



John J. Kulczycki\*  
Chicago

## The Legitimization of Forced Migration: A Long-Term Consequence of the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Lausanne

### Abstract

Following World War I, the Great Powers gathered in Paris to negotiate a series of treaties under the watchword “national self-determination.” By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century national homogeneity had become the ideal attribute of a nation-state, and in practice this is what the Great Powers saw as national self-determination. Only in very few instances did a population actually self-determine its future. In addition, the Great Powers took other considerations into account in redrawing borders in Eastern Europe, resulting in the inclusion of large minorities, which prompted the imposition of treaties protecting those minorities. If the new borders resulted in a change of an individual’s nationality, one could self-determine one’s nationality by “opting” for another nationality, but with the obligation to “transfer” one’s residence to the country of that nationality, the equivalent of forced migration and illustrating the primacy of national homogeneity over self-determination. The Treaties of Neuilly and Sèvres went further by obligating Bulgaria and Turkey to reduce their minority population. The failure of the latter Treaty led to a conference in Lausanne, at which the Great Powers in the resulting Treaty legitimized the expulsion of Greeks and Turks, providing an international sanction for forced migration. In the following decades, statesmen and others repeatedly invoked the Treaty of Lausanne by name as a successful model for dealing with minority-majority conflicts, supposedly by promoting national homogeneity, which culminated in massive forced migrations following World War II.

**Key words:** national homogeneity, self-determination, minorities, population transfers, population exchange, Munich Pact, Potsdam Conference

**Słowa kluczowe:** jednorodność narodowa, samostanowienie, mniejszości, transfery populacji, Pakt Monachijski, Konferencja w Poczdamie

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\* Department of History, University of Illinois at Chicago, e-mail: kutch41@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-3572-524X.

“No phrase has had greater political resonance in the last one hundred years than ‘self-determination.’”<sup>1</sup> Although one can trace its origins to an individualistic Enlightenment concept, prior to World War I it evolved into the collectivist doctrine of national self-determination.<sup>2</sup> President Woodrow Wilson took it up as the slogan for establishing peace during World War I, and it became the watchword of the Paris Peace Conference at which the Great Powers imposed treaties on the defeated states and the new and expanded states of Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> Since then, historians and other scholars have written widely concerning self-determination and its application.<sup>4</sup> But as M. Marelja, O. Pilipovic’, and M. Ahtik have recently noted, self-determination actually occurred in the very few cases of plebiscites allowing the population to determine its future.<sup>5</sup> L.V. Smith has made a case for regarding Czechoslovakia as an example of self-determination or “self-recognition,” as he puts it.<sup>6</sup> In general, the application of the principle of national self-determination in the Paris treaties meant the creation of nationally homogeneous states.<sup>7</sup> This has continued to be the goal of calls for national self-determination, and the imprecision of its meaning has resulted in much suffering.

The ideal of a nationally homogeneous nation-state took hold in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and drew attention to the distinct communities within states.<sup>8</sup> In the guise of national self-determination, this ideal guided the drafting of the peace treaties following World War I and ultimately legitimized forced migration, “an aspect of ‘ethnic cleansing’ that can be defined as the wholesale, violent and permanent removal of an ethnically defined group from its homeland.”<sup>9</sup>

Although instances of forced migration occurred in Europe from the 1860s, not until the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 were they meant to foster national homogeneity among the states involved. During the negotiations in London in the winter of 1912/13 following the First Balkan War, the British government repeatedly referred to “ethnological arguments” for determining the assignment of disputed territories.<sup>10</sup> In 1913 Turkey, seeing its Christian minority as a pretext for war on the part of Balkan states, proposed an exchange of population with Bulgaria, to which Bulgaria agreed. In May 1914 Turkey also proposed a “voluntary and reciprocal exchange” of population to Greece, which Greece accepted. But the outbreak of the World War prevented either agreement from being executed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Weitz, 2015, p. 462.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 463.

<sup>3</sup> E. Weitz, 2008, 1327–1328, n. 40, lists some of the recent literature on Wilson and national self-determination.

<sup>4</sup> E. Weitz, 2015, 463 n. 6; 464–468.

<sup>5</sup> M. Marelja, O. Pilipovic’, M. Ahtik, 2022, p. 35, 40–41.

<sup>6</sup> L.V. Smith, 2022, p. 10–20.

<sup>7</sup> E. Weitz, 2008, 1334.

<sup>8</sup> J. von Puttkamer, 2014, p. 11; P. Ther, 2014a, p. 259.

<sup>9</sup> Ther, 2014a, p. 259. P

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *ibidem*, p. 261. See also, M. Biondich, 2014, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> C. Macartney, 1968, p. 433–435.

In 1915 the French Swiss anthropologist and ethnologist Georges Montandon published a brochure in Lausanne, entitled *Frontières nationales: Détermination objective de la condition primordial nécessaire à l'obtention d'une paix durable*. Regarding nationality as the leading principle in international affairs, he argued that to achieve a lasting peace it was necessary to redesign the European system of states by “establishing (if possible) a natural border through the *massive transplantation* of non-members of the nation, or of such who declared themselves to be, to areas beyond the border, further through the prohibition of property rights or even of the right to reside in the border provinces.”<sup>12</sup> He provided concrete examples of new borders for European states to achieve national homogeneity. Whether aware of his proposal or not, statesmen later proceeded as he suggested, attempting to align the state’s borders and its nation’s borders.

Before the first World War ended, the watchword “national self-determination” gained wide prominence as a means of achieving national homogeneity, based on the assumption that people of a kind would choose to live together in the same state.<sup>13</sup> In 1916 the Bolshevik leader Vladimir I. Lenin sought the support of oppressed peoples with his call for “self-determination.”<sup>14</sup> On 5 January 1918 British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, after sharply criticizing Austria for not granting autonomy to its subject nationalities, declared, “government with the consent of the governed must be the basis of any territorial settlement in this war.” Accordingly, he advocated the creation of an independent Poland “comprising all those genuinely Polish elements who wish to form it.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in the Fourteen Points outlined to the US Congress on 8 January 1918, President Wilson called for the “peoples of Austria-Hungary” to have “the freest opportunity of autonomous development” and for an “independent Poland,” which “should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations.”<sup>16</sup> Wilson believed that democracy could flourish only in a nation-state and that a well-organized world, in which every “civilized” race had its own state, would be a world at peace.<sup>17</sup> In the West many throughout society at that time equated race with nation, considered its characteristics inheritable and immutable, and thought that each nation should have its own state.<sup>18</sup> By 1918 national self-determination, encompassing the political ideas of democracy and self-government

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in H. Lemberg, 1998, p. 378, emphasis in original: “nach der Festlegung einer (wenn möglich) natürlichen Grenze durch die *massive Verpflanzung* von Nichtangehörigen der Nation oder von solchen, die dafür erklärt werden, in Gebiete jenseits der Grenze, ferner durch das Verbot des Eigentumsrechts oder selbst des Aufenthaltsrechtes für Ausländer in den Grenzprovinzen.”

<sup>13</sup> E. Weitz, 2008, p. 1334.

<sup>14</sup> V. Lenin, 1916, p. 143–156.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in J. Connelly, 2020, p. 330.

<sup>16</sup> W. Wilson, 1918.

<sup>17</sup> E. Weitz, 2003, p. 51; N. Phelps, 2020, p. 12; E. Weitz, 2008, p. 1326; L. Wolff, 2020, p. 3. For a contrary view, see T. Throntveit, 2011, p. 447.

<sup>18</sup> E. Weitz, 2003, p. 50; Weitz, 2008, p. 1320; P. Ther, 2014b, p. 20–21; H. Temperley, 1921, p. 316–317. According to V. Prott, 2014, p. 745–746, the American experts gave “race” an “ethnological meaning.”

adapted to the nationalist claims emanating from Central and Eastern Europe, formed the basis for the peace negotiations following the war.<sup>19</sup>

Before the Paris Peace Conference began on 18 January 1919, the leaders of prospective new and expanded states acted on their own, resorting to force to establish their borders. The Great Powers (France, Great Britain, and the United States) expressed their concern about the inclusion of large Ukrainian, Jewish, and German minorities in a recreated Poland.<sup>20</sup> Simultaneously, the Great Powers pursued geopolitical objectives. The American delegation in particular believed that homogeneity contributed to the stability of nation-states necessary for the spread of capitalist economies globally.<sup>21</sup> Out of a desire to build a strong network of alliances, France advocated an expanded Poland as a *barrière de l'est* isolating Germany.<sup>22</sup> Beyond self-determination and strategic interests, more general criteria affected the process of decision-making. But the delegations of all three Great Powers and their expert advisors focused mainly on “national security, stability, and the establishment of lasting peace in Europe.”<sup>23</sup>

The application of national self-determination led directly to the concept of a national minority.<sup>24</sup> Because of the resulting lack of homogeneity of the states of the “less civilized” peoples of Eastern Europe, the Great Powers saw the need for the protection of minorities to maintain peace. Protecting the rights of minorities had the additional aim of fostering their loyalty to the states in which they resided, thereby ensuring internal stability and facilitating their assimilation into the titular nation. Sir Austin Chamberlain, a member of Lloyd George’s coalition government stated, “The object of the Minorities Treaties [...] was [...] to secure for the minorities that measure of protection and justice which would gradually prepare them to be merged in the national community to which they belonged,” though he later denied that “merged” meant the abolition of cultural characteristics.<sup>25</sup> Lloyd George specifically argued that “every effort ought to be made to merge the Jews of Poland in the Polish nationality, just as the Jews in Great Britain or France became merged in British or French nationality.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, for some, the minorities treaties had national homogeneity as an ultimate goal. At the same time, the treaties legitimized Great Power intervention in the states of Eastern Europe.<sup>27</sup>

On Wilson’s insistence, the Great Powers devoted their initial attention to the creation of the League of Nations. Wilson sought a universal solution by introducing an article defending minority rights at a meeting of the League of Nations Commission. Ultimately, the opposition of other members led to the

<sup>19</sup> V. Protz, 2014, p. 728, 743.

<sup>20</sup> C. Fink, 2004, p. 137–140.

<sup>21</sup> V. Protz, 2014, p. 745.

<sup>22</sup> I. Davion, 2021, p. 324–325. On additional French efforts to build a network of alliances, see F. Dessberg, 2020, p. 59–88.

<sup>23</sup> V. Protz, 2014, p. 744.

<sup>24</sup> L. Wolff, 2020, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> C. Macartney, 1968, p. 275–277, the quote is on p. 277.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in L. Wolff, 2020, p. 206.

<sup>27</sup> L. Robson, 2019.

omission of such an article, which meant that any protection afforded minorities would be formulated in connection with each particular territorial arrangement. However, the victorious allies assigned the League the task of overseeing the protection of minority rights in Eastern Europe.<sup>28</sup>

The East European states regarded the requirement to sign agreements to protect their minorities as discriminatory and a violation of their sovereignty: no Western European state faced the same requirement, not even Germany in relation to the Lusatian Sorbs.<sup>29</sup> To pressure Poland and Czechoslovakia to sign the agreements, both Wilson and Lloyd George linked this obligation to the territorial arrangements in the treaty with Germany.<sup>30</sup> Other East European states, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, Greece, Romania, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria, came under the same pressure. In defense of the requirement, a cover letter sent to Polish Prime Minister, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, with the minority treaty that Article 93 of the Treaty of Versailles required Poland to sign claimed that it “does not constitute any fresh departure,” citing the examples of the Great Powers imposing requirements on states in the Balkans in return for recognition of their sovereignty.<sup>31</sup>

## The Treaties of the Paris Peace Conference

During the conference, the Allied and Associated Powers signed treaties with each of the five defeated belligerent states: Germany at Versailles on 28 June 1919, Austria at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 10 September 1919, Bulgaria at Neuilly-sur-Seine on 27 November 1919, Hungary at Trianon on 4 June 1920, and Turkey at Sèvres on 10 August 1920.

Except for the treaty with Germany, the treaties required the defeated states “to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants [...] without distinction of birth, nationality, race or religion.”<sup>32</sup> “Nationality” meant the equivalent of “citizenship,” and residents of a particular country were termed “nationals” of that country. For example, Article 91 of the Treaty of Versailles states, “German nationals habitually resident in territories recognised as forming part of Poland will acquire Polish nationality *ipso facto* and will lose their German nationality.”<sup>33</sup> Each of the treaties incorporated similar provisions

<sup>28</sup> C. Fink, 2004, p. 152, 158, 160, 267.

<sup>29</sup> Eadem, p. 269

<sup>30</sup> Eadem, p. 212–215; L Wolff, 2020, p. 193, 203.

<sup>31</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers* (hereafter cited as FRUS), 1943, *Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 6, p. 629–634; the quote is on p. 630.

<sup>32</sup> *Treaty of Peace between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Austria (signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1919, 10 September)*, Art. 63, p. 18; *Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria, and Protocol and Declaration signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919*, Art. 50; *Treaty of Peace Between The Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary And Protocol and Declaration, Signed at Trianon June 4, 1920*, Art. 55; *The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920*, Art. 141.

<sup>33</sup> *Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)*, 1919, Art. 91, p. 94. M. Marelja, O. Pilipovic', M. Ahtik, 2022, p. 38, also see “nationality” as meaning “citizenship.”

providing for individuals in territory transferred to another state to acquire “the nationality of the State exercising sovereignty over such territory.”<sup>34</sup> This acquisition of a new “nationality” was not in all cases automatic and could come with restrictions. For example, Austrian “nationals” residing in territory transferred to Italy did not “ipso facto” acquire Italian nationality.<sup>35</sup> The principle of state sovereignty prevailed over nationality, particularly in relation to the Principal Allied Powers.

Those whose “nationality” changed because of border shifts could self-determine their “nationality” by opting within a specified period of time, which varied from two years to six months, for their former “nationality” or for one in keeping with the ideal of national homogeneity. Accordingly, citizens of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy residing in territory “differing in race and language from the majority of the population of such territory” were entitled to opt for a state “if the majority of the population of the state selected is of the same race and language as the person exercising the right to opt.”<sup>36</sup> Persons of Turkish nationality residing in territory detached from Turkey (or Egypt) where they differed “in race from the majority of the population” were entitled to opt for a state (any state in the case of Egypt) “if the majority of the population [...] is of the same race as the person exercising the right to opt.”<sup>37</sup> The Treaty of Versailles specifically stated that “Czecho-Slovaks” and “Poles” who were “German nationals [...] habitually resident in Germany will have a similar right to opt for” their respective nationalities.<sup>38</sup> The Treaty of Neuilly gave Serb-Croat-Slovenes who were “Bulgarian nationals” the same right.<sup>39</sup>

However, those who invoked this option had to “transfer their place of residence” within twelve months to the state for which they opted.<sup>40</sup> Some treaties before the World War that confirmed a transfer of territory contained similar provisions.<sup>41</sup> The Treaty of Sèvres refers to “persons desiring to avail themselves of the right to opt” as “voluntary emigration,” but none of the other treaties so characterized it.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, all of the treaties of the Paris Peace Conference mandated forced migration (euphemized as “transfer”) in the name

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, *Treaty of Peace between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Austria (signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1919, 10 September)*, Art. 70, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, Art. 71.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, Art. 80, p. 21; *Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary And Protocol and Declaration, Signed at Trianon June 4, 1920*, Art. 64.

<sup>37</sup> *The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920*, Art. 105, 125, 126.

<sup>38</sup> *Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)*, 1919, p. 88, Art. 85, p. 88; Art. 91, p. 94.

<sup>39</sup> *Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria, and Protocol and Declaration signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919*, Art. 40.

<sup>40</sup> Exceptionally, *Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)*, 1919, Art. 91, p. 94, stated that German nationals in Poland and Poles in Germany may transfer their residency to the state for which they opted.

<sup>41</sup> C. Macartney, 1968, p. 431.

<sup>42</sup> *The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920*, Art. 127.

of national homogeneity.<sup>43</sup> So did The Minorities Treaties signed by Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, Romania, and Greece.<sup>44</sup> Although the “transfer” hinged on a free choice of nationality, it foreshadowed more extensive forced migration.

### The Treaties of Neuilly-sur-Seine and Sèvres and “Voluntary” Emigration

The Treaty of Neuilly took a step further towards forced migration.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the earlier treaties, it required a commitment to reduce the minority population. In Article 56 Bulgaria undertook “to recognise such provisions as the Principal Allied and Associated Powers may consider opportune with respect to the reciprocal and voluntary emigration of persons belonging to racial minorities.”<sup>46</sup> On the same day as the signing of the Treaty, Bulgaria and Greece signed a Convention providing for “the right of their subjects belonging to the racial, religious or linguistic minorities to emigrate freely to their respective territories” by officially declaring their intention within two years of the creation of a mixed commission for the purpose “of supervising and facilitating the voluntary emigration.” It also allowed for “the adhesion of states with a common frontier with one of the signatory states” within one year.<sup>47</sup>

Greek Prime Minister, Eleutherios Venizelos, first proposed the exchange. He dreamt of moving hundreds of thousands of people to create homogeneous nation-states. He saw the Allied victory as “the occasion to fix the political frontiers of the European States in exact accordance, or at any rate in approximate accordance, with the limits of their ethnical domain. In this way the indispensable basis of the Society of Nations will be created.”<sup>48</sup> During a discussion of Greece’s territorial demands with representatives of the Principal Allied Powers on 3 February 1919, he justified claims to Northern Epirus on the basis that Greeks constituted a majority of the population, while admitting that many did not speak Greek, only Albanian. But he argued, “After the experience gained in this war, neither race, nor language, nor skull, could be taken by itself

<sup>43</sup> E. Weitz, 2008, p. 1313, sees forced deportations and minority protection as concurrent without specifying the obligation to “transfer” as part of the dyad.

<sup>44</sup> *Minorities Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers (The British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States) and Poland, signed at Versailles (28 June 1919)*, Art. 3, p. 4; *Treaty between the Principal and Allied Associated Powers and Czechoslovakia, signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, September 10, 1919*, Art. 3; *Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers (The British Empire, France, Italy, Japan and the United States) and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919, 10 September)*, Art. 3, p. 2; *Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Roumania, signed at Paris, December 9, 1919*, Art. 3, p. 4; *Treaty concerning the Protection of Minorities in Greece, signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920*, Art. 3, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> P. Ther, 2014b, p. 35, considers the Treaty of Neuilly to be the blueprint for the Treaty of Lausanne.

<sup>46</sup> *Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria, and Protocol and Declaration signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919*, Art. 56.

<sup>47</sup> *Convention between Greece and Bulgaria respecting Reciprocal Emigration, signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1919*, Art. 1, 4, 16.

<sup>48</sup> E. Venizelos, 1919, p. 1.

as determining nationality: national conscience alone must decide” and asserted that the Christians of Albania had always considered themselves Greek, seeing religion as determining nationality.<sup>49</sup>

Greece saw the exchange as an opportunity to promote national homogeneity by settling Greeks in the ethnically mixed territory it acquired as a result of the war and therefore pushed for immediate enforcement of the convention. But many of the eligible proved reluctant to become refugees and showed a preference to remain in their places of birth, even making concessions regarding their national identity to integrate into the host society. Multiple factors influenced those who did relocate, illustrating the variable significance of national identity.<sup>50</sup> The commission supervising the emigration struggled to maintain its voluntary character as both governments pressured the unwilling. Some out of fear simply fled and could more properly be regarded as refugees than as voluntary emigrants.<sup>51</sup> In the face of resistance, reciprocity failed: by 1931 when the agreement formally ended, it affected nearly 102,000 Bulgarians but only 53,000 Greeks.<sup>52</sup>

On the model of the Treaty of Neuilly, Article 143 of the Treaty of Sèvres committed Turkey “to recognise such provisions as the Allied Powers may consider opportune with respect to the reciprocal and voluntary emigration of persons belonging to racial minorities.” At the same time, it obligated Greece and Turkey within six months to “enter into a special arrangement of reciprocal and voluntary emigration of the populations of Turkish and Greek race in the territories transferred to Greece and remaining Turkish respectively.”<sup>53</sup> In a declaration signed on 2 October 1921, Albania, which achieved independence in 1912 but descended into chaos until after the World War, similarly agreed “to the reciprocal and voluntary emigration of persons belonging to ethnical minorities” as recommended by the Council of the League of Nations.<sup>54</sup>

## Treaty of Lausanne

Turkey never ratified the Treaty of Sèvres, nor did Greece and Turkey reach agreement on a convention concerning “reciprocal and voluntary emigration.” In 1919 Greece, with British support, had landed troops in Smyrna, justified by the presence of a large Greek minority in Asia Minor.<sup>55</sup> In 1921 the Greek army advanced into inner Anatolia, again with British approval, cutting a path of destruction. Ultimately, a Turkish force mobilized by the Turkish nationalist,

<sup>49</sup> FRUS, 1943, *Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 3, p. 860.

<sup>50</sup> T. Dragostinova, 2009, p. 187.

<sup>51</sup> C. Macartney, 1968, p. 439–441.

<sup>52</sup> P. Ther, 2014a, p. 276.

<sup>53</sup> *The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920.*

<sup>54</sup> *Declaration Concerning the Protection of Minorities in Albania (Geneva, October 2, 1921)*, Art. 3, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> P. Ther, 2014b, p. 35–36.



Kemal Pasha, with the goal of creating a homogeneous Turkish nation-state, defeated the Greek army in August 1921. Nearly all Christians fled with the retreating Greek army, and hundreds of thousands of refugees found themselves in Smyrna when the Turkish army entered in September 1921. The destruction that followed and the Greek defeat came to be known as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, ending the Greek dream of a revival of a Mediterranean Empire.<sup>56</sup>

To address the failure of the Treaty of Sèvres, the Allies convened a conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, in November 1922. The famed Norwegian explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees, apparently was the first to propose a compulsory exchange of population at the conference, seeing a benefit in Muslims from Greece cultivating lands in Turkey abandoned by Greeks and freeing up land in Greece for the refugees from Turkey, and Venizelos agreed.<sup>57</sup> Nansen seems to have been an advocate of national homogeneity. In 1905 he supported the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden, stating "Any union in which the one people is restrained in exercising its freedom is and will remain a danger."<sup>58</sup> British Foreign Secretary, George Curzon, who chaired the conference, expressed optimism about the feasibility of the benefits of the exchange as suggested by Nansen. Curzon, not Greece or Turkey, introduced the euphemistic term "exchange of populations" at the crucial meeting of the Territorial and Military Commission of the conference and insisted that it be compulsory with no exceptions since a voluntary exchange would not suffice. Nevertheless, the minutes of the next meeting of the Commission two weeks later, recorded Curzon saying that "For his own part, he deeply regretted that the solution now being worked out should be the compulsory exchange of populations – a thoroughly bad and vicious solution, for which the world will pay a heavy penalty for a hundred years to come."<sup>59</sup> But later in the negotiations Curzon cited the standard justification for this action, that "the greater homogeneity of the population [will result in] the disappearance of the causes of ancient and deep-rooted conflicts."<sup>60</sup>

The resulting convention signed on 30 January 1923 stated in Article 1: "As from the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem [sic] religion established in Greek territory." Article 3 legitimized the earlier expulsion and flight *ex post facto*: "Those Greeks and Moslems who have already, and since the 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1912, left the territories the Greek and Turkish inhabitants of which are to be respectively exchanged, shall be considered as included in the exchange provided for in Article 1."<sup>61</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne between Turkey and the allies (The

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75–76; R. Hirschon, 2003, p. 14.

<sup>57</sup> C. Macartney, 1968, p. 444. My thanks to Tomasz Knothe for bringing the role of Nansen to my attention.

<sup>58</sup> "Fridtjof Nansen," *Britannica Academic*.

<sup>59</sup> P. Ther, 2014b, p. 35–36, 43, 77; the quote is on p. 77.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in E. Weitz, 2008, p. 1337.

<sup>61</sup> *Convention concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations*, 1921, Art. 1, 3.

British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State) signed on 24 July 1923 in Article 142 recognized the convention “between Greece and Turkey, relating to the exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations [as having] the same force and effect as if it formed part of the present Treaty.”<sup>62</sup> It thereby gave international sanction to and legitimized the forced migration of 1,221,000 Christians from Anatolia to Greece and 355,000 Muslims from Greece to Turkey. Significantly, the main wave of deportation and flight from their homelands occurred during the hostilities in 1922, before the signing of the convention, which affected about 700,000 after the Treaty of Lausanne was concluded. The Muslims of Greece strongly protested as did even some Greeks, hoping to return to Turkey once peace was restored after they fled Anatolia for Greece, suggesting that very few left their homelands voluntarily.<sup>63</sup>

Superficially, the exchange of population did increase the national homogeneity of Greece and Turkey. For example, the portion of Greeks in Greek Macedonia rose from 42.6 percent in 1912 to 88.8 percent in 1926.<sup>64</sup> But the integration of the refugees with nationals in Greece and Turkey tested the “homogeneity” of both societies for generations. As noted above in reference to Albanians, Venizelos regarded Christians as Greeks, and the Ottoman Empire traditionally classified minorities into religious communities, which had administrative self-government under the *millet* system. The reliance on religion as the criterion in the agreements reflected this but resulted in the misidentification of some affected by the “exchange”: Anatolian Christians who did not speak Greek, Albanian and Bulgarian-speaking Pomak Muslims in Greece. They were not afforded any option. The terms of the treaty and state authorities determined their “nationality.”<sup>65</sup> The problems of accommodating the refugees soon led to hostility between them and the local population, especially in Greece, where they increased the population by 25 percent. The financial cost contributed to Greece’s bankruptcy and continued economic crises, which had long-term political consequences.<sup>66</sup>

## After the Treaty of Lausanne

The Allied Powers had made the League of Nations the guarantor of the minorities treaties, but its officials, bound by the principle of state sovereignty, favored the interests of states over those of their minorities.<sup>67</sup> Once Germany became a permanent member of the League Council in 1926, it used the Minority Protection System to back the petitions of Poland’s German minority, whose

<sup>62</sup> *Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923*, Art. 142.

<sup>63</sup> C. Macartney, 1968, p. 444; Ther, 2014a, p. 281; E. Weitz, 2008, p. 1334; R. Hirschon, 2003, p. 14–15.

<sup>64</sup> H. Lemberg, 1998, p. 380.

<sup>65</sup> P. Ther, 2014b, p. 36.

<sup>66</sup> R. Hirschon, 2003, p. 14–20.

<sup>67</sup> C. Fink, 2004, p. 282.

petitions to the League outnumbered those of any other minority. According to Christian Raitz von Frenztz, this ultimately destroyed the system and “paved the way for forcible population transfers on an unprecedented scale.”<sup>68</sup>

The “compulsory exchange” mandated by the Treaty of Lausanne forced the migration of over one and half million people from their homes. By focusing on international politics, statesmen and others came to regard the Treaty as a model for the peaceful resolution of conflicts between states over minorities despite its negative consequences for the migrants. The treaty of friendship signed by Greece and Turkey in 1930 seemed to provide proof of the success of the Treaty of Lausanne. A lack of sensitivity to, or even an interest in, the suffering and losses of people forced from their homes made “population exchanges” more palatable. As one historian observed concerning a later British commission that considered the transfer of German population, it “toyed with the fates of millions [...] rarely troubled by moral qualms.”<sup>69</sup>

In 1931 Alfons Krysiński, a Polish specialist in population movements, saw the Greek-Turkish friendship treaty as a consequence of the national homogeneity of the two states: “the wave of Greek emigration from the reborn Turkish republic, a wave, which together with the outflow to Anatolia and eastern Thrace of Muslims from Greece, assured both nations, feuding for centuries, congruence of the political borders with the ethnographic and, hence, the basis for a lasting agreement.”<sup>70</sup> He attributed the forced migration of Muslims from Greece in the Treaty of Lausanne to Turkish pressure on Greece and regarded the results for Turkey as “extremely significant. [...] [F]rom a multilingual, multinational state, it became a state of far advanced national consolidation. [...] The fruit of this policy was finally the possibility of a lasting agreement between Turkey and its neighbors, an example of which is the conclusion of a friendship pact with Greece, which, given a continuation of the pre-war national chaos in Thrace and Western Anatolia, would have been something unimaginable.”<sup>71</sup>

As minority-majority conflicts intensified in most European countries, especially following the world economic crisis, the minorities treaties proved insufficient to maintain peace. Forced migration could remove a troublesome minority unlikely to assimilate. The escalation of conflict in the 1930s also prompted the questioning of national borders, particularly those of the states defeated in World War I. The British were the leading enthusiasts of promoting “homogeneity” in the belief that assigning each nation or nationality its own

<sup>68</sup> C. Raitz von Frenztz, 1999, p. 245.

<sup>69</sup> P. Ther, 2014a, p. 282.

<sup>70</sup> A. Krysiński, 1931, p. 19: “falę emigracji greckiej z odradzającej się republiki tureckiej, falę, która wespół z odpływem do Anatolji i wschodniej Tracji muzułmanów z Grecji, zapewniła obu od wieków zwaśnionym narodom zgodność granicy politycznej z etnograficzną i, co za tem idzie, podstawę trwałego porozumienia.”

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem, 1931, p. 60. “niezmiernie doniosłe. [...] z wielojęzycznego państwa narodowościowego stała się ona państwem o daleko posuniętej konsolidacji narodowej. [...] Owocem tej polityki stała się wreszcie możliwość trwałego porozumienia się Turcji z sąsiadami, którego przykładem jest choćby zawarcie paktu przyjaźni z Grecją, co przy trwaniu przedwojennego chaosu narodowościowego w Tracji i Anatolji Zachodniej byłoby rzeczą nie do pomyślenia.”

specific territory would resolve conflicts between them. For example, a government commission proposed an “exchange of populations” to resolve Jewish-Arab violence in Palestine, but in 1937 Arab resistance forced it to drop the proposal.<sup>72</sup>

In Europe in the late 1930s Nazi Germany’s expansive ambition triggered further attempts to achieve “national homogeneity.” With this goal in mind, in the spring of 1938, leading French and British politicians proposed to Germany and Czechoslovakia the elimination of German-speaking islands in Bohemia through migration and a revision of the border in Germany’s favor.<sup>73</sup> On 15 September 1938, Czechoslovak President, Edvard Beneš, similarly proposed a territorial concession and the compulsory transfer of 1.5 to 2 million Sudeten Germans.<sup>74</sup>

These proposals did not satisfy Adolf Hitler. The Munich Pact signed on 29 September 1938 reflected the commitment of the signatories, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany, to the ideal of “national homogeneity” by forcing Czechoslovakia to cede the areas based on a “strictly ethnographical determination” with “a right of option into and out of the transferred territories [...] to be exercised within six months,” half the time allowed for resettlement under the Paris Peace Treaties.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the signatories called on Czechoslovakia and Hungary to revise their border along ethnic lines within three months.<sup>76</sup>

Hitler’s goal of building a homogeneous German state went beyond “national homogeneity” to biological “racial” purity through the resettlement of the at least 10 million *Volksdeutsche* residing in eastern Europe, a program called *Heim ins Reich*, to replace undesirable Jews, Slavs, and others. In a speech on 6 October 1939, Hitler echoed the concerns of European statesmen: “Because the whole of East and Southeast Europe is partly filled with untenable fragments of the German nation. It is precisely in them that there is a cause of continued inter-state disturbances. In the age of the nationality principle and the idea of race, it is utopian to believe that one can assimilate these members of a high-quality people without further ado. It is therefore one of the tasks of a far-sighted order of European life to resettle here in order to eliminate at least part of the source of European conflict.”<sup>77</sup>

Hitler’s violent and murderous means of achieving homogeneity did not discredit the goal. In April 1940 Polish Foreign Minister, August Zaleski, commented to the National Council of the Government-in-Exile, “there are a lot

<sup>72</sup> P. Ther, 2014b, p. 11, 37, 88, 248.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, p. 87.

<sup>74</sup> R. Douglas, 2012, p. 18.

<sup>75</sup> *Munich Pact September 29, 1938*, Art. 6, 7.

<sup>76</sup> *Munich Pact Declaration*, 1938.

<sup>77</sup> *Reichstagsprotokolle*, 1939/42, 1, 6 October 1939, p. 56: “Denn der ganze Osten und Südosten Europas ist zum Teil mit nichthaltbaren Splittern des deutschen Volkstums gefüllt. Gerade in ihnen liegt ein Grund eine Ursache fortgesetzter zwischenstaatlicher Störungen. Im Zeitalter des Nationalitätenprinzips und des Rassegedankens ist es utopisch, zu glauben, daß man diese Angehörigen eines hochwertigen Volkes ohne weiteres assimilieren könne. Es gehört daher zu den Aufgaben einer weitschauenden Ordnung des europäischen Lebens, hier Umsiedlungen vorzunehmen, um auf diese Weise wenigstens einen Teil der europäischen Konfliktstoffe zu beseitigen.”

of people who continue to maintain that the political organization of Europe should be based on ethnographic premises,” which he saw as a threat to Poland’s claim to its pre-war eastern border.<sup>78</sup>

In 1940 a group of experts commissioned by the British government to study the desirability of a large-scale exchange or transfer of people concluded that it could be an appropriate way of dealing with the German minority of Poland and Czechoslovakia and restructuring the population of Europe after the war. The chairman of the commission, the historian, Arnold Toynbee, explicitly endorsed the Treaty of Lausanne and its exchange of population.<sup>79</sup>

The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, agreed. On 12 December 1940 he told his private secretary, “Exchanges of population would have to take place on the lines of that so successfully achieved by Greece and Turkey after the First World War.”<sup>80</sup> Minority protection had not maintained peace. British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, in a conversation with his private secretary in September 1941 concluded that “minority treaties had been a curse--causing minorities to be often impossibly obstructive and obliging us to intervene perpetually in internal affairs. We thought that next time there should be no minorities. They must opt between exchange and absorption, having no special privileges.”<sup>81</sup>

On 10 January 1941 Germany and the Soviet Union, apparently at the request of the latter, agreed to an exchange of population along the lines of the Treaty of Lausanne: Germans from the Baltic States annexed by the Soviets and Lithuanians, Russians, and White Russians from Germany. The eligible individuals were to declare their desire to resettle within two and half months of the agreements, though one might doubt the voluntary nature of the exchange. In the view of the US Chargé in Germany, the Soviet government’s concern was very much in line with that of Western diplomats: the German minority might be manipulated at some later date by Berlin in the same manner as it was in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the partitioning of Poland.<sup>82</sup>

Following Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, by which it became an ally against Germany, Eden informed the Polish Prime Minister, Władysław Sikorski, on 4 July 1941, “Soviet policy was to favour the establishment of an independent national Polish State. The boundaries of this State would correspond with ethnographical Poland.”<sup>83</sup> After a meeting of Sikorski with Churchill and Eden concerning the deportation of Germans out of East Prussia, Eden’s private secretary wrote in his diary, “Anyway we have Hitler’s authority for mass deportation and it may be a solution.”<sup>84</sup> When Eden met with

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in W. Kowalski, 1970, p. 165: “jest dużo ludzi, którzy twierdzą w dalszym ciągu, że urządzenie polityczne Europy powinno opierać się na przesłankach etnograficznych.”

<sup>79</sup> P. Ther, 2014b, p. 37, 102.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in English in D. Brandes, 2001, p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in English in D. Brandes, 2001, p. 159.

<sup>82</sup> FRUS, 1941, 1, *General, The Soviet Union*, 1958, p. 126, n. 24.

<sup>83</sup> General Sikorski Historical Institute, 1961, p. 116, 141–142.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in English in D. Brandes, 2001, p. 159.

the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, in Moscow in December 1941, Stalin proposed, in addition to retention of the 1941 Polish-Soviet border, Poland's acquisition of "all the lands up to the Oder [River]" and the transfer of the region's Germans to Germany.<sup>85</sup> Seemingly in response to Stalin's proposals, in January 1942 the British government requested a major government commission to investigate the "[l]essons to be learnt from past exchanges of populations, particularly the Greco-Turkish exchange and the forced removal of populations by the Germans in the Baltic States and in territory now occupied by Germany."<sup>86</sup> In July 1942 the British War Cabinet agreed in principle to the transfer of the German population from Poland and Czechoslovakia and so notified their governments.<sup>87</sup>

In December 1942 the Polish government informed the Foreign Office of its territorial demands, including East Prussia, conceding the necessity of the forced resettlement of some of the Germans.<sup>88</sup> When Eden met with President, Franklin Roosevelt, in Washington in March 1943, the president thought that "the only way to maintain peace [was] to move the Prussians out of East Prussia the same way the Greeks were moved out of Turkey after the war."<sup>89</sup>

At the conference of the Big Three in Tehran on 1 December 1943 during a discussion concerning the Polish territory east of the 1939 German-Soviet border, Stalin disavowed any wish to retain areas inhabited mainly by Poles. President Roosevelt then, perhaps naively, asked if a voluntary transfer of peoples from the mixed areas was possible, and Stalin replied that it was entirely possible.<sup>90</sup>

Stalin favored the resettlement of national minorities. In December 1943 he advised Beneš, who led the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile, to get rid of all his Germans.<sup>91</sup> Following his meeting with Stalin, Beneš informed US Ambassador W. Averell Harriman that the Soviet government approved of the transfer of the German population from the Sudetenland and an exchange with Hungary of the Slovak and Hungarian populations.<sup>92</sup>

"[T]he West's vision of postwar Europe was based on a framework of homogenized nation-states."<sup>93</sup> In preparation for the Anglo-American conference in Quebec in August 1944, the Committee on Post-War Programs issued a memorandum that regarded the presence of substantial German minorities in various states in Eastern Europe as a problem for the establishment of "equitable" borders, presumably with the ideal of national homogeneity in mind. The Committee saw their transfer to Germany as contributing to the "tranquility" of the states in question, citing Hitler himself as having set an example

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in A. Noskova, 2000, p. 98.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in P. Ther, 2014b, p. 102; H. Lemberg, 1998, p. 388.

<sup>87</sup> D. Brandes, 2001, p. 402.

<sup>88</sup> D. Brandes, 1988, p. 406; D. Brandes, 2001, p. 215–217.

<sup>89</sup> FRUS, 1943, 3, *The British Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, the Far East*, 1963, p. 15.

<sup>90</sup> FRUS, *The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, 1961, p. 600.

<sup>91</sup> P. Ther, 2001, p. 53; J. Rychlík, T. Marzik, M. Bielik, ed., 1995, p. 622. R. Douglas, 2012, p. 16–38, regards Beneš as the prime mover of the expulsion.

<sup>92</sup> FRUS, 1943, 3, *The British Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, the Far East*, 1963, p. 732.

<sup>93</sup> Ther, 2014b, p. 103

by “numerous forced migrations.” But the Committee recommended against a mass transfer to Germany immediately at the end of the war on purely practical grounds: the German economy could not accommodate the enormous size of the transfer.<sup>94</sup>

In a speech before the House of Commons on 15 December 1944, Churchill confirmed the belief that national homogeneity enhanced international peace when, in defending an “exchange” of minorities, he stated: “There will be no mixture of populations to cause endless trouble. [...] A clean sweep will be made.”<sup>95</sup> But the initiative for the transfer of German minorities came not from American and British leaders but from the states that Germany had occupied: Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

Following Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Polish communists, who would dominate the Provisional Government of Poland, embraced Polish nationalism. According to Krystyna Kersten, “The word nation, rarely present in the documents and publications of the [Communist Party of Poland], became the word most often used and supplanted all others with social and class content.”<sup>96</sup> In 1943 a leading member of the Party stated unequivocally, “The rebuilt Polish state will be a nation-state.”<sup>97</sup> Nationalist grounds undergirded the demands for German territory in the west and north: formerly Polish areas that included a Polish minority.<sup>98</sup>

The issue of Poland’s borders was among the most contentious at the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three, 17 July-2 August 1945. Prior to the conference, the US and the British protested the Soviet handover of German territory to the Polish government. The US sought to limit the “compensation” for Poland’s loss of territory in the East to predominantly Polish areas for the sake of peace and tranquility in Europe, supposedly making Poland more economically viable and reducing the transfer of population.<sup>99</sup>

At the fifth plenary meeting of Stalin, Churchill, and President Harry Truman on 21 July 1945, Churchill also spoke out against the Polish demands on German territory, inaccurately claiming that they exceeded Polish losses in the East. He noted that millions would be moved west across the Curzon Line and millions of others would be moved elsewhere and that these vast transfers of population caused a great shock for his country. In his account of the meeting at Tehran in 1943, he had proposed such transfers to Stalin, “Poland might move westward, like soldiers taking two steps ‘left close.’”<sup>100</sup> He now argued that Germans who fled Poland should be encouraged to return. With insufficient food supply, he

<sup>94</sup> FRUS, *Conference at Quebec, 1944*, 1972, p. 57.

<sup>95</sup> W. Churchill, 1944, cols. 1483, 1484.

<sup>96</sup> K. Kersten, 1989, p. 473: “Słowo naród, rzadko obecne w dokumentach i publicystyce KPP, stało się słowem najczęściej używanym, wyparło wszelkie inne o treściach społecznych, klasowych.”

<sup>97</sup> K. Kersten, 1996, p. 139.

<sup>98</sup> See J. Kulczycki, 2016, p. 60–69.

<sup>99</sup> FRUS, 1960, *The Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, 1, doc. 510, Briefing Book Paper, 29 June 1945, p. 743–746.

<sup>100</sup> W. Churchill, 1951, p. 361–362.

feared conditions similar to those in the German concentration camps, but on a far wider scale.<sup>101</sup>

Pragmatic considerations would remain dominant in the minds of the US and British leaders in connection with the transfer of German minorities after the war. The next day Churchill returned to this subject claiming he had grave moral scruples concerning great movements and transfers of populations. But his main concern was the burden the migrants would place on the British zone of occupation in Germany, which he claimed had the smallest supply of food and the densest population. On 25 July 1945, he expressed concern about Germans coming to the British and American zones from Czechoslovakia. According to the notes, he commented, “they brought their mouths with them.”<sup>102</sup>

Ultimately, the Conference’s Final Document No. 383 signed by Stalin, Clement Attlee (who replaced Churchill), and Truman on 1 August 1945 stated, “The Three Governments [...] recognize that the transfer to Germany of German population, or elements thereof, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, will have to be undertaken. They agree that any transfers that take place should be effected in an orderly and humane manner.” The rest of the document focused on procedures for the “orderly” transfer but offered nothing on achieving a “humane” transfer.<sup>103</sup> The invocation of the word “humane” allowed the Big Three to deny responsibility for the necessarily inhumane act of driving millions of people from their homes against their will. As the inhumane conditions of the transport of refugees, particularly during the winter of 1946/47, came under increasing criticism among the American and British public, Britain sought to pause the resettlement at least during winter, but with limited success.<sup>104</sup>

## Conclusion

The treaties of Paris protected the rights of minorities, supposedly ensuring internal peaceful relations with the majority, enhancing the possibility of assimilation, and depriving a neighboring nation-state with a related titular majority of a justification for intervention. But along with the Treaty of Lausanne, they also legitimized forced migration as a means of achieving national homogeneity.

“The notion of sovereignty rooted in national homogeneity has remained a principle of international politics down to our present day.”<sup>105</sup> During the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, the Croat leader, Franjo Tudjman, like statesmen before him, cited the success of the Treaty of Lausanne in the “transfer” of the Greek population allowing for Turkey’s “development as a national state.”<sup>106</sup> As a result, forced migration on the model of the Treaty of Lausanne continues

<sup>101</sup> FRUS, 1960, *The Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, 2, p. 212–214.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 262–263, 383–386; the quote is on p. 383.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1495.

<sup>104</sup> H. Lemberg, 1998, p. 391.

<sup>105</sup> Weitz, 2008, p. 1341.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in N. Naimark, 2001, p. 171



to find advocates, even if they do not invoke it by name, despite the deprivation and deaths that the Treaty and its successors have caused, without promoting peace. The tragedy of 12 million Germans forced to leave their homelands in East Central Europe following World War II received considerable attention in the West. But 2.1 million Poles and more than 1.6 million Finns, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Italians, experienced a similar fate during and after the war. Only as refugees arrived in Germany in the summer and fall of 1945 and the Western media featured their misery did the Allies begin to question the borders decided at Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam, which necessitated forced migration to achieve national homogeneity, but the Western Powers did not retreat. In areas where Stalin had the primary influence, the “transfer” of populations stopped and even reversed in Romania and Yugoslavia after Stalin labeled them as multiethnic rather than homogeneous nation-states.<sup>107</sup>

Unlike the treaties following World War I and the role assigned to the League of Nations for the protection of the rights of minorities, the international community established no such procedures after World War II. At the same time, it reaffirmed the right of national self-determination.<sup>108</sup> It may seem that the international community abandoned its commitment to minority rights. But an ultimate goal of that commitment was to foster national homogeneity on the assumption that it promotes peace. The ideal of national homogeneity masquerading as national self-determination remains the main cause of forced migration.

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<sup>107</sup> Ther, 2014b, p. 197–99. Weitz, 2008, p. 1343, notes the forced deportations of around 13 million ethnic Germans, but not of other ethnic groups.

<sup>108</sup> Weitz, 2008, p. 1342–1343.

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