

# The Rise of Nationalism in a Cosmopolitan Port City: The Foreign Communities of Shanghai during the First World War\*

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THROUGHOUT history, the Chinese city of Shanghai has been a microcosm characterized by global phenomena such as urbanization, imperialism, and cosmopolitanism.<sup>1</sup> This article uses the case of Shanghai's imperial diasporas before and during WWI to analyze the impact of global conflict in multiethnic port cities. Up to 1914, Shanghai developed into a metropolis inhabited by over a million Chinese and ten thousands of foreigners. This has inspired historians to call early twentieth-century Shanghai "the most cosmopolitan city of China and of the world."<sup>2</sup> This assertion usually refers to the relatively peaceful coexistence of Chinese and foreigners in the treaty port. Nevertheless, semicolonialism seems a more appropriate term to describe their asymmetrical relations.<sup>3</sup> As a result of imperialist incursions into Chinese sovereign territory, foreigners occupied large

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of recent works on Shanghai history, see: Joshua A. Fogel, "The Recent Boom in Shanghai Studies," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Christine Cornet, *Le Paris de l'Orient: Présence française à Shanghai, 1849-1946* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Musée Albert Kahn, 2002), 191; See also: Paul French, *Through the Looking Glass: China's Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 101; Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010: A History in Fragments* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Bryna Goodman, "Improvisations on a Semicolonial Theme, or, How to Read a Celebration of Transnational Urban Community," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 4 (2000). For more details on the system of and life in treaty ports, see also: Robert Bickers and Isabella

plots of land, so-called concessions, in the heart of the city. In these areas, technically still under Chinese sovereignty, the Western diaspora politically and economically dominated the Chinese majority. From this perspective, the international diaspora of Shanghai before WWI was far from prototypical, but rather a set of imperial diasporas, who were part of the expansionist logic of Western powers.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the attribute of “cosmopolitan city” mainly fits Shanghai because of the symbiosis of the different imperial diasporas, sharing a similar *raison d’être*. Very often, claims about cosmopolitanism remain rather vague and nostalgic. However, cosmopolitanism is not only an abstract ideal but also concerns people’s attitudes and sociocultural practices. It is “a way of living based on an ‘openness to all forms of otherness’, associated with an appreciation of, and interaction with, people from other cultural backgrounds.”<sup>5</sup> Historians have extensively studied this “everyday cosmopolitanism” in various urban societies, especially port cities in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean.<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to further operationalize the concept for historical empirical research, Malte Fuhrmann has formulated three levels of cosmopolitanism in port societies.<sup>7</sup> Cosmopolitanism points to (1) a visible ethnic or cultural diversity in public space, (2) the capability to use and take advantage of different languages and cultures, and (3) social practices of conviviality creating intercultural bonds, the strictest definition according to Fuhrmann. All three interpretations apply to the cosmopolitanism of the Shanghai foreigners. It manifested itself not only in a visible diversity or the presence of polyglots but also in the willingness to share a single social space and to create an international community, albeit totally excluding Chinese society.<sup>8</sup>

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Jackson, eds., *Treaty Ports in Modern China: Law, Land and Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 68–79.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Hiebert, “Cosmopolitanism at the Local Level: The Development of Transnational Neighbourhoods,” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, ed. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 212.

<sup>6</sup> Glenda Sluga and Julia Horne, “Cosmopolitanism: Its Past and Practices,” *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (2010); Tim Harper and Sunil S. Amrith, “Sites of Asian Interaction: An Introduction,” *Modern Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2012): 57; Henk Driessen, “Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered,” *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2005); Hervé Georgelin, *La fin de Smyrne: Du cosmopolitisme aux nationalismes* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005); Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis, eds., *Alexandria 1860–1960, The Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community* (Alexandria: Harpocrates, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Malte Fuhrmann, “Meeresanrainer - Weltenbürger? Zum Verhältnis von hafenstädtischer Gesellschaft und Kosmopolitismus,” *Comparativ* 17, no. 2 (2007): 15–16.

<sup>8</sup> *Shanghaianders* (this is how they called themselves) only showed openness to other Westerners in the city, not to the Chinese majority. Consequently, the scope of this article is limited to interactions within the imperial diaspora. The multiple Sino-foreign

Cosmopolitanism being just one outcome of the process, sociologists have recently drawn attention to an important side effect of the global spread of diaspora communities.<sup>9</sup> Migrants moving to another country often maintain a strong identification with the home country. Scholars have called this “long-distance nationalism,” being a “set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographical locations to a specific territory that they call their ancestral home.”<sup>10</sup> As a part of that identity, migrants might import homeland conflicts into the host society. These imported conflicts have been a long-standing research subject. A first strand of scholarship has focused on the way the diaspora was involved in ongoing homeland conflicts: expatriates setting up local branches of political parties, financing armed rebellion, or being mobilized for political goals by leaders in the country of origin.<sup>11</sup> A second group of scholars has shifted the focus toward the host societies. They have observed that in many cosmopolitan cities the transportation of conflicts provoked inter-diaspora tensions. Bahar Baser, for example, has shown that the ongoing Turkish-Kurdish conflict has led to violent confrontations in German and Swedish cities where migrants of both conflict parties had to share a compact urban space.<sup>12</sup> After Australia had witnessed dozens of violent incidents between Croats and Serbs, Gregory Brown has analyzed the way the communities managed to contain the inter-diaspora conflict in the 1990s. Their strategies included avoiding confrontation, channeling emotions verbally, and invoking possible repercussions from host country policy makers.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to the lively historical literature on cosmopolitanism and migration, historians have only recently begun to explore the phenomenon of interdiaspora violence in the past. Case studies on, for example, the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in twentieth-century France are worth following, to provide insight into the factors

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relationships, whether cosmopolitan or not, form a field of study on their own, with other source material.

<sup>9</sup> Elise Féron, “Diaspora Politics: From ‘Long Distance Nationalism’ to Autonomization,” in *Migration and Organized Civil Society: Rethinking National Policy*, ed. Dirk Halm and Zeynep Sezgin (New York: Routledge, 2013), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, “Long-Distance Nationalism,” in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, ed. Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, and Ian Skoggard (Boston: Springer, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Van Hear and Robin Cohen, “Diasporas and Conflict: Distance, Contiguity and Spheres of Engagement,” *Oxford Development Studies* 45, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>12</sup> Bahar Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Gregory Scott Brown, “Coping with Long-distance Nationalism: Inter-ethnic Conflict in a Diaspora Context” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Texas, 2004).

that historically determined interdiasporic conflicts.<sup>14</sup> Innovative research is coming from historians of the Great War, whose subject is a prime example of a global conflict that was importable into host societies all over the world. Studies on the treatment of enemy minorities in belligerent and neutral countries have shown that, at the outbreak of war, the presence of minorities caused nervous tensions in multiethnic societies. In most cases, majority societies harassed enemy nationals, as studies have revealed for Germans in Great Britain, Italy, the United States, New Zealand, and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> While in those countries the wartime relations were quite clear-cut, this article investigates the intergroup tensions in a cosmopolitan city where minorities of both sides resided. Shanghai distinguished itself from other contemporary cities hosting important communities of both belligerent parties such as Buenos Aires or Sao Paolo<sup>16</sup> by its system of foreign concessions. Thanks to the concessions' relative autonomy both from the Chinese state and the imperial power, the British, French, and German minorities themselves had the power to decide how the war should affect their international society.<sup>17</sup> The analysis of the interdiaspora relations in this complex political constellation thus provides a historical contribution to the ongoing debates on the cohabitation of different diasporas in a multicultural city.

To analyze the day-to-day evolution of the local intergroup relations, this article mainly uses the German, French, and British local dailies, as well as the correspondence of the major powers' consulates.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller, ed., *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Francophone World*, Routledge studies in cultural history (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> P. P. Panayi, ed., *Germans as Minorities during the First World War: A Global Comparative Perspective* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Buenos Aires had a large European business community. However, Argentina's neutrality during the war and the limited political influence of the minorities prevented any noticeable interactions or conflict. Ronald C. Newton, *German Buenos Aires, 1900–1933: Social Change and Cultural Crisis* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 41–42. In São Paulo the wartime confrontation occurred between Luso-Brazilians and Teuto-Brazilians. The French or British minority was not significant enough to create an overt German-French or German-British animosity. See both Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Laurent Vidal and Tania Regina de Luca, eds., *Les Français au Brésil: XIXe–XXe siècles* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> On the concessions system, see: Christine Cornet, "Système concessionnaire et police française: un exemple original de la politique coloniale de la France à Shanghai," in *Banquier, savant, artiste: Présences françaises en Extrême-Orient au XXe siècle*, ed. Flora Blanchon (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> The sample consists of L'Echo de Chine (EDC), Deutsche Zeitung für China (DZC), Der Ostasiatische Lloyd (OAL) with its local supplement Shanghai Nachrichten (SN) and the North China Herald (NCH) to a lesser extent. The NCH, a weekly created in 1850, was seen as the most authoritative foreign newspaper in Shanghai thanks to the quality of its

Newspapers are especially relevant to this investigation since the local foreign-language press was the prime medium through which the foreigners informed themselves about the war and thus had an influence as an opinion maker. The newspapers also provided information on local events and claimed to represent the voice of the local community. This research will also build on previous work on Shanghai during WWI written by Kathryn Meyer and Robert Bickers.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis lies on the French, British, and German communities, because of their decisive role both in foreign Shanghai as in the First World War.

This introduction has stressed the need for a historical approach to the issue of imported conflicts in cosmopolitan cities. Shanghai was presented as an exceptional city where Western minorities were in a privileged, yet insecure position. Although controlled by foreign powers, the French Concession and International Settlement could not be regarded as genuine colonies. Officially Chinese territory, the concession's authorities had to remain neutral until China declared war on Germany in 1917. In the next section, I will argue that on the eve of WWI, a shared feeling of cosmopolitan solidarity superseded the

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sources and its high circulation (2,800 copies in 1912). The OAL took pride in its status as oldest German newspaper in East Asia (est. 1886). In August 1914, the editors of the OAL, a weekly, responded to the increasing demand for daily information on the war by creating the DZC. The daily's mission was to counter the propaganda of the Allied Shanghai press. The French owed their EDC (est. 1897) to the initiative of local French residents and missionaries wanting to promote French interests in the Far East. The wartime circulation of the DZC was about 550 in Shanghai and 750 elsewhere. The EDC sold approximately 400 copies in whole China (no figures for Shanghai). Given their limited circulation, the French and German newspapers continuously struggled to survive. The DZC quickly depended on financial support from the German Foreign Office, while the EDC could only subsist thanks to its integration into the printer of the French missionaries. As the only French and German language papers of Shanghai and therefore essential propaganda organs toward the foreign and Chinese community, the French and German diplomats were willing to secretly sponsor them. This interdependence affected the editorial policy; during the whole war, the editors generally defended their governments and its local representatives. Only the OAL has been the subject to extensive research: Haikun Niu 牛海坤, “德文新报”研究, 1886–1917 (= *The Research on Der Ostasiatische Lloyd, 1886–1917*) (Shanghai: 上海交通大学出版社, 2012); Françoise Kreissler, *L'action culturelle allemande en Chine de la fin du XIXe siècle à la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1989). Most of the research about the newspapers and some local events is therefore based on archival records from the French consulate general in Shanghai (Center of Diplomatic Archives, Nantes (cited hereafter as CADN)), from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris (cited hereafter as FMFA) and from the German Foreign Office and the Legation in Beijing (Political Archives of the German FO, Berlin, cited hereafter as PA AA).

<sup>19</sup> Kathryn B. Meyer, “Splitting Apart: The Shanghai Treaty Port in Transition, 1914–1921” (PhD Thesis, Temple University, 1984); Robert Bickers, *Getting Stuck in For Shanghai: Putting the Kibosh on the Kaiser from the Bund: The British at Shanghai and the Great War* (Beijing: Penguin Group China, 2014), PDF e-book.

nationalist reflexes of the Westerners. This spirit of international cooperation counterintuitively emerged in a context of imperialist rivalry and rising nationalism. The second section analyzes the impact of the war on local politics, social life, and public security by highlighting a series of key events in Shanghai. Here, the main argument is that the Great War had a far-reaching effect on the intergroup relations. In a way, the “deviant” situation of imperial cosmopolitanism was “normalized,” that is, complied with the nationalist tendency in Europe. I argue that the public opinion gradually dropped its cosmopolitan agenda and encouraged the division of the foreign community along national lines. As will be shown in the third section, the subtle balance of power in Shanghai prevented any violent clashes or harsh measures. This only changed when in March 1917, China reluctantly broke its diplomatic relations with the German *Kaiserreich*. The country finally decided to join the side of the Allies in August of that year. In conclusion, this study clearly demonstrates that the European communities eventually could not shut the war out of their life, even if they wanted to. The cosmopolitanism they cherished before the war made way for a dominant nationalism, increasingly provoking animosity and outbursts of violence. The process was only delayed by the specific political constellation and the Westerners’ mutual interdependence.

#### FOREIGN SHANGHAI

In the mid-nineteenth century, the British, Americans, and French extorted the permission from the Chinese authorities to settle in specific districts in Shanghai. What quickly became the International Settlement—a fusion of the British and American concessions in 1863—and the French Concession, was meant by the Chinese authorities to be merely an area where foreigners could live and do commerce. Taking advantage of the weak position of the Chinese, the foreign settlements soon provided themselves with their own municipal institutions and extensive power. The French Concession, on the one hand, was officially ruled by the elected French Municipal Council. However, the French consul general, who received orders from Paris, increasingly tightened his grip on local politics. The International Settlement, on the other hand, governed itself through an elected body: The Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC). Moreover, the privilege of extraterritoriality severely limited the authority of the Chinese government. As stipulated in the Sino-foreign treaties, foreign

TABLE 1. Foreign and Chinese population in the foreign concessions of Shanghai, 1905–1920

Nationality	Census year and territory							
	1905		1910		1915		1920	
	IS <sup>a</sup>	FC <sup>b</sup>	IS	FC	IS	FC	IS	FC
Britons	3713	109	4465	314	4822	681	5341	1044
Japanese	2157	73	3361	105	7169	218	10,215	306
Americans	991	21	940	44	1307	141	2264	549
Germans	785	47	811	148	1155	270	280	9
French	393	274	330	436	244	364	316	530
Russians	354	60	317	7	361	41	1266	210
Austro-Hungarians	158	5	102	12	123	27	–	–
Other	2946	242	3210	410	3338	663	3625	914
Total foreigners	11,497	831	13,536	1476	18,519	2405	23,307	3562
Chinese	452,716	84,800	488,005	114,470	620,401	146,595	759,839	166,667

All figures are based on official local censuses: Cornet, “Système,” 64; “Volkszählung,” DZC, 25 November 1915; Virtual Shanghai, “Shanghai Municipal Council Censuses, 1865–1942,” <http://www.virtualshanghai.net/Texts/E-Library?ID=1354>. Figures for Chinese inhabitants are minima, since many of them did not register officially.

<sup>a</sup>IS, International Settlement.

<sup>b</sup>FC, French Concession.

nationals only had to obey the laws of their home country and exclusively fell under its jurisdiction. In that way, for instance, Germans in China could only be judged by a German consular court.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1910s, Shanghai counted over a million inhabitants of very diverse origin. Three-quarters of them were not born there, coming instead from other Chinese provinces, Europe, Japan, or the United States. As shown in Table 1, about 21,000 foreigners from over thirty different countries dwelt in the city at the start of the war. The majority of the foreigners lived in the International Settlement, where most of the businesses were situated. The French Concession was less densely populated, although some foreigners preferred its quiet residential areas. The largest group of foreign Shanghai, the Japanese, lived in their own

<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, “Exterritorialität,” in *Das große China-Lexikon*, ed. Brunhild Staiger, Stefan Friedrich, and Hans-Wilm Schütte (Darmstadt: WBG, 2003); Marie-Claire Bergère, “La soeur cadette,” in *Le Paris de l’Orient: Présence française à Shanghai, 1849–1946* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Musée Albert Kahn, 2002); Pär Cassel, “Extraterritoriality in China: What we know and what we don’t know,” in *Treaty Ports in Modern China: Law, Land and Power*, ed. Robert Bickers and Isabella Jackson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

neighborhood without much contact with other foreign residents. The British (and American) community was smaller than the Japanese, though definitely the most influential. They shaped the social relations and gave rhythm to daily life inside the foreign community. Moreover, English was used as the *lingua franca* among foreigners of all nations. The German community, mostly merchants, was envied for its economic dynamism. Because of their economic power, they took part in local politics as well. Most of them dwelled in the International Settlement, close to their businesses, but a minority resided in the French Concession. The French formed a much smaller group of missionaries, shopkeepers, and municipal officials mainly. Less important in number were nationalities such as the Russians, Spaniards, Italians, Danes, Austro-Hungarians, Ottomans, and the Belgians. Despite their visibility in the streets, the foreigners never made up more than 1–2 percent of the total population of Shanghai. However, they definitely formed the city's elite, while most of the Chinese were very poor.<sup>21</sup>

#### WAVERING BETWEEN LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM AND EVERYDAY COSMOPOLITANISM

The Chinese port city exemplifies the fact that nationalism and a certain form of cosmopolitanism are not mutually exclusive. Both forces can coexist within the same society or even within the same person. By definition migrants are “multiple subjects”: they can be loyal both to their homeland and to their new place of living, developing some kind of “localized cosmopolitanism.”<sup>22</sup> In the following paragraphs, both the nationalist and cosmopolitan aspects of the Shanghai identity and their underlying motivations will be analyzed.

On the one hand, the space in Shanghai's concessions seemed segregated along national lines, like in other multiethnic cities. Surrounded by one million Chinese, the foreigners tried their best to preserve their national identity. The own national community provided a basic social network by building its own schools and churches and founding its own clubs and associations. The British owned the oldest and most prestigious club in town. Since 1863, the Shanghai Club on the Bund, the emblematic street at the Huangpu waterfront, welcomed the top of the foreign society. Two years after the

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<sup>21</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère, *Histoire de Shanghai* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 95–97.

<sup>22</sup> Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds., *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.



British, the Germans opened their *Club Concordia*. There were also other clubs for Scottish, Americans, or Japanese. The more modest *Cercle Français* was open to the lower classes of French society. As opposed to these formal clubs, the country clubs had to give the more wealthy foreigners the possibility to relax in a green, quiet environment. While Germans gathered at the *Deutscher Gartenklub*, the French found entertainment at the famous *Cercle Sportif Français* (CSF). This kind of clubs allowed a more relaxed sociability, facilitated through sports. There were clubs for tennis, horseback riding, rowing, cricket, etc. In popularity, none could beat the race club, which organized races on its own course twice a year. Culture enthusiasts could join clubs like the Amateur Dramatic Club, the *Société Dramatique*, or the *Deutsche Theaterverein*. Each large language community had at least one newspaper. These newspapers, such as those used for this study, served as a link both with fellow expatriates in China and with the mother country to stay informed about current metropolitan affairs.<sup>23</sup>

The French were particularly attached to their own concession. They were the only group of which the majority lived in the French Concession (see [Table 1](#)). The French did everything to preserve the national character of their small “colony.” To counter the British economic and political dominance, the French assured their influence in the field of religion, intellectual life, and entertainment. They promoted the presence of the Catholic Church as well as the development of theater, cinema, and books in the concession.<sup>24</sup> The German community regarded itself as part of a network of outposts of the German *Reich*. Through its branch of the *Deutsche Flottenverein*,<sup>25</sup> Shanghai was connected with other imperial diasporas across the globe. Both in Germany and abroad, membership of the League was a means of expressing nationalism. More generally, the Shanghai Germans imported their flourishing club life from their home country. All these clubs of engineers, doctors, merchants, etc. bundled in a coordinating structure: the *Deutsche Gemeinde*, counting over 300 members.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, in a “frontier” society far away from the mother country, the foreigners depended on each other, especially when it

<sup>23</sup> Bergère, *Histoire*, 107.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Major, “Le Paris de l’Extrême-Orient: La ‘françité’ de la Concession française de Shanghai, 1900–1912” (MA Thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, 2011), 43, 47, 56.

<sup>25</sup> German Naval League, established in 1898 to promote the construction of a strong German Navy.

<sup>26</sup> “Liste des membres de la Deutsche Gemeinde pour le 2e semestre 1914,” OAL, 15 January 1915; On the German imperial diaspora, see also: Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

came to defending the concessions. At the end of the nineteenth century, it was very in vogue to volunteer in a paramilitary organization. In Shanghai, foreigners could join two urban militias, the *Shanghai Volunteer Corps* for the International Settlement and the *Compagnie Française des Volontaires* for the French Concession. They were called into being to protect the settlements during a Chinese uprising in the 1850s. Ever since, foreign Shanghai feared an invasion of intruders more than imperialist rivalries. The *Volunteer Corps* was subdivided into national companies (German, Italian, Portuguese, American, etc.), which had their own uniforms. Nevertheless, the different companies regularly drilled together and were all under the command of Colonel Bray. Every drill passed in a spirit of friendly competition. If they did not want to be defenseless against Chinese armies, they had to cooperate and trust each other.<sup>27</sup>

In fact, identity in foreign Shanghai was defined more by class difference than by nationality.<sup>28</sup> Businessmen, merchants, bankers, diplomats, doctors, lawyers, and engineers preferred not to sympathize with middle-class shopkeepers and municipal employees. Club membership remained a privilege of the high society. Even if these clubs were organized in a national perspective, the elite blended easily. The Shanghai Club counted many non-British personalities among its members: a lot of Americans as well as dignitaries, bankers, newspaper editors, and merchants from France, Germany, Denmark, Russia, and Spain.<sup>29</sup> The *Club Concordia* wanted to attract an international clientele as well. Still, the CSF had the most cosmopolitan reputation and a steadily growing membership (from 300 members in 1912 to 500 in 1917). Many foreigners easily found their way to the bar and the tennis courts. Although its management stressed the Frenchness of the club, symbolized by the Gallic Rooster at the entrance, the CSF saw nothing wrong in the organization of tennis tournaments with their colleagues of the German Garden Club.<sup>30</sup> Music loving members of the

<sup>27</sup> Virtual Shanghai, "Shanghai Volunteer Corps Centenary Dinner held at The Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club on Friday, 2 April 1954 – Virtual Shanghai," Ye Olde Printerie, <http://www.virtualshanghai.net/Texts/E-Library?ID=1264>; A. Raquez, *Au Pays des Pagodes: Notes de Voyage; Hongkong, Macao, Shanghai, le Houpe, le Hounan, le Kouei-tcheou* (Shanghai: Presse Orientale, 1900).

<sup>28</sup> On the relationship between class and cosmopolitanism in a different geographical context, see Athanasios Gekas, "Class and Cosmopolitanism: The Historiographical Fortunes of Merchants in Eastern Mediterranean Ports," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 95–114.

<sup>29</sup> *Who's who in the Far East* (Hong Kong: China Mail, 1906–1907).

<sup>30</sup> "L'inauguration du Cercle sportif français," *EDC*, 9 May 1914; "Lawn Tennis. French and German Club Games," *NCH*, 23 September 1911.

foreign community could enjoy the concerts of the local band, financed by the International Settlement and the French Concession. It did not bother the sponsors that the *Shanghai Municipal Orchestra* (SMO) was led by a German conductor, Rudolf Buck. During his appointment (1906–1919), he even recruited a few professional musicians in Germany and Austria-Hungary.<sup>31</sup>

The cosmopolitan attitude was most widespread in the Shanghai upper class, as social scientists also observe in other societies today. However, the situation in schools and at church proves that the cosmopolitanism was also shared in other layers of society.<sup>32</sup> Since more and more families rather than single men were arriving in Shanghai, the foreign communities had to organize education for their children. The *Shanghai Public School* (est. 1893), the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Schule* (est. 1895), of whom the name could not be more nationalist, and the *Ecole municipale française* (est. 1911) all accepted foreign children exclusively. The *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Schule* offered education in German but also taught French and English. Officially, the board refused to accept more than 25 percent non-Germans, in order to preserve the national and racial character. Though, in reality, 57 of 127 pupils were of non-German origin in 1913–1914. They came from Great Britain, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, etc. The same went for the French Municipal School, where thirty-three French followed classes in French and English together with thirty pupils from countries such as Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy, and Norway in 1912–1913.<sup>33</sup> Another meeting place was the St. Joseph church in the French Concession, which was attended by all Catholics. The Germans, for instance, were “warmly invited” via an announcement in the German paper to join the service. The French Jesuits were pragmatic enough to do the sermon in French and English every other week.<sup>34</sup>

The curious mixture of patriotism and cosmopolitanism could at best be seen at events in commemoration of the mother country. A

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Bickers, “The Greatest Cultural Asset East of Suez: The History and Politics of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra and Public Band, 1881–1946,” in *China and the World in the Twentieth Century: Selected Essays*, ed. Chi-hsiung Chang (Nankang, Taiwan: Academia Sinica, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Bickers realized this in later work. Compare his findings in *Getting Stuck in* with his earlier work: “Shanghaiers: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843–1937,” *Past & Present* 159 (1998).

<sup>33</sup> French Municipal Council, *Compte rendu de la gestion pour l'exercice 1913 – Budget 1914* (Shanghai: Imprimerie Municipale, 1913), 125; Manz, *Constructing*, 248; Barbara Schmitt-Englert, *Deutsche in China 1920–1950: Alltagsleben und Veränderungen* (Großheirath: Ostasien Verlag, 2011), 73–74.

<sup>34</sup> “Katholischer Gottesdienst,” *SN*, 3 July 1914.

first example concerns national holidays. Whether it was the celebration of the birthday of the emperor Wilhelm II or Bastille Day, the Shanghai diaspora traditionally celebrated it with a drink for a number of foreign officials, marine officers, and a lot of other foreign guests. Usually, the celebrating nationals proudly shared their joy with the rest of the foreign community. At night, the municipal band, police officers and civilians of all nationalities marched together in a torchlight procession.<sup>35</sup> A second example relates to the commemoration of the history of Shanghai, on which every foreigner had his national view. For instance, a monument dedicated to the crew of the sunken German gunboat *Iltis* could be found on the Bund. Although the statue had become a nationalist symbol to the local Germans, it also represented the Anglo-German friendship in Shanghai. As a matter of fact, the monument was placed on the property of the British trading firm Jardine Matheson with the latter's explicit permission.<sup>36</sup>

All in all, the bonds of solidarity were forged in daily life. The colonial cosmopolitanism also found its origin in opposition to the Chinese majority. Western foreigners shared the same feeling of cultural superiority, cherished the same privileges of extraterritoriality and had to face the same challenges in what they felt was an outpost of the British and French colonial empire. Social practices were key. What James Moore observed for twentieth-century Alexandria also holds true for Shanghai: the public space organized in the concessions was a meeting ground for all nationalities.<sup>37</sup> They would listen to concerts in the park together, share drinks in the bar, cooperate in local institutions, or simply meet foreign friends in the streets of the concessions. Like in Alexandria, the interdependence could be noticed even more in the business world. Out of pragmatism, Britons would often partner with Germans to do commerce in Shanghai. The foreigners' interests were so closely knit that the nationality of companies became blurred.<sup>38</sup>

#### RIISING NATIONALISM IN A WAR-TORN CITY

From the previous section emerges that the numerous networks between foreigners created an "everyday cosmopolitanism." This

<sup>35</sup> Bergère, *Histoire*, 109; Bickers, *Getting Stuck in*. Chap. I.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Bickers, "Moving Stories: Memorialisation and its Legacies in Treaty Port China," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, no. 5 (2014): 838–841.

<sup>37</sup> James Moore, "Between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism: The Strange Death of Liberal Alexandria," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 5 (2012): 887–889.

<sup>38</sup> Meyer, "Splitting," 48; Bickers, *Getting Stuck in*. Chap. I.

profound mutual respect dimmed the nationalist sentiment, which in Europe largely predominated.<sup>39</sup> Remarkably, before the summer of 1914, the cosmopolitanism of Shanghai was never really criticized or reflected upon. Only after the outbreak of war, the numerous ties between foreigners became a subject of public discussion. In this section, I argue that the international conflict had a deep impact on the local social relations, drastically tipping the balance in favor of nationalism. In times of such a major crisis, minorities, be they in São Paulo, Izmir, or Shanghai, started to revalue their own national identity, viewing other nationalities as fundamentally different or even hostile.<sup>40</sup> This cannot be a surprise, because the multiethnic breeding ground that enhanced cosmopolitan cooperation, also provided the best conditions for nationalist frictions. Advanced means of communication available in a port city such as the telegraph, press, and steamships, combined with the experience of being foreign in a multifaceted urban society could expedite the process in both ways.<sup>41</sup>

The news of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo struck Shanghai as a distant, but impressive event. The consulates of Austria-Hungary and Germany flew flags at half-mast immediately, although nobody was really aware of the possible implications of the murder.<sup>42</sup> At the end of July, the stream of European news fostered the Shanghai foreigners' fear of a war in Europe. In the streets and clubs of the concessions, people gathered to talk about the European crisis. They were afraid of the consequences of war, which would be disastrous for business in Shanghai. Their fear was well-founded: war broke out on August 3, paralyzing commerce and raising import prices. The local newspapers called on their readers to stay calm, in the interest of the city's cosmopolitan character. The city councils of the French and International Settlement promised to keep the peace between their foreign inhabitants. The efforts of newspapers and officials did not seem unnecessary since wild rumors circulated. In the Shanghai Club and the CSF, people believed that the German Kaiser had committed suicide. German residents of the French Concession feared that the city

<sup>39</sup> Recently, the conference "War & Fatherland: Nations, Identities and the First World War" (Brussels, 14–15 October 2015) extensively dealt with the issues of nationalism and cosmopolitanism during WWI. Conference proceedings are forthcoming. For Great Britain, see also: Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (New York: Berg, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Goffman, "Izmir: From Village to Colonial Port City," in *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, ed. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 133.

<sup>41</sup> Fuhrmann, "Meeresanrainer," 25–26.

<sup>42</sup> "Le drame de Sarajevo," *EDC*, 4 July 1914.

services would cut off their access to water and electricity (which actually happened in Tianjin's French Concession).<sup>43</sup>

From the start, the war could not be kept out of Shanghai completely. The German and French consulates general mobilized their available men immediately. When the Germans left the station to go defend the German colony of Qingdao, they were acclaimed by a crowd of 300 people singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* and the *Deutschlandlied*. A few days later, a large crowd including German friends and colleagues also accompanied the French reservists to the quay, after having sung the *Marseillaise* at the CSF. Many Britons, Austrians, and Russians were mobilized too.<sup>44</sup> In these first weeks, the foreign communities patriotically admired the hundreds of young men gone to war, regardless of the side on which they would have to fight. After departure, the mobilized men would keep contact with their Shanghai friends via the newspapers. These often published letters and news from countrymen under arms.<sup>45</sup> Some *Shanghaianders* were carried away by their patriotism. According to the German press, the French had sung the *Marseillaise* in front of the *Club Concordia*. In response, the French newspaper reported the case of Shanghai Germans insulting France and its citizens in public. Quickly, the German and French papers abandoned their commitment to refrain from all controversy. Instead, they adopted a much harder tone, still invoking the trope of cosmopolitanism, but only as a rhetorical weapon. Cosmopolitanism became a virtue the own side respected and the other side lacked.<sup>46</sup>

Like their colleagues in Europe, the Western journalists in Shanghai, who were not at the front, wanted to support the war differently. They voluntarily mobilized themselves in a certain way, to accomplish their patriotic task of rallying public support for the war.<sup>47</sup> The press indeed played a crucial role, since the *Shanghaianders* impatiently awaited the latest news on the war in their home country.

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<sup>43</sup> "Zur Lage in Shanghai," SN, 7 August 1914; "Jusqu'ou? . . ." EDC, 8 August 1914; "Propos du jour," EDC, 8 August 1914; "Propos du Jour," EDC, 15 August 1914; Meyer, "Splitting," 59; Mathieu Gotteland, "Le rôle de la France dans le système impérial à Tianjin, 1914-1940" (paper presented at the French Colonial Historical Society Conference, Siem Reap (Cambodia), 24 June 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Bickers, *Getting Stuck in*. Chap. I; Meyer, "Splitting," 60-61.

<sup>45</sup> The DZC had a section about fellow Germans at the front: "Unsere Ostasiaten". Bickers, *Getting Stuck in*. is excellent on the about 200 British volunteers gone to Europe and the friends they left behind in Shanghai.

<sup>46</sup> "Englische und französische Kundgebungen," SN, 21 August 1914; "Menteurs! . . ." EDC, 29 August 1914.

<sup>47</sup> Christian Delporte, "Journalistes et correspondants de guerre," in *Encyclopédie de la Grande guerre, 1914-1918: Histoire et culture*, ed. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Jean-Jacques Becker (Paris: Bayard, 2013).

Via telegraph and domestic newspapers, European propaganda produced by governments and news agencies arrived in Shanghai, where it could spread its poison, albeit slowly. Both French and German newspapers adopted the war propaganda. Yet, whereas the former eagerly exploited all German “atrocities” in Louvain or Reims, the latter took a more defensive stance.<sup>48</sup> The word use in articles of the *EDC* regarding local events shows the evolution of the paper’s mentality. Before the war, Germans were neutrally designated as *Allemands*. From August 1914, this was often reduced to *Prussiens* (Prussians), which had a bad connotation from the Franco-Prussian War onward. The term of abuse *Boche*, widespread in Europe, was used for the first time only in late 1915, in an article on the German agent Nielsen (see below).<sup>49</sup>

#### LOCAL POLITICS AND SOCIAL LIFE UNDER PRESSURE

The war between the Entente and Germany also affected the composition of local political bodies. In September 1914, the only German member, representing the about 270 Germans living in the French Concession, was forced to resign from the French Municipal Council. The official reason was the restoration of the balance between the number of French and foreign councillors. In reality, the French local authorities were glad to see this enemy subject removed from the highest institution of the concession.<sup>50</sup> In the International Settlement, something similar happened. Before the war, the three most important communities always arranged to divide the seats of the SMC among themselves: the British got six, the Americans two, and the Germans got one. For a few years, the director of the *Deutsch-Asiatische Bank* H. Figge had been the vice-chairman. However, the first elections during the war showed that local politics obeyed the logic of war. Instigated by the British consul general Fraser, the Allied press campaigned against Figge. They argued that “this current war, an abominable crime against humanity prepared, wanted and unleashed by Germany, ma[de] it impossible to treat the municipal election of the International Settlement from a simple municipal point of view.”<sup>51</sup> The

<sup>48</sup> In fact, this difference in style reflected the broader tendencies in the domestic French and German press during the war. Stéphanie Dalbin, *Visions croisées franco-allemandes de la Première Guerre mondiale: Étude de deux quotidiens; la Metzger Zeitung et l’Est Républicain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 246–247.

<sup>49</sup> “Médecine pour l’Inde,” *EDC*, 30 October 1915.

<sup>50</sup> “Conseil d’administration municipale de la concession française,” *EDC*, 8 August 1914.

<sup>51</sup> “le crime abominable contre l’humanité qu’est la guerre actuelle, préparée, voulue et déchaînée par l’Allemagne, rende impossible de traiter les élections municipales de la



campaign of dissuasion succeeded: there would never be any German elected to the council again.<sup>52</sup>

At the start, no foreign inhabitant thought that “the war could affect his personal situation” in Shanghai.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, readings of the local press produced their effects on the social relations. In a letter to the editor of the *DZC*, a German suggested that his fellow countrymen should rethink their participation at international events:

As a citizen of Shanghai since many years, I'm in touch everyday with almost all nations represented in this international settlement. (. . .) [O]ur enemies, French as well as English, generally do not hesitate to talk about the war, which they normally condemn. (. . .) Some recent press articles have proven the fact that one finds with some people in Shanghai a good dose of spitefulness. In general, I have found the hatred of the English more pronounced than of the French (. . .). Since one can never know, when and where one encounters this hatred, it seems better for Germans to avoid the places, where enemy nationals gather in great numbers.<sup>54</sup>

A few initiatives trying to unite the whole foreign community around a single project failed. A British woman, married to a German, wanted to organize a charity ball in favor of all victims of war, regardless of nationality. Her “peace treaty for a couple of hours” was destined to fail, because the tensions between enemies had become insuperable. Thinking of their compatriots on the battlefield and the horrifying war stories, French and Germans alike refused to have a cheerful evening right next to their opponents.<sup>55</sup> For the same reasons, a lot of Germans

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concession internationale d'un simple point de vue municipal.” “La concession internationale et les élections municipales,” *EDC*, 23 January 1915. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

<sup>52</sup> Instead of a German, first the Russians, then the Japanese managed to send a representative to the council.

<sup>53</sup> “Français et Allemands à Changhai,” *EDC*, 12 December 1914.

<sup>54</sup> “Als langjähriger Einwohner Shanghais komme ich täglich in Berührung mit fast allen Nationen, die in dieser internationalen Niederlassung vertreten sind. (. . .) [U]nsere Feinde, Franzosen sowohl wie Engländer, scheuen sich im Allgemeinen nicht scheuen, das Gespräch auf den Krieg zu bringen, den sie mit nur wenigen Ausnahmen verdammen. (. . .) Das in Shanghai auch eine gute Portion Gehässigkeit bei Manchem anzutreffen ist, haben unter Anderem einige Zeitungsartikel in den letzten Tagen bewiesen. Im Allgemeinen habe ich (. . .) den Hass eher bei den Engländern als bei den Franzosen ausgesprochen gefunden. Da man nie wissen kann, wann und wo man solchem Hass begegnet, so scheint es mir geraten zu sein, dass der Deutsche die Stätten meidet, wo Angehörige der feindlichen Nationen sich in grösserer Zahl sammeln.” H., “Stimmungen in Shanghai,” *DZC*, 3 September 1914.

<sup>55</sup> “Au jour le jour,” *EDC*, 12 December 1914; “Ein ‘Wohltätigkeitsball’,” *DZC*, 24 December 1914.



campaigned against the organization of the horse races in wartime. However, some did not see why they had to change their habits and refused to hazard their relationship with friends belonging to the enemy. Germans and Frenchmen continued to watch the races, not bothered by the presence of participants belonging to enemy countries.<sup>56</sup>

Except for the rise of prices and a nationalist revival, the war did not make itself felt among Shanghai's foreign citizens.<sup>57</sup> Unlike their countrymen in Europe, the *Shanghaianders* could still enjoy a comfortable life with sports and holidays, making sure to avoid the places with too much enemy tourists of course. On evenings, music lovers could listen to the universal works of Handel, Beethoven, and Bizet, played by the German musicians of the municipal orchestra. So after a while, nationals of both the Central and Allied Powers worked out a *modus vivendi*, allowing them to continue business as usual. The contacts merely became a matter of politeness. Even on national holidays, mutual respect prevailed. When the German community celebrated the *Kaiser's* birthday for the first time during the war, they decided to limit decoration and flags in the French Concession to avoid provocation.<sup>58</sup>

Although foreign Shanghai could try their best to keep the peace, it could not control the events in the outside world. The torpedoing of the passenger ship *Lusitania* by a German submarine in May 1915 dealt a fatal blow to the relations between the foreign communities. The death of 1201 civilians crossing the Atlantic from New York to Liverpool shocked public opinion globally. Allied propaganda exploited the case and spread false rumors. While in Germany children allegedly had got a day-off from school to celebrate, the Germans in Shanghai were said to have organized parties at the *Club Concordia* and the German school.<sup>59</sup> More than elsewhere, the torpedoing of passenger ships heading to Europe such as the *Lusitania*

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<sup>56</sup> P. Westendorff, "Die Herbstrennen," *DZC*, 24 September 1914; H.T., "Deutsche Pflichten," *DZC*, 11 May 1915.

<sup>57</sup> However, foreign commerce in Shanghai strongly suffered from the consequences of nationalism. Trade with the enemy being forbidden as of 1915, British firms broke with their German partners and tried to get their hold on the latter's market share. This economic warfare spread to other nations such as the United States and France (to a lesser extent). Meyer, "Splitting."

<sup>58</sup> "Sommeraufenthalt," *DZC*, 8 June 1915; Rudolf Buck, "Zum Beginn der Sonntagskonzerte," *DZC*, 14 November 1914; "Flaggenschmuck an Kaisers Geburtstag," *DZC*, 25 January 1915.

<sup>59</sup> Bickers, *Getting Stuck in*. Chap. III.

and the *Ville de la Ciotat*<sup>60</sup> traumatized foreign Shanghai. Ocean liners were the principal means of communication for European expatriates in Shanghai. Increasingly isolated because of the war, they had to rely on this connection when going back to Europe, but it had now become a potential threat.

Considering the violent anti-German riots in Moscow, Liverpool, Johannesburg, and other cities, the *Lusitania* affair did not cause incidents of the same intensity in Shanghai.<sup>61</sup> A German and a Briton, former business partners, caused a scene in the tram. A French woman insulted a German-speaking Suisse family walking in the French park, believing they were Germans. The decision of the Shanghai clubs to kick out their German members was just another consequence, though one with high symbolic value. If even the highly cosmopolitan elite could not resist the nationalist temptation, the gap between the different communities had definitely become too deep. The few dozens of Germans, who had not yet withdrawn themselves, were thus excluded from the Shanghai Club, the Race Club, and the CSF. The German community was incensed about the expulsion but chose not to cause any provocation in order to keep the “harmony” (*Burgfrieden*). This defensive strategy—the Germans were now almost isolated—resulted in a code of conduct, in which the German and Austrian-Hungarian communities advised their members to exercise “elegant restraint” against enemy co-inhabitants and to stay in their own circle of friends.<sup>62</sup>

The news about the *Lusitania* might have been the immediate cause of the complete social segregation, the underlying reason was probably more profound. Although the conflict mainly took place in Europe, nationals of Allied and Central Powers were personally involved, since friends and relatives had been mobilized. As the war lasted, messages about fallen fellow *Shanghaianders* also reached Shanghai, causing much grief in the small communities. Those that stayed behind in the concessions felt obliged to do their part of the war effort. They gave large sums to charity funds, created to support their own soldiers,

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<sup>60</sup> The French mailboat *Ville de la Ciotat* was actually heading from East Asia to Marseille when an Austrian submarine sunk it in the Mediterranean on Christmas Eve 1915, which caused over eighty casualties.

<sup>61</sup> Panayi, *Germans*, 13; Eric Lohr, “Patriotic Violence and the State: The Moscow Riots of May 1915,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 3 (2003); Tilman Dederig, “‘Avenge the Lusitania’: The Anti-German Riots in South Africa in 1915,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 31, no. 3 (2013).

<sup>62</sup> “Au jour le jour,” *EDC*, 15 May 1915; “Incident regrettable,” *EDC*, 22 May 1915; “Shanghai clubs and German members. Important decisions reached,” *NCH*, 22 May 1915.

prisoners of war, and civilians. By organizing lectures, balls, and concerts, both sides collected huge amounts of money. In fact, the conflict had penetrated society so much, that they regarded frequenting shops or even doctors of enemy nationality as helping the enemy.<sup>63</sup> From this point of view, the foreigners in Shanghai had now also been mobilized socially. Arguably, foreign Shanghai started to resemble a situation of “total war,” where more and more aspects of social life were dominated by the conflict.<sup>64</sup>

#### SPY MANIA IN THE FRENCH CONCESSION

Even if the front line was far away from the foreign settlements of Shanghai, nationals of the belligerent states were still involved in the military operations. Especially, the consulate generals of the Allied Powers were cooperating to get intelligence on the activities of the Germans in East Asia. The French consul had German subjects in his jurisdiction watched and letters opened. The Allied consulates suspected the Germans to use the concessions as the Asian nerve center for global arms smuggling. In the end, the investigation of the local authorities led to several cases against alleged arms traffickers, of which the Nielsen affair was the most representative and most mediatized one. The lawsuit against the German Nielsen and its accomplices provoked a media storm opposing the German and the Allied press and hardened the public opinion on both sides. In a sense, while no one could directly blame the Shanghai Germans for the *Lusitania* disaster, the Nielsen affair was rooted in the local German community and brought the war much closer to Shanghai. If the *Lusitania* had already mobilized the minds, then the Nielsen affair gave the deathblow to the respectful relations between the foreign communities.

In the fall of 1915, Shanghai newspapers started reporting on arms and munition traffic, involving both Chinese and Germans of Shanghai. A German merchant, called Adolphe Nielsen, allegedly led the operations. The allied consuls and some newspapers even believed that the German consul general Knipping was the brain behind the conspiracy. Reportedly, the aim of the “Boches” was to

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<sup>63</sup> “En tram,” *EDC*, 24 February 1917.

<sup>64</sup> Other authors have called this phenomenon a “war culture,” being “the attitude of populations who, during several years, exclusively live in function of the war,” constantly adapting their beliefs and behavior. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gerd Krumeich, *La Grande Guerre: Une histoire franco-allemande* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008), 103.

“cause trouble in all the colonial possessions of the Allies.”<sup>65</sup> In fact, the allegations were not far from the truth, even though the German newspaper completely denied the facts.<sup>66</sup> This local arms traffic was part of a larger undercover operation of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The *Reich* wanted to arm Indian resistance fighters, who sought to overthrow the British colonial regime. By supporting them, Germany wished to force the British to keep their troops in the colonies instead of sending them to the battlefields of Europe. The consulate general of Shanghai functioned indeed as the nerve center of the operations in East Asia. Diplomatic documents prove that Nielsen really worked for the consulate’s secret “Upper Office” and bought small amounts of arms and munition to export to South-Asia. To his Chinese accomplices, Nielsen told it was medicine that had to be transported to India.<sup>67</sup>

Since Nielsen could not be charged directly, he escaped a trial. This urged the French concessionary police to track him even closer and collect evidence. In early March 1916, the French authorities got a tip from the British consul general Fraser that there were boxes of ammunition on Nielsen’s property in the French Concession.<sup>68</sup> The discovery of the shells got ample coverage in the local press. Allied and German newspapers put considerable effort into respectively attacking and defending the Shanghai Germans. False accusations were rampant: on the one hand, the German consulate was said to be a “complete war organization,” on the other hand, the French would have set up the whole story to compromise all Shanghai Germans.<sup>69</sup> Immediately after the shell discovery, the French press began campaigning for the deportation of all Germans from China, “just like General Sarrail ha[d] done in Thessaloniki.”<sup>70</sup> If the Germans stayed, The *EDC* asserted, the foreign settlements would no longer be safe. Once again, Nielsen went unpunished. Although he lived in the

<sup>65</sup> “Médecine pour l’Inde,” *EDC*, 30 October 1915.

<sup>66</sup> “Ein Waffenhandel,” *DZC*, 2 November 1915.

<sup>67</sup> Secret letter from Schaller (former secretary of German Consulate in Hongkong) to German FO, 8 May 1920, R 23202, PA AA; Raj Kumar, *Essays on Indian Freedom Movement* (New Delhi: Discovery, 2003), 85; Thomas G. Fraser, “Germany and Indian Revolution, 1914–18,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977): 265–266.

<sup>68</sup> Private letter from Fraser (British Consul General in Shanghai) to Naggiar (French Consul General in Shanghai), 1 March 1916, 635PO/B/57, CADN.

<sup>69</sup> “En pleine Bocherie!,” *EDC*, 11 March 1916; “Eine unverschämte Verleumdung,” *DZC*, 4 March 1916.

<sup>70</sup> “Les Allemands hors de Chine,” *EDC*, 11 March 1916. Early 1916, the French general Sarrail had ordered the expulsion of all enemy foreigners from Thessaloniki, that Allied forces had occupied a few months before. Stephen Pope and Elizabeth-Anne Wheal, *Dictionary of the First World War*, 2nd ed. (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2003), 418.

French Concession, his German nationality protected him from trial by the local French authorities. Due to the extraterritoriality principle, only the German tribunal court could judge him. Moreover, in times of war, the German consulate would never give up on someone who had worked for them in the past. For want of the chief suspect, the French authorities contented themselves with the prosecution and conviction of his supposed accomplices.<sup>71</sup> The French consul general's aim was to create a big fuss to discredit all Germans and Austrians in Shanghai, to which the Allied press gratefully contributed.<sup>72</sup> During the whole trial, the foreign press exploited the opportunity to blacken the good name of the other newspapers, the consulates of the enemy, etc. Without any reticence toward the foreign neighbors, the press set up public opinion against each other. Especially the *EDC* depicted the Germans in Shanghai as a criminal organization wanting to blow up the foreign settlements. To the newspaper, the events in Shanghai were not different from all the crimes the Germans had committed worldwide like Verdun and the torpedoing of the *Lusitania* and of the *Ville de La Ciotat*.<sup>73</sup>

The Allied press' focus on threats inside the foreign community produced its effects. Like in Europe, the "spy mania" (French: *espionniste*) of the newspapers was meant to promote national unity and sharpen the patriotism of their readers.<sup>74</sup> With success, for the Shanghai French were frightened of this "enemy within". French neighbors to the German Medical School reported to the police that Germans were holding secret conferences there and feared that they were planning to blow up police stations. Readers of the *EDC* asked what measures the French Concession would take to guarantee their security.<sup>75</sup> However, the demands of part of the public to take firm action against the Shanghai Germans sharply contrasted with the actual policy of the local leaders. The authorities seemed to adapt only slowly to the changing mentality of their citizens, but they did increase the pressure on enemy nationals. This discrepancy could be found at

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<sup>71</sup> They both were sentenced to several months in prison. Unsurprisingly, given the war context, archival documents of the French consulate strongly suggest that evidence had been manipulated. Fraser to Naggiar, 20 March 1916, 635PO/B/57, CADN; Naggiar to Conty, 21 March 1916, 635PO/A/286, CADN.

<sup>72</sup> Naggiar to Conty (French Minister Plenipotentiary in Beijing), 6 March 1916, 635PO/A/286, CADN.

<sup>73</sup> "L'Affaire Nielsen ou plutôt Les Complots boches contre les Alliés en Extrême-Orient," *EDC*, 25 March 1916.

<sup>74</sup> Dalbin, *Visions*, 346.

<sup>75</sup> "Des obus dans un jardin," *EDC*, 11 March 1916; Neighbors of the German Medicine School to French police, 31 October 1916, 635PO/B/57bis, CADN.

almost every place with a large German minority. Research on other countries such as Brazil and New Zealand has shown that public opinion generally called for harsh measures against the Germans in retaliation for the German attacks on civilians, thereby going much further than what their government intended.<sup>76</sup>

After the trial, the police of the International Settlement and the French Concession became much more nervous. They followed and arrested any German or Austro-Hungarian who behaved in a suspect manner. Then again, the Nielsen affair clearly illustrated the limited possibilities the local authorities had to act against the Germans dwelling in the concessions. Legal action against enemy nationals was futile given their extraterritorial status. Furthermore, in whatever way the English consul general tried to force the Municipal Council to take harsher measures, the SMC refused to break with the long-standing tradition of neutrality. The preservation of good relations in the concession was more important than international politics. In the French Concession, the situation could have been different, since the French consul general had much more power than his English colleague. The reality was much more complicated. A passenger on the French tram explained it as follows:

We should not forget (. . .) that we are in a very strange situation here. We live side by side with the Germans although they are enemies; we stare at each other and we still cannot give each other a beating. We are in the French Concession and we cannot expulse them. Why? The reason is simple: we are not at home; we are in a foreign country and in the face of the Chinese the European community always stays the intruder, where they would like to see reasons for division: we fear the war as well, which could easily break out in Shanghai and we back down in the face of this alternative, which would stress out everybody, ruin business for a while and could cost the lives of many Frenchmen.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Panayi, *Germans*, 11–21.

<sup>77</sup> “Il ne faut pas oublier (. . .) que nous sommes ici dans une situation très bizarre. Nous vivons côte à côte avec les Allemands bien qu’ennemis; nous nous regardons comme des chiens de faïence et nous ne pouvons cependant nous taper dessus. Nous sommes en Concession Française et nous ne pouvons les expulser. Pourquoi? La raison en est simple: c’est que nous ne sommes pas chez nous; nous sommes en pays étranger et devant les Chinois la communauté européenne reste toujours l’intruse où ils seraient contents de voir des sujets de division: on craint également la guerre qui ne manquerait pas de se déchaîner à Shanghai et l’on recule devant cette alternative qui mettrait tout le monde sur les dents, ruinerait les affaires pour un temps et pourrait coûter la vie à beaucoup de Français.” “En tram,” *EDC*, 24 February 1917.

As long as China, still the legal sovereign on the concession's territory, stayed neutral, or even favorably toward the Central Powers, the French Concession could not take firm action against its enemy inhabitants. The passenger expressed a fear shared by many: an open conflict could have had consequences for the position of all Europeans in China. As a result, the French Municipality tried to keep the peace among its residents. For example, after three Frenchmen stained and removed the German road sign indicating the way to the German Medical School, the French police apologized to the school and replaced the sign immediately.<sup>78</sup>

#### WHEN CHINA FINALLY JOINED THE ALLIES

The year 1917 marked a turning point in the global history of the First World War. Following the example of United States, a whole range of non-European states joined the Allies. On March 14, a month after the United States, China decided to break off all diplomatic relations with Germany and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Unlike in Brazil later that year, the break-off did not spark violent anti-German protests in the streets of Shanghai.<sup>79</sup> Most likely, Shanghai's particular political situation, that is, the precarious condition of all Europeans as mentioned by the French passenger prevented any outbursts of this kind. Nevertheless, the weakening of the German political situation in China allowed much more room for maneuver to Shanghai's foreign authorities. Yet, due to Shanghai's semicolonial status, the harshest measure—deportation—had to be endorsed by the Chinese authorities, whose approval only came after the war.

The local French authorities immediately found a pretext in the break-off of Sino-German relations to take action. On March 17, the French municipal police seized the buildings of the German Medical and Engineering School (*Deutsche Medizin- und Ingenieurschule für Chinesen*). Due to the extension of the French Concession in 1914, the terrains of the school had changed from Chinese to French-administered territory. At this occasion, the French and German consuls general had agreed that the French Municipality could not enter the school without permission nor intervene in its internal affairs. Yet, from the first war years onward, the French consulate had considered sequestering the school to install a French institution of the

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<sup>78</sup> Marie du Bois-Reymond, *Die Deutschen und der Krieg in China*, April 1918, *Nachlass Marie du Bois-Reymond*, N 2055/1, Federal Archives, Berlin.

<sup>79</sup> Luebke, *Germans*, 123.

same kind in its buildings.<sup>80</sup> After bombs had been found on German ships in the area, the French asserted that the school formed a danger to the security of the concessions, since there were “machines able to produce the most dangerous equipment.” Hence, a large force of sixty armed police officers ordered the German professors and over 400 Chinese students to leave the premises.<sup>81</sup> The seizure of the school roused the emotions in foreign Shanghai. The wife of one of the German professors wrote in her diary: “Enormous agitation [reigned] in the whole city, schadenfreude among the enemies, grief and pain among the Germans. For the first time out here, we clearly experienced the war first hand.”<sup>82</sup> In the next few weeks, the French police also seized other large properties owned by Germans: the *Deutscher Gartenklub*, the private estate of Dr Paulun and a private garden. The *Conseil Municipal* quickly transformed the garden club into a public park and symbolically renamed it the *Verdun Gardens*.<sup>83</sup>

Taking advantage of the weakened political status of the Germans in China, the French consul general tightened his grip on the German residents in his concession. The French authorities gave a rather loose interpretation of Chinese declarations made after the break-off of Sino-German relations. To the French, it was clear that the Germans lost their extraterritorial rights, although the issue was in fact still being negotiated. Nonetheless, from the end of March 1917, the Germans, first of all, had to present themselves at the police station to hand in all their arms (just like in Chinese territory). Second, no German could live in the concession without a residence permit. Entering the concession was only allowed to license holders and some businessmen. Third, men were obliged to present themselves daily and women weekly at the police station. Fourth, the enemy residents were forced to

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<sup>80</sup> Naggiar to Delcassé (French Minister of Foreign Affairs), 17 July 1915, 148CPCOM/138, FMFA; Roswitha Reinbothe, ed. *Tongji-Universität in Shanghai: Dokumente zur Gründungsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 438–442.

<sup>81</sup> The Shanghai French quickly transferred the school's equipment to their own university, the *Aurore*, but awaited the end of the war to install the French-Chinese Institute of Commerce and Industry in the classrooms. Meanwhile, the Chinese local authorities had found vacant buildings to continue the teaching of the Chinese students. “Die Deutsche Medizin- und Ingenieurschule,” *DZC*, 22 March 1917; “Fermeture de l'école de médecine allemande,” *EDC*, 24 March 1917; “Zur Schliessung der Deutschen Medizin- und Ingenieurschule in Schanghai,” *DZC*, 24 March 1917; Kreissler, *L'action*, 147–148.

<sup>82</sup> “Ungeheure Aufregung herrschte in der ganzen Stadt, Schadenfreude bei den Feinden, Kummer und Schmerz bei den Deutschen. Zum ersten Mal spürten wir hier draussen den Krieg deutlich am eigenen Leibe.” du Bois-Reymond, “Deutschen.”

<sup>83</sup> “Weitere Massnahmen der Franzosen,” *DZC*, 26 March 1917; “Von der französischen Niederlassung,” *DZC*, 30 April 1917; French Municipal Council, *Compte rendu de la gestion pour l'exercice 1917 – Budget 1918* (Shanghai: Imprimerie Municipale, 1917), 64.



register all their belongings and hand in their title deeds.<sup>84</sup> In reaction, many Germans followed the advice of the DZC to escape the “French arbitrariness” by moving from the French Concession to the International Settlement. At the end of the year, only ten Germans and one Austrian lived on French-administered territory, while in 1915 there were 270 and 27, respectively.<sup>85</sup>

Chinese political leaders such as Sun Yat-sen and Duan Qirui debated their relations with Germany for another five months. Only on the 14th of August, China officially declared war on the German *Kaiserreich* and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. It immediately terminated all agreements with these countries. Therefore, Germans and Austrian-Hungarians lost the privilege of extraterritoriality. Following the French measures of March 1917, all enemy male residents now had to present themselves twice a month at the Chinese authorities, though women and children only once per trimester. China also licensed all German officials working in the Chinese administration. In addition, the Chinese government shut down all German clubs, banks, and post offices as well as all German periodicals. The SMC adopted the Chinese measures as far as it had not implemented them already. Given the far-reaching previous measures, nothing changed in the French Concession.<sup>86</sup> Such anti-German actions were not unusual during the Great War. From 1917, Brazil did not only close down all German-language newspapers and schools but even forbid all public conversations in German. In the United States, it also “became dangerous, and in some jurisdictions illegal, to speak German in public.”<sup>87</sup>

The measures imposed by the Chinese and foreign authorities had severe consequences for the Shanghai Germans. Following the Chinese orders, the police of the international settlement sealed the premises of the *Deutsch-Asiatische Bank* and the editorial office of the German newspapers. In addition, on that same 17th of August armed police officers closed down the *Club Concordia* on the Bund, the heart of German social life. All members left the building in bewilderment and

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<sup>84</sup> “Der französische Anschlag,” *DZC*, 26 March 1917; “Aus der französischen Niederlassung,” *DZC*, 27 March 1917; “Aus der französischen Niederlassung,” *DZC*, 29 March 1917; “Die französische Niederlassung,” *DZC*, 31 March 1917; “Von der französischen Niederlassung,” *DZC*, 2 April 1917.

<sup>85</sup> “Französische Gewaltmassregeln,” *DZC*, 26 March 1917; French Municipal Council, *Compte rendu 1917–1918*, 161–162.

<sup>86</sup> Kreissler, *L'action*, 23–24; Schmitt-Englert, *Deutsche*, 82.

<sup>87</sup> Luebke, *Germans*, 130–131; David Laskin, “Ethnic Minorities at War (USA),” 1914–1918-online: *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (2016), [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/ethnic\\_minorities\\_at\\_war\\_usa](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/ethnic_minorities_at_war_usa).

gathered at the other side of the road. In addition, a large crowd was attracted by the sight of a strong police force. While watching the eviction of the club members, a Frenchman in the crowd gave a sarcastic speech, but no overt clash between Germans and other foreigners occurred.<sup>88</sup> Until the end of the war, Germans and Austrians kept living in the concessions in a relatively quiet manner, although their freedom of movement had been limited. Nielsen's fate was worse: having lost his extraterritoriality, he was imprisoned by the Chinese authorities because of "political undertakings against an Allied State" from April 1918 until deportation in 1919. Other than that, the children were allowed to continue to go to the German school and even without a club, there were enough other bars in town where Germans could meet. Deprived of the German newspapers, the community shared translated Swedish articles to have some 'neutral' information about the war.<sup>89</sup>

The news of the Armistice reached Shanghai on the 12th of November 1918. Ten days later, the Allied consulates and the SMC organized extensive celebrations. Nationals of the Allied countries could party, eat, and drink in honor of their collective victory. Together, they paraded in front of the ex-German club, waving cartoons of the *Kaiser* and German generals. Afterward, they fixed these pictures on a wooden frame that carried the words "House of Hohenzollern" and put fire to the whole thing. Early December, a large group of French marines pulled down the *Illtis* statue, another German symbol.<sup>90</sup>

The victory finally allowed the Allies to proceed with their plan to deport all Germans from China, as they had managed to do in Great Britain and Australia. From Hong Kong, a genuine British colony, Germans were immediately expelled in 1914. Prior to the Armistice, the delicate balance between the Western and Chinese powers in Shanghai hindered any measures of that kind. In the meantime, the British seized the businesses and belongings of the Germans in the International Settlement, like the French had done in their

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<sup>88</sup> "Municipal Notification No. 2461: The Deutsch-Asiatische Bank, the Club Concordia, 'The War' and the 'Deutsche Zeitung für China'," *Municipal Gazette*, 23 August 1917; "German Club and Newspapers," *NCH*, 25 August 1917; "Fermeture du Concordia," *EDC*, 18 August 1917.

<sup>89</sup> "Les Boches ont encore un club," *EDC*, 25 August 1917; du Bois-Reymond, "Deutschen"; List of interned Germans in Shanghai, 1918, Peking II 1581, PA AA; Nielsen to the German Ministry for Reconstruction, 12 February 1920, R 23202, PA AA.

<sup>90</sup> Francis Lister Hawks Pott, *A Short History of Shanghai: Being an Account of the Growth and Development of the International Settlement* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1928), 227–229; Bickers, "Moving Stories," 839.

concession. This measure seriously impoverished the majority of the Germans, except for those who managed to entrust their possessions to Chinese friends. In the end, China complied with the request of France and Great Britain, who wanted to break the German competition on the Chinese market through the expulsion.<sup>91</sup> However, China wanted to avoid an unnecessarily severe treatment of the Germans, so it excluded all teachers, doctors as well as all elderly and ill people from deportation. Others escaped by hiding themselves with Chinese friends. Nevertheless, between February and August 1919, about 2,200 Germans passed through Shanghai in order to be deported by the British, French, and Japanese.<sup>92</sup> In 1920, a few had already returned (see Table 1), but reintegration in the international community proved to be very difficult.

## CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed the cohabitation of different imperial diasporas in Shanghai before and during the First World War. I have argued that the outbreak of the global armed conflict had a decisive influence on local interdiaspora relations. In the early 20th century the relations between *Shanghaianders* of different nationality were determined by both long-distance nationalism and cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, the Western expatriates were deeply embedded in their own national community and maintained a strong connection with the homeland via various means of communication. On the other hand, thanks to the international bonds knit in business and social life, the Shanghai French Germans and British had developed a sense of belonging to the port city and a feeling of solidarity with other Westerners. However, this “localized” or “everyday cosmopolitanism” faded out after the outbreak of war, before being overrun by virulent nationalism. Slowly but surely, a European interstate war was transported to Shanghai and transformed into a small-scale interethnic conflict. As I have argued, this mobilization of the minds occurred for three reasons.

First, war operations quickly spread out over the entire globe. The general mobilization order drew the other Shanghainese into the war as

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<sup>91</sup> Meyer, “Splitting.”

<sup>92</sup> Schmitt-Englert, *Deutsche*, 81; Kreissler, *L'action*, 25–26; Matthew Stibbe, “Enemy Aliens and Internment,” 1914–1918-online: *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (2016), [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/enemy\\_aliases\\_and\\_internment](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/enemy_aliases_and_internment).

their friends and family went to—and died at—the front. The more they heard about the war, the more they felt nationalism was their patriotic duty, even in Shanghai. Second, in this isolated semicolony far from the home country, the Shanghai foreigners had to rely primarily on newsprint to stay informed about the war. The local press enthusiastically adopted the European propaganda and sought to manipulate opinion to revive patriotism among its readers. Third, local events disrupted the peaceful but fragile *modus vivendi* of the foreign community. Fear of the “enemy within” quickly replaced mutual trust.

While in other contemporary and more recent cases interdiaspora conflict involved widespread physical violence, the relative peace in wartime Shanghai is striking. Although, like elsewhere in the world, the claims of the public opinion were more extreme than the actions of the local authorities, no violent clashes occurred. I have argued that Shanghai’s semicolonial status mainly explains why the escalation was delayed and contained. Power over the concessions was fragmented in the hands of the home country, local, and Chinese governments. Whereas France and Great Britain were at war with Germany since 1914 and took corresponding measures, their respective concessions in Shanghai did not do anything until 1917. The political regime of the concessions gave the foreign local authorities some power to act against enemy subjects, but they could not openly violate the Chinese neutrality. Only when the three administrations concurred, firm measures could be taken. This political ambiguity froze the situation of 1914 until China declared war on Germany. Moreover, all principal belligerent nations were represented in the city, thus constituting a dangerous cocktail. However, they all thanked their presence to European imperialism. In order not to undermine their position in an increasingly anti-imperialist country, the Westerners preferred to hold on to peaceful coexistence. An open interdiaspora conflict would have caused the loss of all their privileges. As seen in the introduction, this last factor was also decisive in the containment of the Serbo-Croatian conflict in Australia.

The case of Shanghai has once again shown the complexity of interdiaspora relations in multiethnic urban spaces. The First World War erupted in a globalized world, where nationals of European nation-states could be found on six continents. Both cosmopolitan cities and import of homeland conflicts were by-products of these entanglements. The importation of the war into Shanghai shows that nationalism has been a force powerful enough to instigate hatred at a very long distance. This force has sealed the fate of cosmopolitanism in many multiethnic cities.