five years. These offered education in Basque in areas where most of the population was Basque-speaking and in Spanish where the majority was Spanish-speaking. Spanish and Basque were taught as a subject in each type of school, respectively. Yet, the project was severely curtailed already in 1921 and, more decisively, with Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923.[28] Attempts at introducing schooling in minority languages thus touched only a tiny fraction of the local school population in both the Basque Country and Catalonia.

Overall, during the short liberal period between the end of the Great War and the rise of dictatorial governments, education in minority languages was better protected in Italy than in Spain—although less so in Venezia Giulia than in South Tyrol. The inhabitants of the Italian "new provinces" also had some access to administration in their language. In Spain, however, the exclusion of minority languages from schools and bureaucracy was only partly due to the centralizing tendencies of the Spanish elite, as at the local level demand for teaching in minority languages remained weak. Private schools could have provided such teaching if there had been sufficient requests from parents. In both countries, calls for autonomy were approached with ambivalence, if not open hostility, on the part of central governments and Parliaments. Furthermore, state authorities tolerated, even openly exploited, violent acts committed by extreme right-wing organizations against minority nationalist leaders and organizations.

If contrasted with the policies enforced in Eastern Europe, the situation surrounding minorities within Liberal Italy and Restoration Spain can be compared to that in Czechoslovakia, one of the Eastern European countries that treated its minorities relatively liberally. In fact, on paper, Czechoslovakia offered a higher degree of protection than either of the Western European regimes, since it provided its minority groups with a wide-ranging set of rights beyond the minimum required by the minority treaties. For instance, in districts where more than 20 percent of the population spoke the minority language, the courts and civil servants had to communicate with members of minorities in their own language. Furthermore, public primary schools in minority languages had to be established whenever the parents of forty children requested it.[29] However, legislation was often poorly implemented. The state promoted land colonization in border areas inhabited by minorities to the advantage of Czechs and Slovaks and, in Moravia, Czech authorities often denied parents the right to send their children to German schools if these were considered to be of Czech descent, regardless of the fact that they often spoke German at home.[30] Czechoslovak was imposed as the official language of the state and, in 1926, 33,000 German-speaking civil servants lost their positions because they lacked proficiency in this language. Also, Czech politicians tended to exclude members of the country's minority groups (including those of Slovak origins) from positions of power in the state administration.[31] Thus, as in Liberal Italy and Restoration Spain, minorities enjoyed some protection, but this was not completely in line with the standard required by the League's minority treaties.

Fascist Italy (1922–43) and Primo de Rivera Spain (1923–31): Coercive Assimilation

In contrast with the liberal regimes just discussed, the authoritarian regimes of Benito Mussolini and Miguel Primo de Rivera set out to erase any minority nationalist movement in their respective countries and to assimilate minority populations into the majority language and culture.

In Italy, this process was more gradual than in Spain. The 1923 Gentile Law, named after the then Minister of Education and prominent philosopher Giovanni Gentile, imposed the Italian language as the only language of instruction in schools. Yet, the disappearance of minority languages from the primary school curriculum was phased out over a period of five years. Thus, by 1927–8, German and Slovenian/Croatian speakers could learn their mother tongue only as a foreign language in secondary schools. Private teaching was first impeded and then forbidden.[32] Teachers and civil servants belonging to one of these minorities were either dismissed or transferred to other Italian regions. Minority cultural associations were dissolved, while the minority's lower clergy was accused of defending minority languages and heavily harassed.[33]

Fascist assimilationist policies went beyond schooling as the regime envisaged the total Italianization of its minorities. To this effect, Mussolini tried to impose the Italianization of family names. Although officially this conversion was not compulsory, lists of "foreign" names were drafted and strong pressure was applied to transform them into "pure" Italian names.[34] Furthermore, to improve the results achieved up until that point, which they saw as disappointing, from 1933 onward the fascists scaled up the settlement of these new provinces with Italians from other regions of the country.[35] Overall, results were not satisfactory for the regime, but in the city of Bolzano/Bozen the establishment of an industrial zone settled with "pure" Italians, coming from provinces of the Kingdom without minorities, reversed the linguistic balance in the city to the advantage of Italian speakers, who by the late 1930s became a majority.[36] Although violence rarely reached extreme levels, it was institutionalized in the repressive apparatus of the regime and continuously applied to minority organizations and the wider population through policing and surveillance.

In Spain, Primo de Rivera's dictatorship repressed minority organizations and minority languages more rapidly, but less profoundly than Mussolini's. Only a few days after his coup on September 13, 1923, the Spanish leader passed a decree against separatism. This imposed Castilian as the official state language at all levels of the administration and the education system. Spreading separatist propaganda in schools was punished with prison sentences, and teachers caught speaking Basque or Catalan in class were often transferred to other Spanish regions. The regime created a system of surveillance and systematic evaluation of teachers that rewarded denunciation. The same occurred within the state administration so that officials deemed to hold nationalist sympathies were purged. As in fascist Italy, minority cultural associations were disbanded, and the minority's lower clergy accused of defending minority languages. Although family names were left untouched, the public space was Castilianized.[37]

However, Primo de Rivera did not aim at erasing Catalan and Basque completely from Spanish territory. In fact, the regime allowed the publication of newspapers in Catalan—their production in fact increased between 1923 and 1927. The regime also continued to fund studies on the Catalan language. The dictator simply strove to turn minority languages into elements of regional folklore without any connection to political identities.[38] In the Basque Country, the regime repressed the separatist *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* and all those nationalists who openly challenged the regime, but it did not dissolve the moderate *Comunión Nacionalista Vasca*, which, in turn, focused on purely cultural activities. Publications in Basque were allowed and the regime even renewed the *concierto economico*, a special agreement between the central government and the Basque provinces that guaranteed some form of fiscal autonomy for the latter.[39]

Coercive assimilation did not work in Italy or Spain. Both Mussolini and Primo de Rivera's regimes tried to force minority populations to identify with Italy and Spain, respectively, by using repression and indoctrination tactics. Yet, the nation-building efforts put forth by these two regimes only managed to increase opposition to the state and reinforced minority nationalism. In Italy, the results of the 1939 Option Agreement negotiated by Mussolini and Hitler offer the clearest evidence for this increased opposition. The Option Agreement allowed the German-speaking population of South Tyrol to choose whether they wanted to stay in Italy or move to Nazi Germany and obtain German citizenship. More than 85 percent of voters opted for moving to Germany.[40] This result was a harsh setback for the Italian regime, which had insisted for about twenty years that the inhabitants of South Tyrol could not resist assimilation to Italian majority culture. Similarly, by the late 1920s, when Primo de Rivera began losing support among the social classes that had bolstered him, the strength of minority nationalism had grown considerably. When in April 1931 the Second Republic was declared immediately after the municipal elections held throughout the country, Basque and Catalan nationalist parties came out among the biggest winners of the ballot.[41]

In a wider comparative context, both these Western European regimes showed a standard of treatment in line with, and in some respects even less tolerant than that granted to minorities in Poland—which was one of the most repressive Eastern European countries with regards to their minorities. Polish legislation was officially quite protective of minorities, and between 1926 and 1935 the Józef Piłsudski's dictatorship openly defended an inclusive form of civic nationalism. Yet, laws were largely disregarded and the situation degenerated after 1935, especially with the introduction of antisemitic measures.[42] The number of schools in minority languages declined dramatically throughout the interwar period and economic discrimination hit the German-speaking population in the early 1920s.[43] Large-scale violence against minorities was probably stronger in Poland than in authoritarian Italy and Spain. In the early 1930s, Piłsudski's government adopted strongly repressive policies of "pacification" under the cover of anti-terrorism activities in the areas inhabited by Ukrainian speakers,[44] while in the late 1930s Polish authorities tolerated several antisemitic pogroms.[45] Yet, violence was institutionalized in Mussolini's and Primo de Rivera's regimes as well and practiced daily through small acts of repression and surveillance.

Republican Spain (1931–39) and Democratic Belgium (1918–39): Recognition and Homogenizing Tendencies

Liberal regimes tended to integrate their minorities by recognizing cultural differences and granting a minimum degree of protection. This was especially the case in Spain during the Republican period (1931–39) and in Belgium throughout the interwar years. Yet, even in these cases one can see homogenizing tendencies in the latter and persisting conflict between minority demands and centralizing efforts in the former.

In Spain, the Second Republic originated in the combined efforts of a wide coalition of democratic republican forces in which minority nationalist parties, especially in Catalonia, played a prominent role. Catalan nationalists were among the first political leaders in Spain to proclaim the Spanish Republic on April 14, 1931. With the creation of this new democratic regime, Catalan and Basque representatives had a chance to obtain the political autonomy that had been resisted by the old Restoration elite. In Catalonia, an autonomous government called *Generalitat*, established immediately after the proclamation of the Republic, governed the territory until the end of the civil war. In the Basque Country, on the contrary, major disagreements among the drafters of the statute of autonomy delayed the creation of a regional executive until October 1936, well into the civil war.[46]

The Catalan statute affirmed the co-official nature of Catalan and Spanish in the region. Public schools remained under the control of the central executive, but the *Generalitat* was allowed to set up its own school network at its own expense. A decree signed in April 1931 ordered pupils to be taught in their mother tongue until eight years of age, thus opening up the possibility to establish Catalan as the language of instruction in public primary schools. The decree was de facto largely ignored. This however was also due to a dearth of teachers sufficiently fluent in Catalan—a reminder that the Catalan nation was still under construction. The equality of Spanish and Catalan was also extended to higher education.[47]

The Basque statute also recognized the official character of the Basque language but transferred a limited number of competences to the regional executive. The relative isolation of the Basque provinces and the weakness of the Spanish Republican government, both caused by the ongoing civil war, enabled the Basque government to exercise a much wider range of competences than those originally devolved by the central government. The Basque region was practically acting as an independent state until the conquest of this territory by Franco's troops in June 1937.[48] Even before the establishment of the Basque executive, several projects providing primary bilingual education were launched in both Biscay and Gipuzkoa, which expanded the lukewarm attempts at education in Basque of the early postwar years, although they still affected only a few thousand pupils.[49]

Republican Spain can thus be categorized as a mixed example regarding the recognition of national difference. On the one hand, it constituted an exceptional instance of devolution of powers to regional authorities in the Basque Country and Catalonia. On the other hand, it was a very brief and conflict-ridden regime. This was especially the case in Catalonia, where, in October 1934, after a few months of struggle between the *Generalitat* and the central executive over a regional agricultural law, and with the

coming of a new government opposed to Catalan autonomy in Madrid, the President of the *Generalitat* Lluís Companys decided to declare a Catalan state within a Spanish Republican Federation. The new Spanish executive imposed a state of emergency on the region, closed the Catalan Parliament, and directly ruled the region until the left-wing Popular Front won new elections in February 1936 and re-instated Catalan autonomy. A few months later, the civil war began and although this was mostly an ideological conflict between the Left and the Right, Franco's rebellion was caused in part by, and aimed at uprooting, nationalist forces in the Basque Country and Catalonia.[50]

Compared to Republican Spain, Belgium did not experience the same level of minority conflict. At the end of the Great War, the Belgian political elites were confronted with two minority issues. The first concerned a population of former German subjects annexed at the end of the Great War that was living in the districts of Eupen, Malmedy, and St. Vith (the so-called Eastern cantons). The second regarded the Flemish-speaking population of Flanders, whose demands for equality between French and Flemings had grown stronger during and immediately after the conflict.

Belgian policy toward its German population in the Eastern cantons was often paternalistic, sometimes despotic. However, it generally guaranteed the protection of the language and culture of the region. Successive Belgian executives never hid their goal of assimilating the population of the Eastern cantons. Yet, they interpreted assimilation as a policy that would integrate the "new Belgians" into the administrative and social fabric of the state without necessarily implying full homogenization. For this purpose, the central government appointed General Herman Baltia as Royal High Commissioner of the region, which he ruled with wide-ranging powers from 1920 to 1925. Baltia's regime tolerated the cultural and linguistic difference of local inhabitants but was also paternalistic and authoritarian. In educational terms, the general divided the cantons into two areas: in Malmedy (where most of the population was French speaking) French was the dominant language and German the second language; in Eupen and St. Vith (where the linguistic landscape was the opposite), the situation was reversed. This generally ensured that German-speaking pupils could have most of their education in German.[51] However, similar to Italian authorities (although not to the same extent), Baltia removed German-speaking teachers from primary and secondary schools, as he believed that they were not "reliable." About one-third of the total number of these teachers left or were fired in 1920.[52] Furthermore, the regime repressed dissent, notably during the "popular consultation" on annexation imposed by the Treaty of Versailles that took place in the first half of 1920. The consultation was widely defined as a fraud, including by some Belgian politicians, and its farcical nature undermined the legitimacy of Belgian control of the area throughout the interwar years.[53]

In the immediate post-Baltia period, the Belgian central government acted inconsiderately toward the population of the Eastern cantons. For instance, it removed some elected mayors that it did not trust and leaked details of negotiations with Berlin, which occurred from 1925 to 1926, about a possible restitution of the cantons to Germany. Both occurrences convinced many locals that they were second-class citizens.[54] After 1929, Brussels started taking a more lenient approach, but the Nazi takeover in Germany complicated things further. Belgian authorities detected an intensification of covert pro-German activity in the area. Consequently, they increased

surveillance and even introduced radical measures such as the implementation of a law that would denationalize citizens who were not Belgian nationals by birth if they violated “their duties as Belgian citizens.”[55] At the same time, successive governments carefully avoided disaffecting the local population and creating martyrs.[56]

The fact that in 1939, 45.2 percent of the population of the cantons voted for the revisionist party *Heimattreue Front* suggests that the assimilation efforts of the Belgian authorities had worked only in part. Yet, in comparison with the situation in Fascist Italy, where more than 85 percent of the population of South Tyrol voted to move to Germany in 1939 suggests that, in relative terms, Belgium’s more tolerant approach was more effective than Mussolini’s attempts at forced assimilation.[57]

The second minority issue that the Belgian state had to address in the interwar period concerned the population of Flanders, which in fact was a demographic majority. We consider this population as a sociological minority on account of its lower status in a state dominated by francophone elites. However, despite this initial lower status, during the interwar years Flemish nationalism became stronger and the Flemish economy also improved, reinforcing the negotiating power of Flemish nationalist elites within the Belgian state. Thus, by the early 1930s, Flemish and francophone politicians agreed to turn Flanders and Wallonia into two homogeneous monolingual areas.

The main minority organization advocating for the rights of the Flemish people was the Flemish Movement. It had arisen in the second half of the nineteenth century to demand equality between French and Dutch in Belgium. During the Great War, the Movement divided into a radical anti-Belgian wing calling for autonomy, even independence, and a moderate faction, that rallied the Movement’s large majority. This latter faction demanded the Flemishization of education (in particular secondary and higher education), the administration and the courts in Flanders, as well as equality between Francophones and Flemings in the army. At the end of the war, these requests, embodied in the “minimum program” devised by the Flemish Catholic leader Frans van Cauwelaert, met resistance from the francophone establishment, which despite the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1919 remained dominant in the executive.[58] Many francophone politicians, along with the King, were willing to provide more equality to Flemish, but not at the expense of bilingualism in Flanders, where education in Flemish was provided, but French was widely used in public administration and prevailed in higher education.[59]

At the end of the war, the use of languages in the administration and the school system was mostly regulated in accordance with the personality principle. According to this principle, every citizen should have been able to use whatever official language in his or her dealings with the state and within schools. Toward the end of the 1920s, however, support for an alternative principle, the territorial principle, grew. This postulated that the language of the majority in a specific area should have been the official language in the administration and education. Between 1930 and 1932, through the adoption of the three bills on the complete Flemishization of the University of Ghent (in 1930), the use of languages in public administration (1932) and the use of languages in primary and secondary schools (1932), most of the Belgian territory was divided into two monolingual linguistic areas. As a result, linguistic minorities in most of Flanders and Wallonia did not enjoy any protection, except for some derogations along the border between these two regions, Brussels (which remained bilingual), and

the Eastern cantons—indeed the francophone Flemish elites rapidly declined after the formation of the two monolingual areas.[60]

The turn toward the territorial principle occurred as the result of a change in opinion among most Walloon MPs. In 1921, when a first reform of the use of languages in the administration that introduced a degree of territoriality was passed, politicians from Wallonia had voted overwhelmingly against the bill. MPs from Flanders, by contrast, massively supported it.[61] Eleven years later, two-thirds of MPs in both Flanders and Wallonia accepted the new bill on the use of languages in the administration that did away, almost completely, with the rights of minorities in both areas. Such change in the attitude of Walloon lawmakers occurred because of a complex set of reasons. In part, the shift reflected a generalized reaction of Belgian authorities to the election of August Borms, a Flemish radical nationalist who was in prison for collaboration with the German occupier during the First World War, at a by-election in Antwerp in 1928. The event stunned the Belgian political elites and convinced them to adopt a more lenient approach to Flemish linguistic demands. Indeed, Belgian politicians thought that an intransigent line would favor a radicalization of Flemish public opinion. However, among Walloon politicians in particular, the turnaround in favor of the creation of two monolingual regions also stemmed from fears that Flemish MPs would use their majority in Parliament to impose equality between Flemish and French in the form of bilingualism throughout Belgium. The Liberal Walloon politician François Bovesse conveyed these fears well, as well as the trade-off that many Walloon politicians were ready to accept, when he bitterly acknowledged that "it is hard, it is bitter to abandon the Francophones of Flanders. It would be certainly harder and more dangerous to sacrifice our [Walloon] linguistic unity."[62] Concerns about the linguistic integrity of Wallonia convinced most Walloon MPs to accept the Flemish MPs' proposal to divide the country into two monolingual areas. Hence, although there was no homogenization at the state level in Belgium, homogenization occurred within both Flanders and Wallonia.

Overall, with respect to our case studies, Belgium throughout the interwar period and Republican Spain from 1931 to 1936 guaranteed the best standard of protection to their minorities. Public education in minority languages was allowed (although funded by regional authorities in Spain) and the Republic even granted territorial autonomy to the Basque provinces and Catalonia. Although formal autonomy was not given to the Flemish population, the moderate nationalist leader Frans van Cauwelaert considered the implementation of his "minimum programme" (which was de facto realized in the 1930s) as a form of cultural autonomy, because it would shield the Flemish population from social dynamics favoring French assimilation.[63]

There was a comparable level of protection and recognition in the Eastern European context, namely in the Baltic Republic of Estonia until the 1934 coup d'état. There, recognition was chiefly granted through the peculiar institutional tool of non-territorial autonomy. Estonia allowed each group considered as a minority with at least 3,000 members to set up a far-reaching system of cultural (non-territorial) autonomy. These groups could establish institutions to manage their educational and cultural life. Minority organs had the authority to impose legally binding rules on their members and raise taxes (under state supervision).[64] The system was not perfect

and, for instance, the German minority was heavily targeted by land redistribution measures. Nevertheless, pre-1934 Estonia still offered minorities one of the most tolerant contexts of the entire continent during the interwar period and allowed the creation of an extensive network of subsidized German and Jewish minority schools that went beyond the efforts carried out in this sector in Catalonia and the Basque Country during the Republican period.[65]

Conclusion: Locating Belgium, Italy, and Spain in the Wider European Context

Contrary to interwar assumptions that linger in historiography to this day, Western Europe experienced tense majority-minority relations between the two World Wars. Moreover, in many respects, minority treatment in Western European states and in the countries subjected to the minority treaties did not differ substantially. Hence, in the interwar years, minorities were a "problem of Europe as a whole."[66] The decision to circumscribe minority protection to Eastern Europe stemmed from power asymmetries between the European states and lingering civilizational stereotypes, rather than from realities on the ground.

This does not mean that majority-minority relations were the same in Eastern and Western Europe, but that comparable situations existed. Furthermore, both parts of the continent showed considerable variation in terms of minority treatment within their own region, sometimes even within the same country over time.

Although Western European states were not legally bound to respect the League's minority treaties, they had a moral obligation to fulfill them in light of the 1922 resolution of the Assembly of the League of Nations. We can thus evaluate their behavior against the background of these treaties. Liberal Italy and Restoration Spain provided liberal rights to their population, including minorities, but they did not fully provide minority-specific rights. Furthermore, both regimes became increasingly repressive in the early 1920s and tolerated, even publicly exploited, violent extreme-right groups attacking minority organizations, which eventually took over state institutions altogether.

Italian Fascism and Spain under General Primo de Rivera clearly disregarded most of the rights set out in these treaties. Apart from the violations of the right to liberty and equality before the law implied by their authoritarian nature (and which concerned all citizens), these two regimes consistently repressed minority organizations and imposed the majority's language as the sole language of instruction and administration. Primo de Rivera, however, left more room than Mussolini for the use of regional languages in the media and the public space as mere elements of Spanish folklore.

In contrast, Republican Spain and Democratic Belgium recognized the language and culture of their minorities. Republican Spain granted territorial autonomy to the regions of the Basque Country and Catalonia and recognized the co-official character of the languages spoken there. Although the Republic did not directly fund schools in minority language, it allowed regional executives to create their own

parallel school system with their own revenues. Interwar Belgium did not concede autonomy to either the German-speaking population of the Eastern cantons or the population of Flanders, but it did establish public schools that taught in the Flemish or German language, allowed the use of these languages in court, and did not repress minority organizations. Both, however, demonstrated disadvantageous aspects with respect to their minorities as well. The Spanish Republic was short-lived and conflict-ridden, eventually leading to a civil war and a new dictatorship. Belgium's legitimacy in the Eastern cantons was undermined by the 1920 farcical plebiscite concerning annexation and by a number of other "tactless" attempts to promote French assimilation of the area (although this never meant the annihilation of German language and culture), while Flemish demands for equality between Flemish and French led to the division of the country into two linguistically homogenous areas.

Although a systematic comparison with the situation in Eastern Europe is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is possible to establish connections between Eastern and Western European cases. While Mussolini's Italy and Primo de Rivera's Spain violated minority rights to an extent and in ways similar to interwar Poland, Czechoslovakia afforded a standard of treatment in line with the mixed records of Liberal Italy and Restoration Spain. Similarly, pre-1934 Estonia granted minorities a degree of autonomy at least as extensive as interwar Belgium and Republican Spain.

Without going so far as carrying out a thorough East-West comparison, this chapter has shown that Western European countries should be located more firmly in an all-European context. It suggests that the image of a European continent split between a homogeneous, tolerant, and peaceful West and a heterogeneous, repressive, and conflict-ridden East does not hold. As a result, a more nuanced picture emerges in which policies of recognition are comparable in Republican Spain and Belgium just as in pre-1934 Estonia, while repression was a hallmark of Fascist Italy and Primo de Rivera's Spain as much as was the case in interwar Poland.

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Notes

1 Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1314.

2 Mark Mazower, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," *Daedalus* 126, no. 2 (1997): 53.
3 Matthew Frank, *Making Minorities History: Population Transfer in Twentieth-century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 45–6. For more on this point see the introduction to this volume.
4 Jacques Fouques Duparc, *La protection des minorités, de race, de langue et de religion, étude de droit des gens* (Paris: Dalloz, 1922), 17.
5 C. A. Macartney, "Minorities: A Problem of Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 9, no. 4 (1931): 677. For a similar point see also Arnold Toynbee, *Nationality & the War* (London: Dent & Sons, 1915), 476–504.
6 See Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Stephan M. Horak, *Eastern European National Minorities, 1919–1980: A Handbook* (Littleton: Libraries Unlimited, 1985); Raymond Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe: 1848–1945*. (New York: St. Martin's Pr., 1983); Christian Raitz von Frentz, *A Lesson Forgotten: Minority Protection under the League of Nations: The Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920–1934* (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 1999); Martin Scheuermann, *Minderheitenschutz contra Konfliktverhütung?: die Minderheitenpolitik des Völkerbundes in den zwanziger Jahren* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Instut, 2000); Paul Smith, *Ethnic Groups in International Relations* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1991). For exceptions, see Volker Prott, *The Politics of Self-Determination: Remaking Territories and National Identities in Europe, 1917–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 137–65.
7 For a similar focus on minority questions in Western Europe, see the chapters of Alison Carrol, Brian Hughes, Alvin Jackson, and Volker Prott in this volume.
8 For an examination of majority-minority relations through the prism of national indifference or, more broadly, nationalism from below, see the contributions of Alison Carrol, Brian Hughes, Pieter Judson, and Olga Linkiewicz in this volume. For a critical discussion of national indifference, see Omer Bartov's coda to this volume.
9 In this chapter we focus on national minorities, that is, on minority groups whose political elites claimed to represent a sovereign political community distinct from that of the state where they lived.
10 Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Poland, 28 June 1919, http://ungarisches-institut.de/dokumente/pdf/19190628-3.pdf (accessed June 27, 2022).
11 Carole Fink, "The Paris Peace Conference and the Question of Minority Rights," *Peace & Change* 21, no. 3 (1996): 75–76.
12 Stanislaw Sierposwski, "Minorities in the System of the League of Nations," in *Ethnic Groups in International Relations*, ed. Paul Smith (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1991), 18–23.
13 The full list includes: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iraq, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia, as well as the territory of Memel, and the region of Upper Silesia. See Pablo de Azcárate, *League of Nations and National Minorities: An Experiment* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), 94–5.
14 Resolutions and Recommendations Adopted on the Reports of the Sixth Committee Part IX (1922). *League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supplement*, 9: 35–8; Eighth Meeting (1933). *League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supplement* 120: 59–61.

15 Javier Tusell, "La crisis del liberalismo oligarquico en Espana. Una rivoluzione mancata a la Española," in *La transición a la política de masas*, ed. Edward Acton, Sebastian Balfour, and Ismael Saz (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2001), 21–36; Andrea Di Michele, *L'italianizzazione imperfetta: l'amministrazione pubblica dell'Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2003), 56–153; Herman Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy from National Independence to National Disintegration* (Antwerp: University Press Antwerp, 2011), 133–9.
16 By sociological minority we mean a political stand identifying a non-dominant group as oppressed (regardless of its actual demographic size) and pursuing different emancipatory agendas to ensure equality with other groups inhabiting the state. Els Witte and Harry van Velthoven, *Languages in Contact and in Conflict: The Belgian Case* (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2011), 15.
17 For reasons of scope, this chapter will not engage extensively with the civil war period and will mostly limit its analysis of the Spanish Republic to the period from 1931 to 1936.
18 Elio Apih, *Italia, fascismo e antifascismo nella Venezia Giulia, 1918–1943: ricerche storiche* (Bari: Laterza, 1966), 51–68.
19 Adriano Andri and Giulio Mellinato, *Scuola e confine: le istituzioni educative della Venezia Giulia 1915–1945* (Trieste: Istituto Regionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1994), 37–8.
20 Angelo Ara, "Scuola e minoranze nazionali in Italia, 1861–1940," *Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche* 4 (1990), 470.
21 Annamaria Vinci, *Sentinelle della Patria. Il fascismo al confine orientale, 1918–1941* (Roma: Laterza, 2011), 72–116.
22 Camera dei Deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Resoconto stenografico, 20.3.1922, 3322, https://storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg26/sed070.pdf (accessed December 13, 2021). See also ibid., 3337.
23 For more details on these campaigns for autonomy, see Santiago de Pablo and Ludger Mees, *El péndulo patriótico: historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco, 1895–2005* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2005), 59–70; Javier Moreno Luzón, "De agravios, pactos y símbolos. El nacionalismo español ante la autonomía de Cataluña (1918–1919)," *Ayer*, 2006: 119–51; Borja de Riquer I Permaner, *Alfonso XIII y Cambó. La monarquía y el catalanismo político* (Barcelona: RBA, 2013), 111–42.
24 De Riquer, *Alfonso XIII*, 132.
25 Daniel Escribano, "La Introducció del concepte de 'llengua oficial' a l'ordenament jurídic espanyol (1902–1931)," *Treballs de sociolingüística catalana*, 2015: 213–29.
26 Josep González-Agàpito, *Tradició i renovació pedagògica, 1898–1939: història de l'educació : Catalunya, Illes Balears, País Valencià* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2002), 295–6; Maitane Ostolaza, *Entre religión y modernidad* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2000), 289–330.
27 Alexandre Galí, *Història de les institucions i del moviment cultural a Catalunya 1900–1936, vol. 1* (Barcelona: Fundació Alexandre Galí, 1980), 129. Although one could argue that the *Mancomunitat* was a form of regional autonomy, the body did not receive any new competences on top of those enjoyed by the four Catalan provinces that constituted it. These competences were executive and not legislative. Furthermore, the transfer of powers (and means to exercise them) from the provinces to the *Mancomunitat* was delayed for several years and took place in 1921, only two years before the beginning of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Even then, the *Mancomunitat* had a lower budget and capacity to raise funds than the municipality

of Barcelona. For more details see Enric Ucelay Da Cal, “La Diputación i La Mancomunitat: 1914–1923,” in *Història de La Diputació de Barcelona : 1812–2005*, ed. Borja de Riquer (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 2007), 39–211.

28 Karmele Artetxe Sánchez, “Las escuelas de barriada de Bizkaia (1920–1937): revisión y nuevos datos,” *Historia y Memoria de La Educación*, no. 12 (2020): 363–94.

29 Jozef Kaldova, “National Minorities in Czechoslovakia, 1919–1980,” in *Eastern European National Minorities, 1919–1980: A Handbook*, ed. Stephan M. Horak (Littleton: Libraries unlimited, 1985), 114.

30 Daniel E. Miller, “Colonizing the Hungarian and German Border Areas during the Czechoslovak Land Reform. 1918–1938,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 34 (2003): 303–17; Tara Zahra, “Reclaiming Children for the Nation: Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1945,” *Central European History* 37, no. 4 (2004): 501–43.

31 Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslavakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 140; Peter Bugge, “Czech Democracy 1918–1938—Paragon or Parody?,” *Bohemia* 47, no. 1 (2007): 3–28. On the contrast between the interwar (and postwar) myth of a tolerant and democratic Czechoslovakia, the propaganda efforts of the Czech political elites to disseminate this myth, and the much more mixed reality on the ground, see Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*.

32 Ara, “Scuola e minoranze,” 479.

33 Andri and Mellinato, *Scuola e confine*, 210; Di Michele, *L’italianizzazione*, 164–77; Milica Kacin-Wohinz, *Vivere al confine: sloveni e italiani negli anni 1918–1941* (Gorizia: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 2004), 205–12; Stefan Lechner, “*Die Eroberung der Fremdstämmigen*” *Provinzfaschismus in Südtirol 1921–1926* (Innsbruck, Wagner, 2003), 432–43.

34 Maura Hametz, “Naming Italians in the Borderland, 1926–1943,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no. 3 (2010): 410–30; Message from the Prefect of Trieste to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 23.8.1931, in *Archivio di Stato di Trieste* (Trieste State Archives, Italy), Prefettura, Gabinetto, 206/68.

35 This turn coincided with a further radicalization of the authoritarian nature of the regime, which some authors qualify as totalitarian. For a short discussion of Italian fascism’s totalitarian aspects, see Davide Rodogno, *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 408–16.

36 Di Michele, *L’italianizzazione,* 244.

37 A. Quiroga, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses, 1923–30* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 110–58; María del Mar Del Pozo Andrés and Jacques F. A. Braster, “The Rebirth of the ‘Spanish Race’: The State, Nationalism, and Education in Spain, 1875–1931,” *European History Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1999): 75–107.

38 Quiroga, *Making Spaniards*, 142.

39 De Pablo and Mees, *El pendulo*, 85–112.

40 Rolf Steininger, *Südtirol im 20. Jahrhundert: Vom Leben und Überleben einer Minderheit* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2016), 171; Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini’s Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy’s Borderlands, 1922–1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 223.

41 José Luis de la Granja Sainz, Justo G. Beramendi, and Pere Anguera, *La España de los nacionalismos y las autonomías* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2001), 113.

42 Harsh antisemitic legislation was also introduced in Italy from 1938 onward. In this study we do not include the Jewish minority in Italy among our cases for two main reasons. First, the Italian Jewish community was small (about 40,000 people) and highly assimilated; hence, there was no (or at least a very weak) political stand claiming the existence of a separate Jewish national community in Italy, at least until the late 1930s. Second, although antisemitism did exist and was widespread, contrary to several other European countries, Italy lacked an overt antisemitic movement. Although the Fascist Party had an antisemitic wing and Mussolini displayed signs of unsystematic antisemitism, until the mid-1930s, it was not an antisemitic party and several Jews reached prominent positions within it. In the late 1930s, things changed radically. However, as this concerns only the last years of the timeframe considered in this chapter, including the Jewish minority in Italy in our study would create a major imbalance with the other cases. On the Jewish minority in Italy, see Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Michael Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews; German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922–1945*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

43 Stephan Horak, *Poland and Her National Minorities, 1919–1939: A Case Study* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961), 144–79. Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland: 1918–1939* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 77–103. Raitz von Frentz, 216–26. On Polish repressive policies with regard to electoral reform, see the chapter of Marina Germane in this volume.

44 Pawel Korzec, "The Ukranian Problem in Interwar Poland," in *Ethnic Groups in International Relations*, ed. Paul Smith (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1991), 203–4.

45 Kathryn Ciancia, *On Civilization's Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 219–23. Fink, *Defending*, 285.

46 Enric Ucelay Da Cal, *La Catalunya populista: imatge, cultura i política en l'etapa republicana, 1931–1939* (Barcelona: La Magrana, 1982); José Luis de la Granja Sainz, *Nacionalismo y II República en el País Vasco: estatutos de autonomía, partidos y elecciones, historia de acción nacionalista, 1930–1936* (Madrid: Centro de investigaciones sociológicas, 1986), 661–81.

47 Albert Balcells, *El nacionalismo catalán* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1999), 103–5.

48 José Luis de la Granja Sainz, *República y Guerra Civil en Euskadi: del Pacto de San Sebastián al de Santoña* (Oñati: Herri Arduralaritzaren Euskal Erakundea, 1990), 257–77.

49 Paulí Dávila Balsera, "Euskal Herria tiene forma de corazón: la escuela en la construcción de la identidad nacional vasca," *Historia de la educación: Revista interuniversitaria*, no. 27 (2008): 227–9.

50 Granja et al., *La España*, 136–9.

51 Haut Commissariat Royal d'Eupen et de Malmedy, *Rapport sur l'activité générale du Gouvernement d'Eupen et de Malmedy*, 07.1921–07.1922, *Staatsarchiv Eupen* (Eupen State Archives) (henceforth SE), Baltia Fonds, Box 193, 44–52.

52 Haut Commissariat Royal d'Eupen et de Malmedy, *Rapport sur l'activité générale du Gouvernement d'Eupen et de Malmedy,* 07.1920–07.1921, SE, Baltia Fonds, Box 192, 91–3. Baltia's measures were not unique in Belgium. Between 1918 and 1921, the country went through an administrative purge hitting civil servants who were deemed to have collaborated with the German occupier. This occurred in parallel with the criminal prosecution of high-profile collaborators. Estimates

show that about 1,600 civil servants (out of a total of around 6,200 in the central administration) were hit by a sanction. By contrast, only 300 people were sentenced in court. Although, later in the 1920s, the purge was interpreted as an anti-Flemish witch-hunt, the regional distribution of sanctions approximately reflected the relative proportion of the populations of Flanders and Wallonia. For more on this, see Stijn de Wilde, and Frederik Verleden. "'Ambtenaren in dienst van de vijand.' De bestraffing van het activisme in de Belgische rijksadministratie (1918–1921)," *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 124, no. 1 (2009): 30–56. For the total number of Belgian civil servants, see Rivet, Raymond. "La Statistique Des Fonctionnaires." *Journal de La Société Française de Statistique* 74 (1933): 91–119.

53 Vincent O'Connell, *The Annexation of Eupen-Malmedy: Becoming Belgian, 1919–1929* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 117–45.

54 Christoph Brüll, "Eupen-Malmedy 1918–1945. Le temps des déchirures," in *Hommage à Henri Bragard (1877–1944)*, ed. Renée Boulengier-Sedyn (Liège: Société de Langue et Littérature Wallonne, 2009), 20–2.

55 Law of July 30, 1934, on deprivation of nationality, quoted in Christelle Macq, "Contours et enjeux de la déchéance de la nationalité," *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 30 (2021), 18.

56 Ibid., 11–37. On the need to be very cautious and avoid creating martyrs, see the report by the Belgian ambassador in Berlin, de Kerchove, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 11.1.1933, in Archives diplomatiques de Belgique, 10.777—Religious questions 1921–6, folder on the expulsion of priest Gilles.

57 Other factors influenced the decision of the inhabitants of South Tyrol to opt overwhelmingly for relocation to Germany. Yet, in many ways, the Option turned into a plebiscite against fascist Italy.

58 Niels Matheve, *Tentakels van de macht: elite en elitenetwerken in en rond de Belgische tussenoorlogse regeringen (1918–1940)* (Inni: Heule, 2016).

59 Jan Velaers, *Albert I: Koning in Tijden van Oorlog En Crisis 1909–1934* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2009), 827–50.

60 Ibid., 962–83. Witte and Van Velthoven, *Languages*, 118–20.

61 Stéphane Rillaerts, "La Frontière Linguistique, 1878–1963," *Courrier Hebdomadaire Du CRISP*, no. 24 (2010): 7–106.

62 Quoted in Astrid von Busekist, *La Belgique: politique des langues et construction de l'État, de 1780 à nos jours* (Paris: Duculot, 1998), 238. See also the comments against the personality principle, which he had previously supported, of the Socialist francophone MP Jules Destrée in Destrée, J., "Un aspect imprévu de la liberté du père de famille," *Le Soir*, February 22, 1930, in Letterenhuis Antwerp (henceforth LA), Frans Van Cauwelaert (FVC), Vlaamse Beweging (VB), Box 62.

63 Lode Wils, *Onverfranst, onverduitst? Flamenpolitik, activisme, frontbeweging* (Kalmthout: Pelckmans, 2014), 301.

64 Kari Alenius, "The Birth of Cultural Autonomy in Estonia: How, Why, and for Whom?," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2007): 445–62; Mikko Lagerspetz, "Cultural Autonomy of National Minorities in Estonia: The Erosion of a Promise," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 45, no. 4 (2014): 457–75.

65 David J. Smith, "Estonia: A Model for Inter-war Europe?," *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 89–104.

66 In contrast with Macartney's famous article. See Macartney, "Minorities."