

# Central Europe as Ground Zero of the New International Order

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It falls to Grace Bell, the acquiescent, less adventurous sister in Shirley Hazzard's novel *The Transit of Venus*, to tell Ted Tice that the woman he loves will marry someone else. Hazzard describes Grace's emotional limitations with affectionate condescension: "Ted's suffering was not obscure to her—indeed, her imagination occasionally played out such matters in some Austro-Hungarian empire of the heart."<sup>1</sup>

Hazzard's Habsburg Empire lies at the outer reaches of self-knowledge and world knowledge: a vast but impenetrable continental interior where the heart—like Europe—keeps its secrets away from the light. Her image works out of a dense archive of associations trailing the Habsburg Empire across twentieth-century arts and letters. Like all archives, its resources can be mined for different ends. One familiar cut emphasizes a kind of baroque opacity—an intricate, otherworldly, obscure untimeliness that can slide easily into the "Austria-Hungary as anachronism" school of thought.<sup>2</sup> It can also surface as an aesthetics of the gently absurd—as the warm-hearted visual grammar, for example, propping up the towers of pastel cake boxes that teeter precariously in bicycle baskets in *Grand Budapest Hotel*, Wes Anderson's love letter to the region. As Hazzard's image suggests, though, another path through that archive circles around the question of interiority—around the disjuncture between the buried inside and the surface—whether we think of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, or Carl E. Schorske's *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna*. That shrouded core of self and world marks the limits of what we know, or can know: like an empire of secrets and of keys to (possibly) unlock them, it draws our attention to the methods we have for penetrating the divide between seen and unseen—for reaching the inchoate thing we might most need to understand.

1. Shirley Hazzard, *The Transit of Venus* (New York, 1990 [1980]), 195–96.

2. For the last few decades, Habsburg historians have emphasized the modernity and cohesion of the empire against an older view of its archaic, illiberal, dysfunctional, unviable non-modernity; see for example Gary B. Cohen, "Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867–1914," *Central European History* 40, no. 2 (June 2007): 241–78; and Pieter Judson's landmark *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016), that constructs a new "general narrative" from the most innovative new work, as well as John Deak's important *Forging a Multinational State: State Making in Imperial Austria from the Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford, 2015). The anachronism paradigm, however, dies hard. In his own new history of the empire, Steven Beller writes that "The Monarchy was, despite all the changes and transformations, liberalization, nationalization and modernization, an anachronism, or at least that was true of the monarch who ruled it almost until its end"; and again on the book's last page, "perhaps it was bound to disappear in any case, given its anachronistic structures and style." Steven Beller, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1815–1918* (Cambridge, Eng., 2018), 276, 286.

There was no grace or shade for shrouded things as the First World War ripped open Europe's map and the multinational empire at its heart. The collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy left its contents and internal organs—peoples, polities, institutions, environments, infrastructures—laid out under the harsh light of international peacemaking. David Lloyd George, prime peace-*macher*, was a little like Grace Bell—though he publicly performed his ignorance of continental interiors. “How many members ever heard of Teschen?,” he challenged the House of Commons, in a statement that became something of a synecdoche for the Paris Peace Conference as a whole. “I do not mind saying that I have never heard of it.”<sup>3</sup> We almost sense a pleasure in submitting to the region's intricate, baffling latticework of duchies within crowns within crowns—an endless fractal. But ignorance would no longer suffice. The world's unknown needed to become its known.

National claim-makers, statesmen, commissions, committees, and a dizzying array of “experts” descended on the carcass of imperial order, dissecting, sorting, and re-organizing its component parts. Crucially, they lacked readymade or settled methods appropriate to the task. There was no international handbook for unmaking imperial sovereignty. That project—of forging and then managing sovereignty after empire—turned central Europe into the ground zero of the new international order. It was not simply that the new order's keyword and ideological lodestar—“self-determination”—ostensibly “happened” in central and eastern Europe (unlike the rest of the world), with all that entailed for border drawing, population sorting, and forging new “national” communities.<sup>4</sup> More than that, post-imperial sovereignty in Europe spurred new problems, institutions, and pathways of international governance that would resonate globally across the twentieth century, from international public health and nutrition science to international policing and financial oversight, the world economy, and international law. In the moment

3. Quoted in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York, 2001), 239.

4. For a survey of old and new work on the collapse of the Habsburg Empire and/in WWI, see John Deak, “The Great War and the Forgotten Realm: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War,” *Journal of Modern History* 86, no. 2 (June 2014): 336–80, as well as John Deak and Jonathan E. Gumz, “How to Break a State: The Habsburg Monarchy's Internal War, 1914–1918,” *American Historical Review* 122, no. 4 (October 2017): 1105–36, and wide-ranging research by Tamara Scheer. Pieter Judson highlights the extent to which the successor states perpetuated rather than “solved” the empire's multi-nationality, and introduced formal ethnic hierarchies, making them more like “little empires” than bastions of “self-determination.” See Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*. On the (global) political currency of “self-determination” in this moment, and the idea that it was in the end only intended for Europe but not elsewhere, see most famously Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007). For an important new account of regional resistance to the new order and the afterlives of the empire, see Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Living in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2020, forthcoming). On border-drawing and experts, see recently Volker Prott, *The Politics of Self-Determination: Remaking Territories and National Identities in Europe, 1917–1923* (Oxford, 2016); and for the peace conference's handling of sovereignty, see Leonard V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Oxford, 2018).

of its negation, Austria-Hungary became a navel of world knowledge—a worlded and worlding knowledge.

Over the last two decades in particular, the “new international order” of 1919 has been rediscovered as the foundational moment of our contemporary global order: its innovations in international organization, national and social rights, colonial governance, financial coordination, and humanitarianism shaped the world we know today.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps no region experienced the many dimensions and implications of this new order more intimately than central and eastern Europe. The new international order and the post-imperial order in Europe were born together, and shaped each other reciprocally. The successor states and the League’s agencies were mutually implicated as each built their capacity, character, and power.<sup>6</sup> They were bound together in positive law (with the minorities treaties prescribing a particular form of sovereignty and subjecting the new states to the League’s oversight, for example) and pragmatic need (for loans, for example). At the same time, problems enflaming the region—from financial collapse and national minorities to starvation and endemic disease—emerged as domains where the League’s identity and authority was defined and tested.<sup>7</sup>

“In the case of Austria we have not only to put an end to the state of war, but to deal with one of the greatest events which have [sic] ever taken place in European history, the dissolution of one of the oldest, the greatest and most extensive States on the Continent of Europe,” emoted James Headlam-Morley, member of the British delegation to the peace conference, distinguishing the case from Germany. “What we have to do is not merely to end the war, but to arrange the liquidation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.”<sup>8</sup> In what follows, I survey some of the ways in which that international project of imperial liquidation turned central and eastern Europe into the flagship campus of world order—with many unexpected, often troubling, consequences. Where most trace the implications of imperial collapse for the region’s nationalization,

5. Key works include: Susan Pedersen, “Back to the League of Nations,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007): 1091–17; Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015); Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford, 2013); Mark Lewis, *The Birth of the New Justice: The Internationalization of Crime and Punishment, 1919–1950* (New York, 2014); Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge, Eng., 2014); Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, Eng., 2012).

6. On the entanglement of nationalism and internationalism more generally, see Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York, 2012). Here that entanglement took on especially concrete and consequential dimensions.

7. For a fuller treatment of this larger point—namely, the co-implication of the interwar international order and the new order in central and eastern Europe—see Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley, eds., *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford, forthcoming). For Patricia Clavin’s pioneering work in this area—in relation to both finance and food—see especially “The Austrian Hunger Crisis and the Genesis of International Organization after the First World War,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March 2014): 265–78.

8. J. W. Headlam-Morley, Note on the Draft Austrian Treaty, May 26, 1919, The National Archives (UK), FO 608/19/10.

here I pursue instead its internationalization.<sup>9</sup> I pull out three different “border effects” in which the boundaries of sovereignty were reworked or challenged. These loosely-grouped border effects/affects, all flowing from the implosion of empire, document a multisided political struggle over the line between the state and the international sphere. The borders of post-imperial sovereignty were under pressure from the “outside” and from within: while some of these initiatives were imposed by the Great Powers as self-anointed spokespeople for the “international community,” others emerged from inside the region, as those on the ground wrestled with the new dispensation. Together, they explain something of the world—our world—that was made when (formal) empire died.

### Scale and Space: Borders as Blockages

The dissolution of the Habsburgs’ sprawling conglomerate monarchy dramatically reconfigured the space of sovereignty. In the confusion of proposals and plans for a post-Habsburg Europe, sovereignty acquired a conspicuous spatial elasticity: projects of nationalization and new schemes for federalization pulled against bids for regional and city autonomy, often reappropriating the layered sovereignty of empire, as Dominique Reill’s study of postwar Fiume captures so vividly.<sup>10</sup> As the successor states took shape, the expansive territoriality of the empire was broken into a patchwork of smaller legal units, crisscrossing the region with new state frontiers. If nationalists celebrated new borders as markers and measures of hard-fought independence (contesting their location, perhaps, but not their existence), to others they represented a major new challenge. They were a problem for things that moved—like crime, capital, refugees, and disease.<sup>11</sup> Such things possessed their own spatiality

9. Indeed, 1918 traditionally represents the triumph of nationalist and nationalizing politics. As Pieter Judson has shown most forcefully, narratives of the empire’s collapse long took their general structure from nationalist claim-makers and state-builders themselves, who were eager to frame 1918 as a radical break with empire and a moment of national liberation. If an exciting new crop of work has turned to examine the lingering impact of Habsburg institutions and ways of thinking, it explores these legacies within and for the different “nation-states” that replaced the empire. See Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, especially the Epilogue; and the essays collected in the volumes *Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918*, eds. Paul Miller and Clare Morelon (New York, 2018); and *The Habsburg Civil Service and Beyond: Bureaucracy and Civil Servants from the Vormärz to the Inter-War Years*, eds. Franz Adlgasser and Fredrik Lindström (Vienna, 2019), as well as further forthcoming work by Iryna Vushko. Here I explore instead the legacies and implications for *international* institutions and projects.

10. Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*.

11. Endemic disease across the region was one factor driving the transnational health collaborations of the League’s newborn Health Organization (forerunner to the WHO), under the pioneering direction of the Polish bacteriologist and epidemiologist Dr. Ludwik Rajchman. See Sara Silverstein, “Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe: The League of Nations, State Sovereignty, and Universal Health,” in Becker and Wheatley, eds., *Remaking Central Europe*. Meanwhile, the collapse of the empire left many people without a nationality, which combined with the Russian refugee crisis to produce mass statelessness in the region, with consequences for the conceptualization and governance

that did not necessarily conform to the shrunken sovereign spaces of the successor states. The need to manage that spatial disjuncture—to manage the non-alignment between national jurisdictions and these jurisdiction-hopping phenomena—spurred diverse new projects of transnational governance.

### *Capital*

What did the new state landscape mean for economic life? A range of economists and state officials fretted about the negative impact of new borders on trade and commerce, and the drastic contraction of markets. Even to preserve the regional commercial circulation of the Habsburg period would now involve agreements between and across sovereign states. As Britain and France doubled down on their own vast imperial marketplaces, the predicament of the small states of central and eastern Europe drove the development of a range of schemes designed to support and manage transnational economic interaction, schemes that are now being recovered as departures in the history of global capitalism and the regulation of the world economy. Madeleine Dungy, for example, had followed Austrian bureaucrat Richard Riedl, who, in adapting his pre-war visions for the economic integration of *Mitteleuropa* for a post-Habsburg world, sought the protection of “trans-border commercial rights” that would remove handicaps faced by foreign commercial actors.<sup>12</sup>

The discrepancy between sovereign and economic space spawned not only targeted legislative efforts but projects of world ordering on the grandest scale. Quinn Slobodian’s magisterial *Globalists* argues that the predicament of post-Habsburg sovereignty constituted the most formative context for the emergence of what we now call neoliberalism. From the offices of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce at Stubenring 8-10, figures like Ludwig von Mises, Gottfried Haberler, and F. A. Hayek wrestled with the predicament of the small rump Austrian successor state of the 1920s. Because Austria could not be self-sufficient, it had no choice, they felt, but to rely on an open world economy: it needed free trade, foreign markets, and resources.<sup>13</sup> Yet the constricting new borders and the rise of economic nationalism threatened free trade with tariff “walls” and demands for high worker wages. They concluded that one needed to inoculate the “rights of capital” from the demands of democratic publics and national governments. These economic thinkers could reconcile with

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of statelessness, citizenship, and refugees. See Mira L. Siegelberg, *Statelessness: A Modern History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2019). Crime and capital are discussed below.

12. Riedl spearheaded the 1927 Draft Convention on the Treatment of Foreigners, debated at the League of Nations. Madeleine Dungy, “International Commerce in the Wake of Empire: Central European Economic Integration between National and Imperial Sovereignty,” in Becker and Wheatley, eds., *Remaking Central Europe*. On business elites over the cusp of 1918, see Máté Rigó, “The Long First World War and the Survival of Business Elites in East-Central Europe: Transylvania’s Industrial Boom and the Enrichment of Economic Elites,” *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 24, no. 2 (March 2017): 250–72.

13. Austria, Slobodian writes, had become a “prototypical case of a small state in the storms of globalization,” prefiguring the predicament of many post-imperial countries around the world. Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018), 51, 43.

the proliferation of nation-states only by conceptualizing a “doubled” world, one split between *imperium*—“the world partitioned into bounded, territorial states where governments ruled over human beings”—and *dominium*—“the world of property, where people owned things, money, and land scattered across the earth.”<sup>14</sup> New supranational institutions would be required to manage the relationship of these two worlds. As many of the Mises circle moved from Vienna to Geneva and beyond, they helped lay the foundations for international investment law, the European Economic Community, and the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, later the WTO—World Trade Organization), which were designed not so much to leave the market unregulated as to insulate it from the potentially disruptive effects of nation-states and democracy. This bifurcation of scales of rule—between national governments and the global economy—became a normative project, Slobodian argues, out of the ashes of the Habsburg Empire, with consequences that clearly shape today’s world.

### Crime

Post-imperial sovereign spatiality was not only challenging for economists. Questions of crime and policing also provoked initiatives designed to transcend the new kaleidoscope of national jurisdictions. The chaos and conflict of the war lingered in the years after 1918: ongoing violence, revolutionary agitation, social dislocation, and mass displacement exacerbated the power vacuum left in the wake of imperial dissolution.<sup>15</sup> Under these conditions, and with the borders themselves contested and moving, “trans-border” crime thrived.<sup>16</sup> As one police official noted in 1923: “All of Europe, or at least central Europe, is in a sense internationalized.”<sup>17</sup> National police forces, islanded in separate state jurisdictions, were ill-equipped to confront this internationalized criminality. It was Vienna police chief, Johannes Schober, who masterminded a solution. As David Petruccelli shows, Schober drove the creation of a new organ of police cooperation called the International Criminal Police Commission. Established in Vienna in 1923, the Commission facilitated the sharing of information on cases as well as methods. Today, that organization

14. Slobodian, *Globalists*, 10.

15. On the protracted, messy end of the war in east central Europe, see Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York, 2016); Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, “Aftershocks: Violence in Dissolving Empires after the First World War,” *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 3 (August 2010): 183–94; John Paul Newman, “Post-imperial and Post-war Violence in the South Slav Lands, 1917–1923,” *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 3 (August 2010): 249–65.

16. This trans-border crime included theft, counterfeiting, and speculation. On counterfeiting, see David Petruccelli, “Banknotes from the Underground: Counterfeiting and the International Order in Interwar Europe,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 3 (June 2015): 507–30.

17. Internationale Kriminalpolizeiliche Kommission, *Der Internationale Polizeikongress in Wien (3. bis 7. September 1923): Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen* (Vienna, 1923), 16; cited in David Petruccelli, “Fighting the Scourge of International Crime: The Internationalization of Policing and Criminal Law in Interwar Europe,” in Becker and Wheatley, eds., *Remaking Central Europe*.

is known as Interpol. In its original interwar iteration, it remained a profoundly central European product, with its focus and membership dominated by the successor states.<sup>18</sup> If imperial dissolution and the desire to circumnavigate new borders turned some economists into neoliberals, it spurred these conservative, revolution-fearing police chiefs toward a deeply illiberal internationalism.

### **Sovereign Dilution: International Oversight and International Jurisdiction**

While the frontiers of the successor states provoked novel trans-border initiatives, the sovereignty operative inside those boundaries also emerged as a site of international experimentation. If the former were often driven by regional actors themselves (as the cases above show), the latter were often imposed from without. Questions about the thickness and completeness of jurisdiction—and not only its extent in space—marked the new states of central and eastern Europe. It soon became clear that the sovereignty of these states was not the same as that possessed by Britain, say, or France. Through a series of novel schemes spanning minority protection and financial reconstruction, post-imperial sovereignty arrived qualified, disaggregated, and interruptible. Prerogatives traditionally classed as sovereign powers could be transferred (temporarily or not) to the organs of international organization, themselves only in their infancy. Not coincidentally, those same prerogatives became the fields in which international capacity evolved and expanded. In central Europe—and not only in the mandated territories of the Middle East, Africa, and the Pacific, as Antony Anghie has shown<sup>19</sup>—we can thus observe the close intertwining of the demise of formal empire and the rise of international agencies that has shaped postwar international history so significantly.<sup>20</sup>

### *Minorities*

Some sovereign reservations accompanied the arrival of the new states like birthmarks. As is well known, the Allied Powers made their recognition of Poland dependent on a treaty guaranteeing the rights of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities residing within its borders. This so-called “minority

18. Petruccioli, “Fighting the Scourge of International Crime.”

19. Antony Anghie famously showed how the interwar mandate system helped transform imperial rule into apparently objective measures and logics of “development” that would subsequently be implemented and tracked by international organizations. Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge, Eng., 2005). On the legacies of Ottoman (quasi-) sovereignty for the mandate system, see important forthcoming work by Aimee Genell. Indeed, the entanglement of Habsburg and Ottoman afterlives in the interwar international order is a dynamic frontier for current research.

20. On the intertwining of empire and international order, see for example Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, 2009); and Emily Baughan and Bronwen Everill, “Empire and Humanitarianism: A Preface,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (December 2012): 727–28, and the special issue that follows.

treaty” then formed the blueprint for others written into the peace treaties with Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey.<sup>21</sup> The treaties, designed to secure the Paris settlement, reflected Allied perceptions of the political immaturity of the new and defeated states. If these states could be tutored away from the persecution of minorities, so Allied thinking went, those minorities would gradually accept and assimilate into the new sovereign dispensation, rather than agitate against the Paris borders, thereby endangering international peace.<sup>22</sup> The post-imperial settlement—built atop the transition from sprawling multinational empires to would-be nation-states—was not an act or moment, but required a process and system, an international architecture. Needless to say, the governments in question bitterly resented the treaties as an unwarranted qualification of their sovereign rights and an attack on the doctrine of sovereign equality: if they were necessary, why were they not universal?

The interwar minorities regime marked a crucial juncture not only in the history of rights, but also in the evolution of international jurisdiction and practices of international oversight. For the first time, an international organization—and not an individual power—became guarantor and guardian of the rights of certain populations, over (and against) their own governments.<sup>23</sup> As Mark Mazower has emphasized, the treaty form represented something far more muscular than the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which remained a mere declaration.<sup>24</sup> The League’s jurisdiction penetrated

21. The subsequent admission of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Albania and Iraq to the League of Nations was made contingent on unilateral declarations regarding the protection of minorities. For foundational research on the minorities treaties, see Carole Fink, “Minority Rights as an International Question,” *Contemporary European History* 9, no. 3 (November 2000): 385–400; and Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection* (Cambridge, Eng., 2004). For important new work on some of the effects of interwar minorities treaties on the ground, see Brendan Karch, “A Jewish ‘Nature Preserve’: League of Nations Minority Protections in Nazi Upper Silesia,” *Central European History* 46, no. 1 (March 2013): 124–60.

22. Still valuable here is C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (New York, 1934).

23. Western intervention on behalf of Christians in the Ottoman realm is here the most prominent precedent, now recovered as a revealing origin point for the deep implication of empire and humanitarian intervention. See Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton, 2011); Gary J. Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York, 2008); Samuel Moyn, “Spectacular Wrongs,” *The Nation*, September 24, 2008 at [www.thenation.com/article/spectacular-wrongs-gary-bass-freedom-battle/](http://www.thenation.com/article/spectacular-wrongs-gary-bass-freedom-battle/) (accessed October 9, 2019). Historicizing our understanding of rights as qualifiers of sovereignty, Sam Moyn has argued that the notion that rights could be wielded by international law *against* sovereignty, that the state was prime rights-violator rather than prime rights-defender, is of radically contemporary vintage. Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010).

24. Mark Mazower, “Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe,” *Daedalus* 126, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 47–63; and Mazower, “The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933–1950,” *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 379–98. On oversight as surveillance, leading towards measurement and indicators, see Jane K. Cowan, “Before Audit Culture: A Genealogy of International Oversight of Rights,” in *The Gloss of Harmony: The Politics of Policy Making in Multilateral Organizations*, ed. Birgit Müller (London, 2013): 103–33. Some contemporaries saw human rights as a universalization of minority rights. For new scholarship in this area, see Nathan Kurz, “Jewish Memory and the Human



down through the dome of sovereignty, and suggested that, for weaker states born in empire's shadow, it was not impermeable but qualified. International jurisdiction blossomed at the cost of sovereign equality—it thrived on hierarchy. New mechanisms of international oversight, meanwhile—especially the minority petitions received and examined by the League—made that jurisdiction visible and tangible.<sup>25</sup> It also brought individuals and non-state collectives into direct, proceduralized contact with international organizations, leading many jurists to speculate that minorities had acquired legal standing in international law, unsettling the state's hegemony on international personality and foreshadowing today's heterogeneous cast of non-state international actors.<sup>26</sup>

### Finance

It was not only ethnic tensions that spurred the League to requisition from the successor states prerogatives normally reserved for sovereigns. In the war's wake, the small Austrian republic wavered on the edge of wholesale collapse. The problem was easy to describe but not to solve: there was no money. Cut off from its former industrial areas, struggling to absorb civil servants from across the fallen empire, and paralyzed by weak governments unable to force through new taxes or fiscal reforms, Austria was bankrupt. To have any hope of economic stabilization, loans were needed, but—unattractive prospect as Austria was—efforts to secure private loans from foreign banks quickly floundered. Here the League stepped in. It summoned the world's first international finance conference in 1920 to tackle the problem: that meeting gradually evolved into League's Economic and Financial Organization.<sup>27</sup> It devised radical new measures for financial oversight that seized control of Austrian state expenditure in exchange for foreign loans. Those measures became a model for subsequent financial oversight not only in interwar Hungary and Germany: as Patricia Clavin, Nathan Marcus, and Jamie Martin have recently shown, they later shaped the IMF's interventions around the world in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup>

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Right to Petition, 1933–1953,” in *The Institution of International Order: From the League of Nations to the United Nations*, eds. Simon Jackson and Alanna O'Malley (Abingdon, Eng., 2018), 90–110.

25. Jane K. Cowan, “Who's Afraid of Violent Language?: Honour, Sovereignty, and Claims-Making in the League of Nations,” *Anthropological Theory* 3, no. 3 (September 2003): 271–291; Natasha Wheatley, “New Subjects in International Law and Order,” in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, eds. Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga (Cambridge, Eng., 2017), 265–286.

26. See Natasha Wheatley, “Spectral Legal Personality in Interwar International Law: On New Ways of Not Being a State,” *Law and History Review* 35, no. 3 (August 2017): 753–787.

27. The “world's first intergovernmental organization responsible for economic and financial cooperation.” Clavin, “The Austrian Hunger Crisis,” 274.

28. Clavin, “The Austrian Hunger Crisis,” 278; Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*; Nathan Marcus, *Austrian Reconstruction and the Collapse of Global Finance, 1921–1931* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018), and see Martin below. See, earlier, Louis W. Pauly, “The League of Nations and the Foreshadowing of the International Monetary Fund.” *Essays in International Finance*, no. 201 (Princeton, 1996), 1–52.

Before finance, though, there was food. Clavin has traced the intricately intertwined histories of Austria's "hunger catastrophe" and its financial reconstruction: economic and humanitarian tentacles of the new international order cannot be explained in isolation.<sup>29</sup> Maureen Healy famously made hunger key among the factors causing the empire's collapse: it was just as consequential, it turns out, for the rise of the new supranational order that replaced it.<sup>30</sup> The first great international mobilization for postwar Austria sought to feed its starving population. That effort pioneered practices of humanitarian relief, and turned Vienna into an international laboratory for child nutrition: local scientists and foreign resources mingled in the production, for example, of Clemens von Pirquet's ground-breaking algorithm for measuring infant nutrition. In the end, immense American food aid—alongside spiraling hyperinflation and fears of bolshevism—highlighted the need for a more structural solution. The financial stabilization scheme developed under the League's auspices facilitated international loans but laced them with strings: they were contingent on massive cuts in government expenditure (some 50,000 civil servants lost their jobs) and a stringent program of international oversight. The League appointed a Commissioner General for Austrian Finances who had the extraordinary power to veto state spending; continuing aid depended on his monthly reports on Austria's financial performance.<sup>31</sup> Austria survived, and Austria ate—but only at the high price of its financial sovereignty.

Jamie Martin's new research argues that Austria's pressured renunciation of its fiscal autonomy marks a pivotal moment in the historical transformation of debt enforcement—from colonial gunboat diplomacy to the organs of international oversight. Revealingly, the precedents in circulation as Austria's rescue was discussed all came from the colonial world. In the nineteenth century, the imperial powers had implemented diverse schemes to protect European credit in Tunis, Egypt, Turkey, Santo Domingo, China, and elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> Such programs involved the European supervision of public revenue—propped up by threat of violence. Could such a humiliating relinquishing of sovereignty now be applied to a European state like Austria? The matter was sensitive. Martin shows that the League offered a way of mitigating the political toxicity of the prescribed austerity, mediating between the demands of international capitalism and the Austrian government. The League's public, corporate nature (distinct from any one power or bank), its (ostensible) impartiality, its (ostensible) basis in expertise, and the (ostensibly) non-coercive nature of its intervention in Austria all helped launder this "financial tool of empire" legitimate for Europe and for a new century. The new form may have been less violent than the naked imperialism of financial

29. Clavin argues that the Austrian *Hungerkatastrophe* was the "founding moment in the institutionalization of ideas and practices regarding international economic and financial support," creating and defining the League's Economic and Financial Organization. Clavin, "The Austrian Hunger Crisis," 266.

30. Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, Eng., 2004).

31. Clavin, "The Austrian Hunger Crisis," 276.

32. The Ottoman Public Debt Administration, established in Cairo in the 1870s, and the Chinese Maritime Customs Service were among the most frequent allusions.

bailouts past, but it was no less intrusive. The line from the “debt colonies” of the nineteenth century to those of the present day runs through Austria: it bore witness to how imperial modes of financial tutelage, and the diluted forms of sovereignty they entailed, were repackaged as the prerogatives of modern international organizations.<sup>33</sup> Here, too, international jurisdiction and oversight fed off the impaired sovereignty of weak(er) states.

### Managing the Edges of Sovereignty in Time

The collapse of Austria-Hungary thus spurred techniques to manage the degree or thickness of sovereignty as well as its borders in space. As I show in my forthcoming book *The Temporal Life of States*, it also raised questions for international law about sovereignty’s borders in time—our third and final border-effect.<sup>34</sup> What happens, legally, at the “end” of imperial sovereignty? The disappearance of a sprawling empire on the European continent and the appearance of a whole crop of new states forced international law and order—in both diplomatic and scholarly registers—to grapple seriously with the beginnings and ends of sovereignty in time. What happened to the residual rights and resources of the empire: who inherited them? Who inherited its debts? Had the legal person of the empire—the juridical avatar to whom those rights and debts accrued—evaporated into thin air, or did one, many, all of the successor states carry it forward into the future? How did states die in law, what did it mean for a new sovereign to be born? These were not only conundrums of state succession, but of the legal “identity” and (dis)continuity of states. Such questions were shrouded in uncertainty, not least because international law had traditionally held the creation and disappearance of states to be beyond its purview. By the onset of global decolonization in the wake of the Second World War, these topics became major geopolitical flash-points, as states of the global south sought (for example) to wrest control of resources and rights that had been signed away under colonial rule. I explore how the many legal ambiguities of Austria-Hungary’s disappearance sparked a jurisprudence of state (dis)continuity—a jurisprudence of sovereignty-after-empire—that allows us to connect 1918 to the broader international legal history of decolonization.

If the neoliberalism of the 1970s—or the ethnic violence of the 1990s, or the multidimensional “global governance” of today—has sent scholars back to the international contours of the post-Habsburg settlement, tracking key

33. Jamie Martin, “Empire and the Origins of International Financial Governance: The Case of Interwar Europe and its Legacies,” paper presented at Edmund J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University, September 25, 2018 (on file with author). See Jamie Martin, *Governing Global Capitalism in the Era of Total War* (Cambridge, Mass., forthcoming). Note Nathan Marcus’ far more optimistic/positive emplotment of this episode: he argues that “accusations of financial colonialism or foreign dictatorship in interwar Austria are entirely misplaced,” and that the League’s intervention pioneered a genuinely new form of multilateral control that aimed to overcome the self-interest of creditors. See Marcus, *Austrian Reconstruction*.

34. Natasha Wheatley, *The Temporal Life of States: Sovereignty at the Eclipse of Empire* (forthcoming).

departures to 1919, *The Temporal Life of States* thinks not only backwards from the present but also forward from 1848. That is, it splices together one version of 1919—as the inauguration of our world—with another—as the curious culmination of a deeply Habsburg story about the shape and structure of imperial rule. Questions about the survival of historic “states” and the singularity or multiplicity of sovereignty already grew out of the constitutional ferment that had exploded into Habsburg public life in the mid-nineteenth century. As officials, jurists, and claim-makers wrote, re-wrote, and contested the newborn imperial constitution, the problem of how to organize the Habsburg Empire in law spurred styles of reasoning about rights and statehood that would acquire a new vocation on the world stage when the empire collapsed, framing debates about the “newness” and “oldness” of the successor states. Telling this story from the inside out—from inside the empire’s own categories and histories—allows us to think more subtly about the reach of our new international histories: about the way in which regional conjunctures can produce formations that spiral off across the globe even as other threads of those same stories insist on their immobility, on their contented nesting in the specificities of place.

Across these fields and senses, we see features of contemporary global governance coalescing out of the wreckage of imperial collapse. What seemed to be an empire of shaded secrets was transformed into a brightly-lit workshop of world order, one that generated myriad transnational schemes, techniques, and bodies of knowledge. In turning imperial sovereignty inside out (to adapt Holly Case’s memorable formulation),<sup>35</sup> the contours of new sorts of sovereignty—often qualified, doubled, diluted—were forged; and in the gap between incomplete sovereigns and complete ones, international jurisdiction, oversight, and intervention blossomed. One hundred years later, the consequences of 1919 are everywhere around us.

35. See Holly Case, “The Quiet Revolution: Consuls and the International System in the Nineteenth Century,” in Timothy Snyder and Katherine Younger eds., *The Balkans as Europe, 1821–1914* (Rochester, 2018), 110–38.