

THE VATICAN AND THE RESHAPING OF THE EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL ORDER AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR*

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ABSTRACT. *The Vatican is often cast as a marginal player in the reshaping of the European international order after the First World War. Drawing on new archival material, this article argues for a reassessment of the content and consequences of papal diplomacy. It focuses on the years between 1917 and 1929, during which time the Vatican used the tools of international law and state-to-state diplomacy to expand its power in both eastern and western Europe. The Vatican's interwar activism sought to disseminate a new Catholic vision of international affairs, which militated against the separation of church and state, and in many contexts helped undermine the principles of the League of Nations' minority rights regime. Thanks in no small part to the assiduity of individual papal diplomats – who disseminated the new Catholic vision of international affairs by supporting anti-communist political factions – the Vatican was able to claim a more prominent role in European political affairs and lay the legal and discursive foundations for an alternate conception of the European international order, conceived in starkly anti-secular terms.*

As Europe's Great Powers battled for influence in one of the most destructive wars of the twentieth century, the Holy See appeared a marginal player, hardly well poised to exercise influence in the continent's political life. As a result of the loss of the Papal States during Italy's wars of unification, the central government of the Catholic church lacked statehood, and its leader, the pope, was no longer widely recognized as a sovereign leader. The papacy's ideological appeal also seemed on the wane; though in 1910 Pope Pius X had rearticulated a long-standing papal opposition to liberalism and democracy via his condemnation of the French pro-democratic group *Le Sillon* – arguing once again that any attempt to found a political order on human will alone constituted an original sin – this would not hinder laymen and clerics in

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countries like Germany, France, and Italy from theorizing the compatibility between Catholicism and democracy, and founding the continent's first Christian Democratic political parties.

It therefore comes as some surprise that in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, the Vatican successfully made use of new legal and diplomatic instruments to regain political and territorial sovereignty, establish formal diplomatic relations with over two dozen countries, and increase its power in international affairs by providing ideological and practical support to political parties in a large number of European nation-states. This article will focus on how the transformation was mediated by a group of Vatican diplomats who helped the Vatican gain a new role in Europe by issuing a prescriptive peace platform during the First World War, and by pursuing a new form of diplomacy at war's end based on the conclusion of binding treaties, known as concordats. Concordat diplomacy began in eastern Europe, in countries like Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania, and then spread west to Germany, Austria, and Italy. Though in the course of just eleven years, the Vatican concluded eleven concordats, few scholars have taken stock of concordat diplomacy's novelty and purpose after the First World War. The new post-war concordat project took shape in response to what Vatican officials perceived as the double threat posed by Wilsonian secular internationalism and by the expansion of communist ideas. Its aim was to use legal means to enshrine a mode of governance based on a close form of church–state collaboration, which would allow the Vatican to reassert its traditional influence over education, public offices, and European foreign relations.

Bringing the Vatican back into the broad sweep of European history complicates the standard account of an interwar contest between communism and Nazi-Fascism, showing how the active pursuit of a Catholic political project—as mediated by the Vatican and its particular conception of a Catholic international order—shaped European political life in the interwar years. However, recent and landmark surveys of contemporary European and international history make only passing mention of the Vatican, presenting it at best as a minor actor in European public affairs.¹ More recently, a series of welcome recent studies on the contribution of Christian lobbies and religious organizations to modern European politics has spent comparatively little ink on the Vatican's diplomatic activism between 1918 and 1945, focusing attention instead on the contribution of religious groups to European imperialism and the rise of Christian Democracy and the 'religious Cold War'

¹ The Vatican receives scant attention in Mark Mazower, *Dark continent: Europe's twentieth century* (New York, NY, 1998); idem, *Governing the world: the history of an idea* (New York, NY, 2012); Zara Steiner, *The lights that failed: European international history, 1919–1933* (Oxford, 2005); idem, *The triumph of the dark: European international history, 1933–1939* (Oxford, 2011); Charles Maier, *Recasting bourgeois Europe: stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the decade after World War I* (Princeton, NJ, 1975); Tony Judt, *Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945* (New York, NY, 2005).

after the Second World War.² Though certain scholars have sought to highlight the Vatican's post-1918 emergence as a global economic actor and its socio-political activism in lesser-studied European states, mainstream Vatican scholarship continues to be dominated by the question of the papacy's relations with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and whether Vatican policies and ideologies facilitated the slaughter of European Jewry during the Second World War. The so-called Pius wars have generated useful studies, but overemphasis on the Vatican's relations with Italy and Germany has also occluded the important story of the Vatican's pan-European diplomatic project, and the role of small states in eastern Europe therein. Thus, rather than trying to fit the Vatican into what Charles Maier has usefully called the dominant 'moral narrative' of the twentieth century – the narrative of mass atrocity, which concerns the causes, content, and consequences of the Holocaust – this article attempts to take stock of the Vatican's broader diplomatic project, which sought to use the modern instruments of international law to overturn or prevent the future separation of church and state in eastern and western Europe.³

The Vatican merits closer analysis because, in the years following 1918, it sought to instantiate an alternative mode of 'governing the world'; one that was opposed to the new forms of secularism it saw built into the League of Nations' minority protection schemes and in the expansion of left-wing radicalism across much of the European continent. In addition to highlighting the counter-revolutionary tack of Vatican diplomacy, this article shows how in Catholic-majority territories, concordat diplomacy implicitly advanced an ideal of religious homogeneity – an ideal that in the interwar years was advocated not just by well-known proponents like Adolf Hitler, but also by east central European nationalists, Pan-Islamic lobbyists, and certain League of Nations lawyers, despite (or alongside) their commitment to minority rights.⁴

² Important recent work on the place of religion in post-war European history includes Maria Mitchell, *The origins of Christian democracy: politics and confession in modern Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2012); Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the origins of the European Union* (Cambridge, 2007); Martin Conway, 'Democracy in post-war western Europe: the triumph of a political model', *European History Quarterly*, 32 (2002), pp. 59–84; Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting democracy: political ideas in twentieth-century Europe* (New Haven, CT, 2011); and Phillip Nord, *France's New Deal: from the thirties to the post-war era* (Princeton, NJ, 2010). For an introduction to the vast literature on religion and European imperialism, see Owen White and J. P. Daughton, 'Introduction', in Owen White and J. P. Daughton, eds., *In God's empire: French missionaries in the modern world* (New York, NY, 2012), pp. 3–28.

³ Charles Maier, 'Consigning the twentieth century to history: alternative narratives for the modern era', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), pp. 807–31, at p. 826. For a useful overview of the Pius wars, see William Patch, 'The Catholic church, the Third Reich, and the origins of the Cold War: on the utility and limitations of historical evidence', *Journal of Modern History*, 82 (2010), pp. 396–433, and Mark Ruff, *The battle for the Catholic past in Germany, 1945–1975* (forthcoming).

⁴ See, inter alia, Holly Case, *Between states: the Transylvanian question and the European idea during World War II* (Stanford, CA, 2009); Eric D. Weitz, 'From the Vienna to the Paris system: international politics and the entangled histories of human rights, forced deportations,

Thus, after the First World War the Vatican made peace with the modern nation-state – a political form it had long opposed – by attempting to instantiate a legal order in which the nation-state was defined in part by its commitment to Catholicism and the Catholic church.

The argument regarding the aims and effects of Vatican diplomacy post-1918 unfolds in four stages. The prefatory section shows how Pope Benedict XV entered the contest for influence at the height of the Great War by presenting a peace platform that directly rivalled the one put forward by his leading perceived competitor, the American President Woodrow Wilson. This, coupled with the pope's failure to gain a seat at the Paris Peace Conference, pushed the papacy to translate its rhetorical recommendations into a political programme, which militated against the Versailles settlement and the League's minority rights regime and was actualized through treaty diplomacy. Section III explores how the Vatican's surprisingly successful treaty diplomacy was increasingly presented as a way to protect Europe against communist revolution and against conceptions of the international order supposedly premised on the separation of church and state. The fourth section takes stock of the effects of the Vatican's treaty diplomacy, arguing that it increased the Vatican's status in European politics, all the while foregrounding an influential and broad-based vision of peace based on church–state collaboration and the reassertion of Vatican influence in domestic and international affairs.

I

The origins of the Vatican's post-war concordat diplomacy lie in the pope's decision to enter the contest between Woodrow Wilson and Vladimir Lenin, so as to disseminate an attractive vision of peace at the height of war. Wilson had set the wheel in motion by urging his adviser, Edward M. House, to travel to Europe in 1916 to work out the first, rather vague, peace proposal of the conflict.⁵ In a speech of April 1917 – issued after the February deposition

and civilizing missions', *American History Review*, 113 (2008), pp. 1313–43; Dirk Moses, 'Partitions, population "transfers", and the question of human rights and genocide in the 1930s and 1940s' (unpublished paper, 2012); Alexis Alexandris, 'Religion or ethnicity: the identity issue of the minorities in Greece and Turkey', in Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: an appraisal of the 1923 compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York, NY, 2006), pp. 117–33; Matthew Frank, 'Fantasies of ethnic unmixing: population "transfer" and the end of empire in Europe', in Panikos Panayi and Pippa Virdee, eds., *Refugees and the end of empire: imperial collapse and forced migration in the twentieth century* (New York, NY, 2011), pp. 81–101; Nathaniel Berman, '"The sacred conspiracy": religion, nationalism and the crisis of internationalism', *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 25 (2012), pp. 9–54; Hussein Alkhazragi, 'The globalization of world politics and religion: Islam at the League of Nations' (unpublished paper, 2012); and Saad Omar Khan, 'The "Caliphate question": British views and policy toward pan-Islamic politics and the end of the Ottoman caliphate', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 24 (2007), pp. 1–25.

⁵ See Arno Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin: political origins of the new diplomacy, 1917–1918* (Cleveland, OH, 1964).

of the tsar, but before the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917 – Lenin gave his response to Wilson and to pro-war socialist movements, via a speech that affirmed that only the end of capitalism *qua* imperialism would bring world peace.⁶ Within a few months, Pope Benedict XV disseminated a peace platform of his own, which was similarly a way to jockey for leadership of the post-war world. Through a peace plan of 15 August 1917, he proposed that the Vatican mediate peace negotiations and help implement certain measures to prevent future wars: the self-determination of select European states (Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, and Poland); the preservation of the German empire, including its colonies; and the creation of international arbitration courts to regulate future disputes, impose freedom of the seas, and oversee a general limitation on armaments. In addition, the pope articulated the need for the legal codification of greater union between church and state across Europe, as a direct alternative to the perceived threat of a future separation of throne and altar.⁷

The papal peace plan immediately became an important contribution to the lively debate surrounding the conditions for peace. ‘Just as the Dome of St. Peter dominates its surroundings’, a Vatican representative boasted, the pope’s message ‘overshadows [other] confused peace efforts.’⁸ By late August of 1917, the plan had been endorsed by neutral countries like Spain and by supporters of the central powers, including the emperor, Karl I of Austria; the chancellor of the German empire, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg; the German kaiser, Wilhelm II; the king of Bavaria, Ludwig II; and the German Catholic politician and leader of the Centre party, Matthias Erzberger, who introduced Benedict’s proposals for discussion in the Reichstag.⁹ The popularity of Pope Benedict XV’s peace plan elicited the concerns of the Wilson administration, as commentators in Washington noted that the fate of the Allied cause would without question ‘depend upon [the president’s]

⁶ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, ‘Speech on the proposal to call an international socialist conference’, 25 Apr. 1917, which elaborated upon his 1916 work, *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism: a popular outline*.

⁷ See Angelo Martini S.J., ‘La nota di Benedetto XV alle potenze belligeranti nell’agosto 1917’, in Giuseppe Rossini, ed., *Benedetto XV, i cattolici e la prima guerra mondiale* (Rome, 1963), pp. 365–87.

⁸ The Bern representative, Monsignor Marchetti-Selvaggiani, is quoted in Philipp Scheidemann, *Papst, Kaiser und Sozialdemokratie in ihren Friedensbemühungen im Sommer 1917* (Berlin, 1921), p. 21. As cited in Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin*, p. 232.

⁹ See the telegraphs to the pope of the chancellor of the German empire, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, and of the emperor of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Karl I, dated 28 Sept. 1917. In *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States (FRUS), Supplement, the World War, 1917* (Washington, DC, 1917), pp. 217–20. For Matthias Erzberger’s decision to bring the papal peace plan before the Reichstag, see idem, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* ([1920]; Bremen, 2012), pp. 41–9; and Charles Seymour, ed., *The intimate papers of Colonel House* (New York, NY, 1926), III, pp. 150–1. On Spain’s endorsement of the plan, see the Spanish ambassador Juan Riaño to the US secretary of state, Washington, 27 Dec. 1916. In *FRUS, Supplement, the World War, 1916* (Washington, DC, 1916), p. 118.

answer'.¹⁰ Justifiably worried that the pope had stolen the president's thunder, Wilson's advisers urged the American president to seize the 'opportunity to take the peace negotiations out of the hands of the pope and hold them in [his] own'.¹¹

On 23 August 1917, Wilson issued what his chief adviser dubbed 'the most interesting document in the world': the president's reply to Benedict.¹² The letter applauded the papal proposals but advised Benedict to abandon naïve hope in the good will of the central powers. When in January of 1918, Wilson issued his first concrete set of peace aims in the form of a speech delivered before a joint session of congress, many wondered whether the pope's peace statement was one reason Wilson crystallized his vision so quickly.¹³ The Fourteen Points followed the pope in calling for the creation of a supranational organization to regulate disputes and enforce disarmament. They similarly redefined the Bolshevik principle of self-determination to suit particularistic ends. But in place of endorsing an international order that took its cues from the Vatican (or much less from Lenin), Wilson called for the spread of democracy, particularly in the former lands of the Russian and German empires.¹⁴ Taking stock of the import and radical contingency of the Wilson proposal, a flippant contemporary observer noted, 'Now it's Wilson who is becoming pope by drawing moral lessons for the belligerent powers ... Long live Pope Wilson!'¹⁵

The Vatican reaction to Wilson's new peace platform was as quick as it was acerbic, taking direct aim at what was perceived as the fundamentally anti-Catholic aim of Wilson's liberal-democratic paean. The prominent Vatican jurist Eugenio Pacelli (future Pope Pius XII) noted that Wilson's plan was imitating key features of Benedict's plan in a bid to masquerade as legitimate and thus conceal its true purpose. In a letter to the pope's secretary of state, Pietro Gasparri, Pacelli berated Wilson: in his view, the Fourteen Points had been drafted by Freemasons who opposed Catholicism and 'supplied the United States with one of the cornerstones of its government, namely the democratic spirit'. If the Allies won the war, Wilson would surely 'Americanise

¹⁰ Colonel House to President Woodrow Wilson, Magnolia, Massachusetts, 19 Aug. 1917. As reprinted in Seymour, *The intimate papers*, III, pp. 157–8.

¹¹ House to Wilson, 17 Aug. 1917. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹² House to Wilson, 23 Aug. 1917. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹³ As noted in Enrico Serra, 'La nota del primo agosto 1917 e il governo italiano: qualche osservazione', in Giorgio Rumi, ed., *Benedetto XV e la pace, 1914–1918* (Brescia, 1990), pp. 61ff; John Pollard, *Benedict XV (1914–1922) and the pursuit of peace* (London, 1999), p. 128; and Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin*, pp. 354ff.

¹⁴ On Wilson's use of the term self-determination, see Trygve Thrøntveit, 'The fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and national self-determination', *Diplomatic History*, 35 (2011), pp. 445–81.

¹⁵ 'Maintenant c'est Wilson qui devient pape, et qui fait la morale aux belligérants ... Vive le pape Wilson!' Alfred Loisy to Alfred Fawkes, c. Oct. 1917, cited in Alfred Fawkes, 'The papacy and the modern state', *Harvard Theological Review*, 11 (1918), pp. 376–94, at p. 376.

the whole world, making it Freemason so as to liberate it from its servitude to the kaiser, the pope, and the priesthood'.¹⁶ For Pacelli, democracy, Freemasonry, anti-Catholicism, and Americanism were inextricably interlinked. Many Vatican officials agreed, and similarly deemed Wilson's Fourteen Points a conniving attempt to prevent the Vatican from regaining any position of global influence. Vatican worries about an 'Americanised' Europe only increased following the March 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (with Lenin's declaration of neutrality), and when Germany and Austria-Hungary signed an armistice with the Allies that neatly summarized the Wilsonian platform. For the Vatican in 1918, the Wilsonian threat loomed large; larger than the threat emanating from Russia, whose recent revolutions were seen as both an opportunity for the Catholic re-conquest of a historically Orthodox nation, and as an abortive and short-lived imitation of the French Revolution.¹⁷

To avert Wilson's triumph over Europe and increase the Vatican's bargaining power, the papacy waged a diplomatic campaign to gain a seat at the Paris Peace Conference between November of 1918 and January of 1919. High-ranking clergymen pointed to the soundness of the papal peace plan and to the Vatican's new code of canon law, which had been recently revised to bring it in line with the codes of laws of modern European states. Vatican diplomats in the United States further claimed to support Wilson's Fourteen Points and the League of Nations, all the while suggesting that Benedict's peace message had been the leading source of inspiration for the American president. They endorsed a circumscribed version of the principle of self-determination, accepting the right of 'various Austro-Hungarian nationalities [to] constitute themselves into independent nation-states'.¹⁸ Finally, in a sudden bid to downplay the Vatican's allegiance to the central powers, leading archbishops informed Allied officials that the Vatican had remained neutral during the war

¹⁶ 'La Frammassoneria ha fornito agli Stati Uniti la pietra fondamentale del suo Governo, cioè lo spirito democratico, il quale nel campo politico non riconosce alcuna autorità, se non quella derivata dalla volontà del popolo. Tutti si sono uniti per combattere la Germania, il rappresentante principale della Monarchia di diritto divino, antidemocratico; ... Si ritorna ... sul dovere di americanizzare tutto il mondo, facendolo frammassone per liberarlo dalla servitù del Kaiser, del Pontefice e dei preti'. Eugenio Pacelli to Pietro Gasparri, Munich, 20 Dec. 1918, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City (ASV), Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (AES) Baviera (3° periodo), 1918–21, pos. 67, fos. 15–18. In his letter, Pacelli referenced the work of the German Father Hermann Gruber, SJ, a Jesuit whom Pacelli describes as 'uno dei migliori conoscitori della Massoneria internazionale' (one of the most knowledgeable scholars of international Freemasonry). The letter amply paraphrases Gruber's findings with the evident aim of buttressing Pacelli's case through appeal to accepted experts in the field.

¹⁷ See, inter alia, Antoine Wenger, *Rome et Moscou, 1900–1950* (Paris, 1987); Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern politics of the Vatican, 1917–1979*, trans. Sandra Smith (Athens, OH, 1981); Giorgio Petracchi, 'I Gesuiti e il comunismo tra le due guerre', in Vincenzo Ferrone, ed., *Chiesa cattolica e il totalitarismo* (Florence, 2004), pp. 123–53; and Philippe Chenaux, *L'église catholique et le communisme en Europe (1917–1989), de Lénine à Jean-Paul II* (Paris, 2009).

¹⁸ Pope Benedict to Pietro Gasparri, 8 Nov. 1918. Cited in Charles Loiseau, 'The Vatican and the new states of central Europe', *Living Age* (8 Nov. 1919), pp. 323–4.

and that it had amply demonstrated its credentials as a voice of peace.¹⁹ But these efforts to gain entry to the Paris Peace Conference would be for naught, as Italy had long since convinced the Allies to exclude the Vatican, fearing it would attempt to regain the lands it had lost during the Italian wars of unification.²⁰ The fact that the pope had competed with Wilson via his peace platform likely hardened the resolve of Great Britain, France, and the United States to comply with what had been Italy's condition for joining their side. Of course, the Vatican was not the only aspiring power rebuffed at the conference, where crucial decisions were made by first five, and then three, major players: the British and French prime ministers, and the American president Woodrow Wilson.

The resultant Paris peace treaty reflected the Allied victory, for though it granted independence to a select number of European countries and created three international arbitration organs (the Permanent Court of International Justice, the International Labour Organization, and the League of Nations), it also harshly penalized the central powers, seizing Germany's colonies and demanding \$33 billion in reparations. Additionally, despite papal qualms, the League covenant and the subsequent Minority Protection Treaties enshrined the principle of religious liberty.²¹ Lenin promptly criticized the settlement on the grounds that it reflected imperial and capitalist interests; in response, he helped the Communist International (Comintern) get off the ground to rival the purported universalism of the League of Nations.²² The pope's protest was just as quick as Lenin's, as was the decision to turn the Versailles failure into an opportunity to win over those who had been excluded from the conference.

¹⁹ See James Cardinal Gibbons, 'The war policy of the pope', *America* (23 Feb. 1918), pp. 487–8; Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool, *Pastoral letter* (25 Nov. 1919); Umberto Benigni, 'Il papa e il congresso di pace', *Nuova Antologia* (1 Mar. 1916); 'Papal white book soon', *New York Times* (2 Feb. 1918); and 'Pope works on white book', *New York Times* (10 Feb. 1918). Many Catholic scholars of the 1920s and 1930s also emphasized Benedict XV's influence on Wilson. See, e.g., Florence A. Wilson, *The origins of the League covenant: documentary history of its drafting* (London, 1928), p. 129; and John Eppstein, *The Catholic tradition of the law of nations* (London, 1932), pp. 311ff. The lobbying efforts of American clerics like James Cardinal Gibbons are discussed in Gerald P. Fogarty, SJ, 'Roosevelt and the American Catholic hierarchy', in David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial, eds., *FDR, the Vatican and the Roman Catholic church in America, 1933–1945* (New York, NY, 2003), pp. 11–45.

²⁰ On the context in which Italy's opposition to Vatican participation took shape, see Paloscio Annibale, *Benedetto fra le spie: negli anni della grande guerra un intrigo tra Italia e Vaticano* (Rome, 2007).

²¹ The deeply religious Woodrow Wilson personally pushed for these measures, which he considered the hallmark of US liberty. See John Milton Cooper, *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: progressivism, internationalism, war and peace* (Baltimore, MD, 2008), p. 239. On Japan's failed attempt to include a prohibition on racial discrimination along with the protections of religious liberty, see Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, race and equality: the racial equality proposal of 1919* (London, 1998).

²² For Lenin's searing critique of the Versailles settlement, see Vladimir I. Lenin, *Left-wing communism: an infantile disorder* ([1920]; Moscow, 1967), pp. 71–2.

In his objection to the Paris peace treaty, the pope noted that the settlement was overly punitive in that Christian charity ‘demands that we treat our enemies with kindness’.²³ The Vatican’s semi-official *Civiltà Cattolica* more bluntly proclaimed that Versailles’s articles were misnamed ‘articles of peace’; in truth, they would foster future war.²⁴ Pacelli similarly predicted that the victory of Wilson would cause a wave of unrest to sweep Europe. ‘An insolvent Germany’ would be unable to pay its debts, and European nations (‘particularly France and Italy’) would find themselves ‘gravely exposed and menaced’ by forces of unrest.²⁵ In 1920, Benedict echoed these fears and repeated the core theocentric claims of the papal peace plan in a sharply worded criticism of the Versailles settlement, couched within a circular letter to the faithful. The Vatican alone was best positioned to council ‘Heads of State and princes’, and ‘bring concord between civilized nations’; without papal assistance, Europe would doubtless fall back into a state of barbarism, war, and unrest. Furthermore, religious liberty provisions would effectively displace the Catholic church from occupying its proper place in European affairs and would therefore foster discord rather than peace.²⁶

II

Despite initial appearances to the contrary, the Paris peace treaties would stand to benefit the Vatican by encouraging the pope to translate his peace platform into a practical legal-political programme. Arguably, this programme can be read as the Vatican’s counter-settlement to Versailles. Like Versailles, the Vatican’s counter-settlement depended on the signature of several Vatican-directed bilateral treaties with many of Europe’s new and newly reconstituted states. The Vatican’s programmatic treaties – which were, in many senses, peace treaties between the Vatican and European states – inaugurated a new era of church–state collaboration, which began in east central Europe and quickly spread west. Known in church parlance as concordats, these treaties worked against the separation of church and state that the pope worried would be actualized by the League of Nations. Concordats allowed the pope to pursue his own Catholic international and build a bloc of European states more tightly bound to the Vatican. They did so by expanding the legally recognized role of

²³ Benedict XV, *Pacem, Dei Munus Pulcherrimum* (23 Mar. 1920), §9. *Encyclicals–Benedict XV–The Holy See–The Holy Father*, www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xv/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xv_enc_23051920_pacem-dei-munus-pulcherrimum_en.html. Last accessed 1 July 2012.

²⁴ ‘La guerra sociale dopo la pace di Versailles’, *Civiltà Cattolica* (30 Aug. 1919).

²⁵ ‘Non solo la Germania stessa, divenendo insolubile, non pagherà le indennità di guerra, non solo la pace non potrà essere ristabilita nel mondo, ma anche le altre Nazioni europee, e soprattutto l’Italia e la Francia, si troveranno gravemente esposte e minacciate dal contagio bolscevico’. Pacelli to Gasparri, ‘Il significato, i prodromi ed i moniti della seconda rivoluzione in Monaco’, Munich, 3 Mar. 1919, ASV, AES, Baviera (3° periodo), 1918–20, pos. 67, fasc. 43, fos. 7–11. For similar sentiments, see Pacelli to Gasparri, Munich, 12 Apr. 1919, *ibid.*, fos. 42.

²⁶ Benedict XV, *Pacem, Dei Munus Pulcherrimum*, §16.

institutional Catholicism, effectively creating a religious platform that would enable the church's deeper penetration in European social and political affairs.

Concordats were old instruments of Vatican diplomacy put to new ends in the immediate aftermath of the war. Between 1122 and 1916, concordats had been treaties used primarily to settle continuing disputes between church and state.²⁷ Legally speaking, they were valid only before ecclesiastical law, which defined them as privileges granted by the church in virtue of the superiority of her aims. But in 1916, Eugenio Pacelli – fresh from his legal studies – had influentially argued that concordats should be defined not as privileges, but as bilateral treaties to which two sovereign entities, the Vatican and the signatory state, were party. He further contended that in legal terms, concordats were valid not only before canon law, but before civil and international law as well. Finally, he recommended that rather than being used to simply settle church–state disputes, concordats had the power to encode a new relationship between the Vatican and the European continent as a whole.²⁸

In the final years of the Great War – as part and parcel of the Vatican bid for influence in Europe – Pope Benedict XV boldly accepted Pacelli's redefinition of the concordat and charged two Vatican diplomats (Eugenio Pacelli himself, and Achille Ratti, future Pope Pius XI) with the task of spreading this new legal instrument. The turn to concordat diplomacy was intimately connected to the Vatican's interest in using the tools of law to assert influence in European affairs, a shift that had begun in the early part of the twentieth century (as Vatican universities expanded their training in non-canon law), and continued in the early part of the twentieth century, when newly minted lawyer-diplomats, like Eugenio Pacelli, reformed and modernized the Vatican's core code of laws.²⁹ Convinced of law's potentially transformative capacities, Benedict welcomed the redefinition of the concordat, and asked Pacelli to attempt to sell the new legal instrument to Berlin and Munich, while Ratti was sent first to Warsaw, and then from there to Riga and Kaunas. Both men were asked to keep an eye on the spread of liberal and left-wing movements, and encouraged to couple a politically motivated humanitarianism with concordat diplomacy so as to present the Vatican as a wealthy ally in the struggle against outside influence and internal unrest.

²⁷ For instance, the investiture strife was settled by the first concordat in church history, the 1122 Concordat of Worms; the violent persecution of the church in Poland was settled by the Concordat of Poland (ratified in 1289); the concordat with Sardinia cleared up a debate surrounding ecclesiastical nominations (in 1727); and the concordat of 1801 temporarily settled the tormented relations between the French state and the Catholic church.

²⁸ Voto di Mgr. Pacelli, Feb. 1916, ASV, AES, Stati Ecclesiastici 157. In Romeo Astorri, 'Diritto comune e normativa concordataria: uno scritto inedito di mons. Pacelli sulla "decadenza" degli accordi tra Chiesa e Stato', *Storia contemporanea*, 4 (1991), pp. 685–701.

²⁹ On the Vatican's turn to international law, see Carlo Fantappiè, *Chiesa romana e modernità giuridica* (Milan, 2008); on the broader shift, see Martti Koskenniemi, *The gentle civilizer of nations: the rise and fall of international law, 1870–1960* (Cambridge, 2010).

The mission of spreading Vatican influence through new instruments was an exciting one, as Achille Ratti could not help expressing to a friend soon after his arrival to Poland. ‘Few things’, he noted, ‘would be capable of inspiring in me a more lively and deep interest than the resurrection and progressive reconstruction of this great state’.³⁰ In his quest to ‘resurrect and reconstruct’ Poland, Ratti took the suggestive title of archbishop of Lepanto, to signal the purported rebirth of Catholicism following the defeat of the Ottoman empire at Lepanto in 1571. Ratti thus began working tirelessly to restore Poland’s Catholic identity and guard it against modern-day infidels. The diplomat pushed Poland’s leaders to sign a concordat with the Vatican, which would show the world that the new Poland was bound to the pope rather than to Wilson or other (non-Vatican) outside powers. He encouraged the founding of Catholic organizations and press organs tightly bound to the pope and set up a Vatican relief organization, which rivalled Herbert Hoover’s onsite branch of the American Relief Administration.³¹

Additionally, Achille Ratti joined with the Polish prime minister, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, to oppose the imposition of the Minority Rights Treaty on Poland. The Vatican position was that fostering (non-Catholic) minority rights would breed conflict, and that it was accordingly best to curb the self-proclaimed attempts of European powers ‘to strengthen the work of the [Minority Rights] treaties’.³² Paderewski similarly presented the Minority Rights Treaties as instances of foreign meddling, arguing via a memorandum presented to the League of Nations that ‘Poland has already experienced the nefarious consequences which may result from the protection exercised by foreign Powers over ethnical and religious minorities.’ If the League insisted on applying minority rights provisions again, this would ‘fatally provoke excitement against the minorities and would become the cause of incessant unrest’.³³

The fact that the Polish Minority Rights Treaty – also tellingly known as the ‘Little Treaty of Versailles’ – contained provisions protecting the Jewish minority was particularly displeasing to Polish and Vatican authorities, who worried that Poland’s identity as a Catholic nation would thus be

³⁰ Achille Ratti to William Warner Bishop, librarian of the University of Michigan, Warsaw, 12 June 1919. As cited in Oscar Halecki, ‘The place of Czestochowa in Poland’s millenium’, *Catholic Historical Review*, 52 (1967), pp. 494–508, at p. 506. Ratti’s sentiments were echoed by his friends in the Milanese hierarchy; see Giorgio Rumi, ‘La nuova Polonia nell’opinione ambrosiana del primo dopoguerra’, in Marta Herling, ed., *Polonia restituta: L’Italia e la ricostituzione della Polonia, 1918–1921* (Milan, 1992), pp. 91–103.

³¹ Achille Ratti to Herbert Hoover, Rome, 15 May 1922, ASV, AES, Pontificia Commissione Pro Russia, Sc.73, fasc. 334, p. 72.

³² The Vatican accordingly opposed the French logic for re-establishing diplomatic relations with the pope, as articulated in the above-cited preamble of the Millerand bill calling for a French ambassador in Rome. See Raymond L. Buell, ‘France and the Vatican’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 36 (1921), pp. 30–50.

³³ ‘Memorandum of M. Paderewski’, in ‘The Council of Four: minutes of meetings, May 24 to June 28, 1919’, in *FRUS, The Paris Peace Conference* (Washington, DC, 1919), vi, 535.

diminished.³⁴ The issue was a charged one, not least because in these same years the Vatican was working with Polish diplomats to create a Catholic bloc of states at the League (composed of Brazil, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal) to protest Britain's Balfour Declaration, which favoured 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'.³⁵ Leaning on a similar logic as that used to protest the Minority Treaties, Benedict's secretary of state argued that the Declaration was to be shunned because it was an attempt to 'subordinate the indigenous population for the advantage of other nationalities'.³⁶ Concurring, the pope publicly warned that 'it would be a terrible grief to Us and for all Christian faithful if infidels were placed in a more prominent position' in the governance of the territories. Trumpeting his continued opposition to a post-war settlement supposedly spearheaded by anti-Catholic world leaders, Benedict further claimed that the Balfour Declaration's purported favouritism of the Jewish minority in Palestine was part and parcel of a post-war settlement enabling 'non-Catholic foreigners' to 'spread their errors' far and wide.³⁷

Following the exclusion of the papacy from an international committee charged with regulating the holy places in Palestine, the pope harped again on his opposition to minority rights. He repeated, in ever-bolder tones, that the Balfour settlement would unfairly grant the minority Jewish population 'a position of preponderance and privilege' – something that would inevitably lead to the decline in the 'situation of Christians in Palestine'.³⁸ As an article in a prominent Catholic newspaper elaborated, fostering religious homogeneity would breed peace, while the empowerment of non-Catholic minorities could only lead to future conflict. Because of 'the homogeneity of the whole Moslem body', it would be a grave mistake to declare Palestine a Jewish national

³⁴ Ibid. Interestingly, this was a volte-face for the Vatican: in 1915–16, the pope had promised to take practical steps to alleviate Jewish suffering in Poland, even offering to issue an encyclical on the matter. See Isaiah Friedman, *The question of Palestine: British–Jewish–Arab relations, 1914–1918* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992), pp. 154–5; and, more broadly, Kay Lundgreen-Nielsen, *The Polish problem at the Paris Peace Conference: a study of the policies of the great powers and the Poles, 1918–1919*, trans. Alison Borch-Johansen (Odense, 1979), pp. 217ff.

³⁵ Poland and Brazil were the most vocal members of the 'Catholic bloc' cultivated by Benedict. On this episode, see Andrej Kreutz, *Vatican policy on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict: the struggle for the Holy Land* (New York, NY, 1990), pp. 41–2; Adriano Ercole Ciani, 'The Vatican, American Catholics and the struggle for Palestine, 1917–1958: a study of Cold War Roman Catholic transnationalism' (Ph.D. diss., Western Ontario, 2011), pp. 38–9; and, more broadly, Sergio I. Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism: conflict in the Holy Land, 1895–1925* (New York, NY, 1990).

³⁶ Aide-mémoire to the League of Nations, 4 June 1922, archives of the Catholic University of America, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Office of the General Secretary, box 18, file 44. As cited in Ciani, 'The Vatican', p. 38.

³⁷ Pope Benedict, allocution to the College of Cardinals, 10 Mar. 1919, in *Civiltà Cattolica*, 70 (1919), pp. 4–8.

³⁸ Pope Benedict, 'Causa nobis' allocution, 13 June 1921, as reprinted in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 13 (Vatican City, 1921), pp. 281–4.

home, and thereby destroy Palestine's purportedly religiously homogeneous character. To be sure, Palestine also had a Christian minority population, but Muslims – this logic suggested – were better suited to peaceful co-existence with the Christian community than Jews (and their Protestant British protectors).³⁹

Given the collaborations between Vatican and Polish diplomats abroad, it was no surprise that the Vatican's activism in favour of the Catholic majority in Poland was widely celebrated. The Polish populace (whose Catholic piety had received a considerable boost during the Great War) hailed Ratti's presence, as did Poland's new chief of state. A former socialist party member and recent convert to Catholicism, Marshal Józef Piłsudski had redecorated both his office and his political rhetoric with an abundance of Catholic references. Ratti's support gave Piłsudski a measure of needed legitimacy, locked as he was in a struggle for power with competing political factions and sorely in need of popular support. Tellingly, Piłsudski's rivals included those Polish politicians who during the war had enjoyed the esteem of American officials; indeed, Wilson's advisers deemed Piłsudski irremediably compromised, given his past affiliations with the Polish socialist party and with the central powers.⁴⁰ The Vatican's importance in internal Polish affairs only increased as American liberal opinion swung against Poland in late 1919, as American officials began to argue that Germany was better suited to act as a check on the Soviet Union than Poland.⁴¹ To show his will to work alongside Ratti, Piłsudski promptly announced that his country would fight the French and American model of separation of church and state.⁴² The Polish leader also invited Ratti to march alongside the head of state and Prime Minister Paderewski when the Second Polish Republic celebrated the convocation of its first parliament in Warsaw's Cathedral of St John. Finally, Piłsudski encouraged local municipal leaders to welcome Ratti throughout his travels with ranks of horses, flag waving and triumphal arches, decorated with the Vatican's colours.⁴³ Commentators noted that displays such as these demonstrated that 'Poland's resurrection' was both a 'moral triumph' and a 'political triumph'; hence, it was 'not astonishing that diplomatic relations have already been entered upon by Rome and Warsaw, and that they should promise to be fruitful'.⁴⁴

³⁹ 'Editorial', *Commonweal*, 13 (5 Nov. 1930), p. 2. The evidence suggests that the Vatican protests had some effect, given the privileges soon enjoyed by Arab Catholics in the British Mandate. See Daphne Tsimhoni, 'The status of the Arab Christians under the British Mandate in Palestine', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 20 (1984), pp. 166–92.

⁴⁰ Neal Pease, *Poland, the United States, and the stabilization of Europe, 1919–1933* (New York, NY, 1986), p. 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² Neal Pease, *Rome's most faithful daughter: the Catholic church and independent Poland, 1914–1939* (Athens, OH, 2009), pp. 35ff.

⁴³ Ratti to Gasparri, 20 Aug. 1918, 7 Dec. 1918, and 8 Jan. 1919, ASV, Nunz. Varsarvia, b.192.

⁴⁴ Loiseau, 'The Vatican', pp. 324–5. For a broader discussion of the emergence of new forms of religious nationalism in Poland after the First World War, see Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and fatherland: Catholicism, modernity, and Poland* (New York, NY, 2011).

The scales would definitely tip in Ratti's favour after February of 1919, when a combination of endogenous and exogenous circumstances pushed Poland's politicians to agree to the concordat. In this month, Piłsudski declared war against the Soviet Union to implement his dream of detaching a portion of Russia's western territory to create a Polish-sponsored 'confederation' capable of curbing the Soviet menace and growing Poland's territorial ambitions. Though he appealed for both American and Vatican support in the conflict, Washington declined Piłsudski's request and announced its neutrality. In private, American officials expressed anger at Piłsudski's boldness, fearing he would strengthen the Bolsheviks and further destabilize the whole of eastern Europe. The events also caused liberal circles in the United States to turn definitively against the Polish marshal, whom they henceforth not without reason saw as an authoritarian dictator and oppressor of non-Catholic minorities in Poland (including, most prominently, the Jews).⁴⁵ Vatican officials, on the other hand, supported Piłsudski's gamble. In fact, Piłsudski's attack on the Soviet Union had two effects: first, it would lead Piłsudski to oblige the Vatican even more; and second, it would help crucially reorient the Vatican to present its concordat diplomacy as a weapon in the fight against communist forces. Thus, if the pursuit of concordat diplomacy initially took shape in part as a reply to the Versailles order, by 1920, Vatican officials would begin casting concordat diplomacy as a powerful instrument to contain the Soviet Union and protect Europe as a whole against the threat of communist revolution. This shift was due to the Vatican's correct diagnosis that the Wilsonian moment was fading as the United States retreated into isolationism, as well as the pressures on the ground exerted by local Catholic officials and politicians worried by the spread of left-wing revolution.⁴⁶

III

In February of 1919, Poland's chief of state declared war against Bolshevik Russia in a bid to settle the vaguely defined Polish–Russian frontiers discussed in the Treaty of Versailles. The Polish army had attacked Western Ukraine, to which the Red Army responded by pushing Polish forces all the way back to the Polish capital of Warsaw. Though many of Warsaw's inhabitants fled, the Vatican nuncio Achille Ratti stayed onsite, and boldly decided to (figuratively) hold the fort during the Soviet onslaught. In mid-August, the Red Army retreated from Warsaw and the city was reclaimed, thanks to a joint attack by Polish and French forces.

Ratti's stubborn resolve to remain in Warsaw during the Soviet attack directly benefited the Vatican and indirectly helped the Polish government. It allowed

⁴⁵ Pease, *Poland, the United States, and the stabilization of Europe*, pp. 9, 140.

⁴⁶ The term 'Wilsonian moment' is borrowed from Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism* (Oxford, 2007).

the Polish government to maintain the fiction of an independent victory, for, as the state-supported myth had it, Warsaw had been saved in part thanks to Ratti's 'calm and trusting presence in the capital', and his invocation of the protection of the Virgin Mary, 'Queen of Poland'. The act would also directly benefit the Vatican, as it proved that Catholicism and Polish nationalism could stand united against what now was presented as the most immediate threat to Poland's survival: Bolshevism. As Pietro Gasparri triumphantly reported, Ratti's gesture had 'encouraged the resistance of the good people' of Poland, while simultaneously showing the Vatican's loyalty to the newly independent state.⁴⁷

Matters moved quickly thereafter. In October of 1920, shortly following the armistice, Ratti succeeded in making the concordat a central component of Poland's new constitution. Issued in March of 1921 (immediately after the Peace of Riga, signed between Poland and Soviet Russia), the constitution represented a slap in the face to the League's minorities regime by dodging the principle of religious liberty, and affirming instead that 'Roman Catholicism took first place' among all faiths in Poland. The constitution further promised to settle church-state relations through a concordat with the Vatican. Negotiations regarding the articles of the concordat began immediately and, despite troubled communications due to the Upper Silesian territorial settlement, Poland's concordat was ratified in February of 1925.⁴⁸ A triumphant Ratti declared himself pleased with 'every comma' of the landmark legal treaty he had worked so hard to conclude.⁴⁹

The Polish concordat was a ground-breaking text, which broadcast a new model for church-state collaboration in domains as varied as education, politics, and organizational life. The treaty began by recognizing the Holy See as a sovereign actor, and promised that the Polish state would honour the Vatican by mandating obligatory religious education in all public schools, at both the primary and the university level, to be taught by individuals directly nominated by the church. The Polish state would also allow Catholic associations of lay people to operate and publish freely—a promise that effectively led to the exponential growth of a new Catholic movement controlled by the Vatican (known as Catholic Action), which would strengthen Poland's nascent Christian Democratic movement.⁵⁰ Finally, the concordat promised to exempt church

⁴⁷ 'Quel buon popolo fu altresì molto riconoscente al Nunzio Pontificio che, con la Sua calma e fiduciosa presenza nella capitale minacciata, aveva incoraggiato alla resistenza'. Gasparri, 'Memorie: Polonia', n.d., ASV, AES Stati Ecclesiastici, pos. 515 PO, fasc. 530, fos. 30–1.

⁴⁸ On the Upper Silesian controversy, see James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and national indifference in a central European borderland* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2008); and F. Gregory Campbell, 'The struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919–1922', *Journal of Modern History*, 42 (1970), pp. 361–85.

⁴⁹ Ratti's comment is reported in Stanisław Grabski, *Pamiętniki* (Warsaw, 1989), II, pp. 233, 238. As cited in Pease, *Rome's most faithful daughter*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ See Piotr Kosicki, 'Between the catechism and revolution: Poland, France and the story of Catholicism and socialism in Europe, 1878–1958' (Ph.D. diss., Princeton, 2011), esp. pp. 71–126.

properties from taxation, protect them from expropriation, and grant the church full freedom in administering its own finances. In exchange, the Vatican promised that Polish clergy would swear an oath of loyalty to the republic and give the state the ability to veto politically problematic bishops-to-be. Further strengthening the Vatican's legitimation of the new Polish state, the concordat promised that Polish Catholic churches would recite a prayer for the Polish republic and for its president during mass every Sunday and on national holidays. Finally, ecclesiastical lines were made to coincide with political lines, as diocesan limits were redrawn to make them reinforce and neatly correspond to the new boundaries of the independent state, settled at the Peace of Riga.⁵¹ Thus, the Polish concordat declared the Vatican a force in political, economic, and social life, and suggested that the Vatican was an ally in Poland's turn against forces advocating the separation of church and state.

As left-wing unrest spread in Europe, the pope and many of Europe's leaders became increasingly worried about the purportedly contagious nature of the Russian Revolution.⁵² Soon, many of the former imperial states in eastern Europe that positioned themselves against the Soviet Union and waged territorial battles of their own against it signed concordats with the Vatican.⁵³ Between 1922 and 1927, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Yugoslavia negotiated, and – in all cases save Yugoslavia – ratified concordats with the Vatican. These states effectively became a kind of 'Catholic bloc' that sought to contain the expansion of the Soviet Union. So successful was the Vatican's scramble for eastern Europe that even the Soviet Union entertained the idea of signing a concordat with the Vatican so as to limit its growing power. Though the Vatican initially signalled its willingness to dialogue with the Bolsheviks, negotiations eventually broke down. The failure was foreseeable, for despite the Vatican's aggressive and pragmatic pursuit of concordat diplomacy with a range of different political groups, there were certain regimes with which the Vatican could not engage – particularly when the very same diplomats negotiating with the Soviets were using anti-communism as a means of spreading concordat diplomacy elsewhere.⁵⁴

⁵¹ For the full text of the 1925 Polish concordat, see Paul Parsy, *Les concordats récents, 1914–1935* (Paris, 1936), pp. 23–30.

⁵² The Vatican was by no means alone in this fear: see Anthony Read, *1919: the world on fire and the battle with Bolshevism* (New York, NY, 2008). For a narrower look at the issue of communism-as-contagion, see Klaus Theweleit, 'Contamination of the body's peripheral areas', in *Male fantasies* (Minneapolis, MN, 1987), pp. 385ff.

⁵³ For an overview of the Latvian–Soviet, Lithuanian–Soviet and Romanian–Hungarian (Red Army) Wars, see Timothy Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, CT, 1999), pp. 57–73. For a highly partisan first-hand account of how the Latvian–Soviet war motivated the concordat reaction, see General Fürst Awaloff, *Im Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus: Erinnerungen von General Fürst Awaloff, Oberbefehlshaber der Deutsch-Russischen Westarmee im Baltikum* (Glückstadt, 1925).

⁵⁴ On the failed negotiations with the Soviets, which in last instance were captained by Eugenio Pacelli, see, inter alia, Winfried Becker, 'Diplomats and missionaries: the role played

In form and content, the Vatican's concordats with Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania mirrored the Polish concordat, and similarly expanded the Vatican's influence in old and new domains. The Latvian concordat, for instance, used the same wording to recognize the juridical personality and sovereignty of the Holy See. It outlined the Vatican's right to found confessional schools and Catholic associations and receive state funding for a cathedral. In exchange, the concordat gave the Latvian state the right to approve the archbishop of Riga, and promised that clergy would swear an oath of loyalty to the republic.⁵⁵ The Lithuanian and Romanian concordats expanded the church's influence in domains like education and property ownership, and granted the state freedom to control clerics deemed politically out of line.⁵⁶ As a perceptive contemporary observer noted, by aggressively exporting concordat diplomacy to even those territories where Catholicism was a minority religion, the Catholic church was acting just like the League of Nations, and making 'foreign interventions in favour of a minority'.⁵⁷

From its development in eastern territories, concordat diplomacy spread westwards, where it too was used to enshrine a new form of church–state collaboration and guard against communist revolution. Indeed, the second round of concordat diplomacy was carried out in states recently rocked by left-wing uprisings (like Germany, Austria, and Italy), and run by anti-communist leaders who hoped to diminish the threat of unrest by supporting the expansion of Vatican influence. Eugenio Pacelli – who had authored the legal reinvention of the concordat in 1916 – was the father of concordat diplomacy in the west. Like Ratti, Pacelli began by presenting concordat diplomacy as an alternative to the Versailles settlement. He called himself the archbishop of Sardi, in reference to one of the 700 Christian dioceses in modern-day Turkey rebuilt following the Ottoman (read, Allied) invasion of 1306; and like Ratti, Pacelli positioned himself against Wilson by working in territories targeted by American efforts, delivering rival aid parcels displaying the coat of arms of the

by the German embassies in Moscow and Rome in the relations between Russia and the Vatican from 1921 to 1929', *Catholic Historical Review*, 92 (2006), pp. 25–45.

⁵⁵ For the concordat text, see Parsy, *Les concordats récents*, pp. 37ff. On the negotiations, see Alexey A. Komarov, 'Il concordato del Vaticano con la Lettonia nel 1922 e gli interessi della politica sovietica', in Massimiliano Valente, ed., *Santa Sede e Russia da Leone XIII a Pio XI* (Rome, 2006), pp. 252–62.

⁵⁶ On the Lithuanian agreement, see Alfonsas Eidintas, Vytautas Zalys and Edvardas Tuskenis, *Lithuania in European politics: the years of the first republic, 1918–1940* (New York, NY, 1998), pp. 144ff; Alfred Erich Senn, *The Great Powers: Lithuania and the Vilna question, 1920–1928* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 142ff; and Juozas Prunskis, *Comparative law, ecclesiastical and civil, in the Lithuanian concordat: a study with historical notes* (Washington, DC, 1945). On the Romanian agreement, see Mózes Nóda, 'The historical, political and ecclesiastical background of the 1927 concordat between the Vatican and Romania', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 9 (2010), pp. 281–301; and Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and politics in post-communist Romania* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 8ff.

⁵⁷ C. A. Macartney, *National states and national minorities* (London, 1934), p. 157.

pontiff and the legend, 'The Holy Father offers his blessing.'⁵⁸ The strategy was particularly effective in Bavaria, a state in which German liberals had cast their lot with the *Kulturkampf* as a way of severing the links between political leaders and the church.⁵⁹

However, following the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic of 6 April to 3 May 1919, Pacelli began to present concordat diplomacy as a strategy to curb communist internationalism. Using language typical of the circles in which he moved, Pacelli declared the new Bavarian government the work of doubly foreign forces: a 'harsh Russian-Judaic-Revolutionary tyranny'.⁶⁰ 'The healthy part of the German people', he noted, erecting himself as its representative, 'is currently desperately fighting to liberate its society from the damaging poison of Bolshevism.'⁶¹ With surprising synchronicity, the Vatican nuncio in Hungary similarly commented that the Hungarian revolution – which had broken out in late March of 1919 – was a 'Judeo-Communist' plot carried out by 'a small minority of delinquents' keen on casting the church out of public life.⁶²

Like Ratti, Pacelli chose to remain briefly onsite and face the revolutionaries. He played up for effect the presence of gunshot marks on the Vatican nunciature and his refusal to hand over his automobile to revolutionaries

⁵⁸ John Cornwell, *Hitler's pope: the secret history of Pius XII* (New York, NY, 1999), pp. 71–2. On the United States' post-war activism, see Erika Kuhlman, *Reconstructing patriarchy after the Great War: women, gender and post-war reconciliation between nations* (New York, NY, 2008); Louis Paul Lochner, *Herbert Hoover and Germany* (New York, NY, 1960); and Sidney Brooks, *American aid to Germany, 1918–1925* ([1925]; New York, NY, 1943).

⁵⁹ Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany*, trans. Christiane Banerjii (London, 2000), pp. 202ff.

⁶⁰ 'L'avvenimento si è svolto all'eco del cannone, che da ieri rimbomba quasi ininterrottamente a Monaco, nella lotta fratricida impegnata fra l'Armata Rossa della Repubblica dei Consigli e l'Armata Bianca lottante per la liberazione della capitale della Baviera dalla durissima tirannia russo-giudaico-rivoluzionaria'. Pacelli to Gasparri, Munich, 30 Apr. 1919, ASV, AES, Baviera (3° periodo), 1918–20, pos. 67, fasc. 42, fos. 42–5.

⁶¹ 'Tutta la parte sana del popolo tedesco lotta disperatamente per liberare l'organismo sociale dal veleno dissolutore del bolscevismo'. Pacelli to Gasparri, 'Il significato, i prodromi ed i moniti della seconda rivoluzione in Monaco', Munich, 3 Mar. 1919, *ibid.*, pos. 67, fasc. 43, fos. 7–11. For contrasting accounts of Pacelli's views of the republic, see Emma Fattorini, *Germania e Santa Sede: le nunziature di Pacelli fra la Grande guerra e la Repubblica di Weimar* (Bologna, 1992); Stewart A. Stehlin, *Weimar and the Vatican, 1919–1933: German–Vatican diplomatic relations in the interwar years* (Princeton, NJ, 1983); and Karl Dienst, ed., *Die Kirchen und die Weimarer Republik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1994).

⁶² 'Il regime boscevico ha inaugurato colà il regno del terrore. Una piccola minoranza di delinquenti, che si è impadronito del potere e dispone della forza, tiranneggia a suo piacimento l'intera popolazione ... Le disposizioni più severe ha emanto il Governo giudeo-comunista contro chiunque osi manifestare opinioni a lui contrarie'. Nuncio Teodoro Valfré di Bonzo to Gasparri, Vienna, 15 Apr. 1919, ASV, AES Austria Ungheria (3° periodo), 1918–20, pos. 1340, fasc. 532, fos. 92–4. On the usage of the 'Judeo-Bolshevik' slur in Hungary, see Paul Hanebrink, 'Transnational culture war: Christianity, nation and the Judeo-Bolshevik myth in Hungary, 1890–1920', *Journal of Modern History*, 80 (2008), pp. 55–80. Attempts by Hungarian communists to separate church and state and abolish religious parties and movements had an unsettling effect on Catholics in Rome closely associated with the pope. See *Civiltà Cattolica*, 70 (1919), pp. 167–8, and 72 (1919), pp. 117–20.

as proof of his personal bravery and of the Vatican's opposition to revolution writ large.⁶³ In fact, that bravery was quite relative, for Pacelli avoided nearly all of Germany's unrest by retreating to the idyllic Swiss side of Lake Constance.⁶⁴ Still, his purported resistance to revolution proved useful in the spring of 1919, as the monarchist Bavarian People's party was swept into power following the bloody defeat of the republic in May. Concealing the violence, Pacelli declared the end of the Bavarian Soviet Republic 'magnificent', evidently letting himself be overtaken by what he described as a general atmosphere of 'emotion and applause' as 'the red flag was lowered on all public buildings'.⁶⁵

Far from hailing the rise of the monarchist party, Wilson's diplomats in Europe, by contrast, worried that the Bavarian People's party would attempt to stir unrest in German Bohemia and Slovakia, and bring back the 'king, as in the "good old days"'.⁶⁶ In a striking parallel to events in Poland following the Red Army's retreat from Warsaw, the Bavarian People's party showed its distaste for home-grown liberalism and communist internationalism by immediately seeking the Vatican's favour in its own bid for legitimacy. It loudly protested the terms of the Wilsonian peace Germany signed on 28 June 1919. It made a show of resisting anti-clerical measures in domains like education, divorce, and abortion, and of cultivating ties with top-ranking clerics. And by January of 1925, it had concluded a concordat with the Vatican.⁶⁷

The Bavarian agreement seemed to suggest that Vatican influence would only grow with the westward movement of concordat diplomacy. Indeed, the concordat recognized the Holy See as a sovereign actor, and allotted considerable funds for churches, clergy pensions, and spiritual services, to be offered in state-run institutions, like prisons and hospitals. It also made religious instruction, taught by church-vetted clerics, mandatory in public schools, and expanded clerical influence at the university level, in disciplines like history, philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, and politics.⁶⁸ In a sign of the Vatican's growing role in European affairs, the Prussian government began concordat

⁶³ Pacelli to Gasparri, Munich, 30 Apr. 1919, ASV, AES, Baviera (3° periodo), 1918–20, pos. 62, fasc. 40, fos. 42–5.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 'Lo spettacolo nella mattina del primo maggio fu magnifico. Fra gli applausi generali comparvero le prime truppe del Governo. Alla Residenza fu abbassata la bandiera rossa ed issata fra la commozione e gli applausi di un immenso pubblico la bandiera celeste e bianca della Baviera. Ugualmente fu fatto su tutti i pubblici edifici'. Pacelli to Gasparri, 6 May 1919, ASV, AES, Baviera (3° periodo), 1918–20, pos. 67, fasc. 43, fos. 44–52.

⁶⁶ American ambassador to Prague Richard Crane, to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, 8 Oct. 1919; 22 Sept. 1920, *Records of the U. S. Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, 1910–1944*, microfilm (Washington, DC, 1982), nos. 77, 298.

⁶⁷ On the role of the Bavarian People's party (*Bayerische Volkspartei*) in post-war culture wars, see Klaus Schönhoven, *Die Bayerische Volkspartei, 1924–1932* (Düsseldorf, 1972); Hajo Holborn, *A history of modern Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1982), pp. 536ff; Atina Grossman, *Reforming sex: the German movement for birth control and abortion reform, 1920–1950* (Oxford, 1997); and Larry Eugene Jones, 'Catholic conservatives in the Weimar Republic: the politics of the Rhenish-Westphalian aristocracy, 1918–1933', *German History*, 18 (2000), pp. 60–85.

⁶⁸ For the full text, see Parsy, *Les concordats récents*, pp. 83–6.

negotiations shortly thereafter, following the brutal crushing of the Spartacist uprising in Berlin and the murder of the German-Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, a stern critic of the Catholic church's purported ties to capitalist and imperial powers.⁶⁹ In 1929, the Prussian concordat was signed.

In the same year, Eugenio Pacelli's brother, Francesco, working in partnership with the Vatican secretary of state, concluded the sweeping Lateran Agreements in Italy. Since the early 1920s, the archbishop of Milan, Achille Ratti had worked to lay the foundations for the agreement by establishing a relationship with then-deputy of Milan Benito Mussolini; together, the two had helped undermine liberal and socialist measures regarding education and urban policy under consideration at the city council.⁷⁰ Once in power following the March on Rome, Mussolini continued to seek the Vatican's favour, so as to gain legitimacy and help undermine rival political factions. Speaking out loudly against both Italy's Liberal past and the recent 'Red Years', Mussolini passed a series of measures throughout the 1920s that restored the crucifix in schools and public institutions, introduced religious teaching in primary schools, banned Freemasonry, and curbed the ability of American Protestants to proselytize in Italy.⁷¹

In 1929, Mussolini helped bring about the conclusion of the Lateran Agreements, which included a concordat whose provisions mirrored those of earlier concordats. The Agreements declared that 'The Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion is the only state religion.' The statement was in keeping with that outlined in Poland's religiously infused and anti-minority rights constitution of 1921. By announcing Catholicism as the only state religion and refusing to grant pre-existent guarantees to Italy's religious minorities, the treaty effectively repudiated the principle of religious liberty, and inaugurated a period of repression of non-Catholic faiths on Italian territory. Though a mild Fascist bill protecting Protestant and Jewish religious minorities was passed on 24 June 1929, despite strong Vatican protests, the bill did little to help these groups.⁷² From prison, Antonio Gramsci lamented that the Agreements had provided 'public recognition to a cast of citizens of a series of political privileges', including that group's claim to priority over all other faiths.⁷³

⁶⁹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Kościół a socjalizm* (The church and socialism) ([1905]; Moscow, 1920).

⁷⁰ See Rene Fontenelle, *Sa sainteté Pie XI* (Paris, 1939), pp. 58–63; Emma Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini and the Vatican: Pope Pius XI and the speech that was never made* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 29; and Giorgio Vecchio, *I cattolici milanesi e la politica: l'esperienza del Partito popolare, 1919–1926* (Milan, 1982).

⁷¹ Adrian Lyttelton, *The seizure of power: fascism in Italy, 1919–1929* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), p. 417.

⁷² See Olindo De Napoli, *La prova della razza: cultura giuridica e razzismo in Italia negli anni trenta* (Florence, 2009); Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: a history*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York, NY, 2001), pp. 69–99; and Giorgio Spini, *Italia di Mussolini e protestanti* (Turin, 2007).

⁷³ For Gramsci's criticism that the pacts amounted to 'il riconoscimento pubblico a una casta di cittadini dello stesso Stato di determinati privilegi politici', see idem, *Quaderni del carcere*,

Though Fascist Italy ultimately proved an untrustworthy partner for the Vatican, in 1929 the pope and his associates deemed the Lateran Agreements the crowning achievement for concordat diplomacy in Europe as a whole. As Pius XI noted, by granting legal protection to the Catholic church in public and private life, Italy's leaders had showed their willingness to 'shed the preoccupations of the Liberal camp', thus allowing the belated restoration of 'God to Italy and Italy to God'.⁷⁴ And as in eastern Europe, the victories of concordat diplomacy acquired meaning when compared to limit cases: while in the east, Vatican diplomats had shown themselves unwilling to engage in earnest with their Soviet counterparts, in western Europe, they failed to actively pursue concordat diplomacy with Third Republic France and the Spanish Second Republic, in that these regimes were deemed too deeply committed to anti-secular principles and practices to merit full consideration.⁷⁵

IV

During and immediately after the First World War, the Vatican drafted and pursued a rhetorical and legal-diplomatic strategy that enabled it to move from the margins to the centre of European political affairs. Pope Benedict XV's 1917 peace platform marked the point of departure, and concordat diplomacy its actualization. Through concordat diplomacy, the Vatican enshrined a new form of church–state collaboration by creating a religious platform that increased its ability to shape public and private life, in domains as varied as education, the organization of youth, and family law. The Vatican's diplomacy was enabled by its pragmatic alliance with many of Europe's new political factions – an alliance greatly facilitated by a shared opposition to the spread of communist ideals and practices. In Catholic-majority territories like Poland, Bavaria, and Italy, the Vatican's actions also helped undermine the League regime of minority rights protections, in the attempt to found a post-war

Quaderno 16, reprinted in Antonio Gramsci, *Il Vaticano e l'Italia*, ed. Angelo D'Orsi (Rome, 2011), p. 73.

⁷⁴ Pius XI, 'Vogliamo anzitutto' allocution at the Catholic University of Milan, 13 Feb. 1929.

⁷⁵ On the church's imperfect interwar *ralliement* to French republicanism, complicated by French policies abroad and by the electoral victories of the Cartel des Gauches and the Popular Front, see Olivier Sibire, 'Une délégation apostolique en Indochine: passe d'armes entre le Saint-Siège et la France (1925–1939)', *Histoire, économie & société*, 1 (2011), pp. 101–12; Ernest P. Young, *Ecclesiastical colony: China's Catholic church and French religious protectorate* (Oxford, 2013); Philip Nord, 'Catholic culture in interwar France', in Kathleen Perry Long, ed., *Religious differences in France: past and present* (Kirksville, MO, 2006), pp. 179–201; and Jacques Prévotat, ed., *Pie XI et la France* (Rome, 2010). On the Vatican's troubled relations with second republic Spain, see Frances Lannon, 'The church's crusade against the republic', in Paul Preston, ed., *Revolution and war in Spain, 1931–1939* (London, 1984), pp. 35–59; Mary Vincent, *Catholicism in the second Spanish republic: religion and politics in Salamanca, 1930–1936* (New York, NY, 1996); and Julián Casanova, *The Spanish republic and civil war*, trans. Martin Douch (Cambridge, 2010).

Catholic bloc of states capable of upending religious liberty provisions and protecting Vatican interests.

The Vatican's enterprise after the First World War shows that European politics in the interwar years were not merely characterized by the fading of the 'Wilsonian moment', the rise of Nazi-Fascism, and the expansion of forms of left-wing radicalism. They were also shaped by the Vatican's ambitious diplomatic project, which advanced a form of anti-secular internationalism through the tools of international law, and was motivated by the attempt to prevent the real and perceived decline of the Catholic church in public and private affairs. With a surprising degree of success, Vatican diplomats took advantage of the turmoil following the Great War to disseminate a theocentric vision of 'governing the world', and inscribe this alternate conception of international affairs into the legal and political framework of nearly a dozen European states.