

The Third Space between the Domestic and the Foreign:

Alsace in France's *Ancien Régime*

Mark A. Connelly

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Dr. Roeber

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Since the end of the Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia, the region<sup>1</sup> known as Alsace has remained central to understanding Western European power politics – both symbolically and geographically. When one considers the basic difficulties of bringing a German-speaking territory with different cultures, dialects, and ways of life than those of the rest of the France into the larger kingdom, one is quick to wonder about the French monarchy's apparent desire to have Alsace, and how effective an absolutist regime could be in such a territory, even in this, the archetype of absolutist regimes in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through the piecemeal conquering and annexation of Alsace by France, Louis XIV added territory to his kingdom that was neither Francophone, nor populated by a majority of Roman Catholics, nor historically associated with Paris or Versailles, while changing the face of geopolitics in the region. In the face of a Protestant population throughout Alsace, the regime had difficulty eliminating the practice of faiths other than Roman Catholicism, even after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, although one can question whether that had been a motive for the conquest. In addition to the government's links to religion, the changes in how the region was administered secularly and in the monarchy's visibility played a role in the region. Considering that most, if not all, of these territories had been gained through warfare, further construction and focus around the military in the region could suggest further rationale for French expansionism. While the government in France attempted to make Alsace more of an integral part of the larger kingdom dominated by Louis XIV and his successors, the geographic separation as well as religious differences rendered the region a third space politically and culturally between the older parts of France under the Bourbons and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation under the Habsburgs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this text, I use region in the general sense of the word, rather than in the French governmental usage of *région*.

<sup>2</sup> Note that all of the translated quotes are my personal translations.

Before dissecting the effects of French absolutism on the region of Alsace, one must first define how Alsace was conceptualized geographically in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and whether the concept changed during that time period; from there, one can analyze the societal and political structures within the region. Geographic concerns, especially with respect to Louis XIV's rights to sovereignty and territorial holdings in the newly acquired territories to the east, were clearly understood to be vital during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as illustrated in a 5 April 1663 administrative letter to the *intendant* in Lorraine and Alsace.<sup>3</sup> Due to the geographic fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, however, Alsace was by no means unified politically or geographically at the time of the Peace of Westphalia, as clearly depicted by Livet's map of the various sovereignties and jurisdictions within Alsace in 1648. If one uses the trek from Colmar to Haguenau as an example, one faced perhaps a dozen or more border crossings if one went in a rather straight line by land. These border crossings would most likely include entrances into land owned by Württemberg, Hanau-Lichtenberg, and the territories held by the Bishop of Strasbourg, amongst smaller territories held by knights, free cities, and others. Even if one went using the Rhine River, a person faced at least two land borders from Colmar to the Rhine, and at least one from the Rhine to Haguenau, not counting the borders that one would pass along the river itself.<sup>4</sup> This fragmentation within Alsace had the potential to cause diverse difficulties with the implementation of an absolutist regime within the region, due to the lack of centralization.

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<sup>3</sup> G. B. Depping, compiler, *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV entre le cabinet du roi, les secrétaires d'état, le chancelier de France et les intendants et gouverneurs des provinces, les présidents, procureurs et avocats généraux des parlements et autres cours de justice, le gouverneur de la Bastille, les évêques, les corps municipaux, etc. etc.*, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, Première Série : Histoire Politique (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1852-1855), 3:22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Livet, *L'Intendance d'Alsace sous Louis XIV: 1648-1715*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 128 (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1956), Map attached to the back cover: "L'Alsace en 1648: La mosaïque territoriale et politique."

Given this hodge-podge of separate territories within the region of Alsace, one cannot say that France really obtained sovereignty over all of the Alsatian territories in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia. Rather, while the Treaty of Münster, a part of the Peace of Westphalia, is not ambiguous about the fate of the lands held by the Austrian Habsburgs, the status of other territories, such as Lower Alsace, remained rather murky due to wording in the document. Certain other lands, such as Strasbourg, technically remained a part of the Holy Roman Empire. Regardless of whether these territories had rightfully belonged to the Bourbon dynasty according to the Treaty of Münster, the monarchy intended on claiming them as their own, through a various number of strategies.<sup>5</sup> Of course, the French monarchy did not rest upon its laurels in trying to expand the kingdom. Indeed, France gained many of the free cities, such as Colmar, in the 1670s, and Strasbourg in 1681, although through forced occupation and warfare.<sup>6</sup> Even beforehand, though, one sees in this 22 February 1665 administrative letter, written by the royal *intendant* in Alsace, one of the main non-war tactics for consolidation of sovereignty and territorial holdings in the region by the French monarchy:

Since you know that all of the gentlemen in this canton [in Lower Alsace] claim to be part of the [Holy Roman] Empire and not to be subjects of the King, in order to subjugate them to His rule through gentle measures, there is no better way than to purchase for His Majesty from the latter all of the lands and *seigneuries* for sale, and if it pleases His Majesty, to give them to French gentlemen [and others] on the condition that they claim to be under His Majesty's rule, that they recognize no other jurisdiction other than His own, and that they only pay dues to His Majesty.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 116-118; Franklin L. Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition: 1648-1789* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 29-31.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Jacques Hatt and others, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, ed. Philippe Dollinger, Univers de la France (Toulouse, France: Édouard Privat, 1970), 279-282.

<sup>7</sup> Translated from Depping, *Correspondance administrative*, 4:664, originally: “car vous sçavés que tous le gentilshommes de ce canton [dans la basse Alsace] prétendent relever immédiatement de l[’a Sainte-]Empire [romain], et n’estre pas sujets du roy; et que pour les y assujettir par des voyes de douceur, il n’y a pas de meilleur moyen que d’acquérir des derniers de S. M. toutes les terres et seigneuries de ce canton qui seront à vendre; et qu’il plaise à S. M. les donner ou à des gentilshommes françois [et d’autres] à condition de les relever de S. M., de ne reconnoistre autre jurisdiction que sienne, et de ne payer aucune reconnoissance qu’à S. M.”

With this letter, one not only sees the desire for territorial expansionism; there are also elements of a desire on the part of the monarchy to set the geographic boundaries of the kingdom more concretely, as well as to change the geo-cultural dynamic of politics within the region, due to the resettlement of loyal subjects, most likely Francophone, within the region.<sup>8</sup> In such a situation, the absolutist state would be able to play down the elements of the third space through integration into the larger whole of France – enlarging France not only territorially, but also culturally.

One of the most important questions that one must address in understanding Alsace's relationship with the rest of France in the context of Louis XIV's absolutist regime is how the differences in religion between Alsace and greater France played a role in the success of absolutism within the territory itself. After the Reformation, and continuing on into the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, because of the diversity of rule and land ownership in the region, different parts of Alsace were split between Catholicism and various sects of Protestantism. For example, Strasbourg, a city along the Rhine River with great symbolic importance, had been primarily Protestant during this time period.<sup>9</sup> Alsace's role as a third space with respect to religion became clear both before and after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, because of both the separation from the rest of France and because of the weaker, if present, efforts for the catholicization of the population than one would see in the more traditional territories of the Kingdom of France.

Laws controlling the population of France and how they could worship during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were far from rare. During 1685, multiple declarations were passed restricting the actions of people of the Reformed faith, building up little by little towards the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. One declaration in particular, dated 14 August 1685, restricted Protestants'

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Hatt and others, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, 266-267.

freedom of movement with respect to worship: “no one professing the supposed Reformed faith may attend religious services located within bailiwicks or other local jurisdictions in which they either do not have their principal domicile, or in jurisdictions in which they had resided for less than one year without interruption.”<sup>10</sup> While the basis given within the declaration does not refer to Alsace specifically, laws such as these had the power to restrict interactions between the kings’ subjects, and could act as a buffer between Protestants within the traditional areas of France and the new territories acquired near the Rhine River.<sup>11</sup> The month prior, in another declaration registered 26 July 1685, and only months before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the monarchy dropped the death penalty for emigrating from the kingdom without permission, while at the same time reaffirming the existing restrictions. While this law did not specifically refer to Protestants, it was passed within close proximity time-wise with other, similar laws restricting Protestants.<sup>12</sup> This weakening of the penalties for emigration also mirrors certain sentiments contained within the Revocation itself, and is most likely a partial precursor to the edict.<sup>13</sup> According to Streitberger, similar sorts of anti-immigration laws also applied to Protestants wishing to immigrate to Alsace.<sup>14</sup> With the prohibitions against worship and immigration to Alsace for non-residents, the territory acted, in a theoretical sense, as a foreign nation from the rest of France for other Protestants.

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<sup>10</sup> Translated from Louis XIV, France, *Declaration du roy, portant que ceux de la R. P. R. ne pourront aller à l’exercice aux Temples hors des Baillages où ils sont demeurans* [microfilm], Goldsmiths’-Kress library of economic literature, no. 2615 (Paris: Frederic Leonard, 1685), 4, originally: “aucunes personnes faisant profession de la R. P. R. [religion prétendue réformée] ne puissent aller à l’exercice aux Temples qui se trouveront dans l’étenduë des Baillages & Sénéchaussées où elles n’ont pas leur principal domicile, ny fait leur demeure ordinaire pendant un an entier sans discontinuation.”

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Louis XIV, France, *Declaration du roy, pour la commutation de peine de mort en celle des Galeres, contre les François qui passent dans les Pays Etrangers* [microfilm], Goldsmiths’-Kress library of economic literature, no. 2614 (Paris: Frederic Leonard, 1685), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Louis XIV, France, *Edit du roy, portant défenses de faire aucun Exercice public de la R. P. R. dans son Royaume* [microfilm], Goldsmiths’-Kress library of economic literature, no. 2619 (Paris: Frederic Leonard, 1685), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ingeborg Streitberger, *Der Königliche Prätor von Strassburg 1685-1789: Freie Stadt im Absoluten Staat*, ed. Martin Göhring, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 23 (Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1961), 84.

The capstone moment against Protestants in late 17<sup>th</sup> century France was the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, also called the Edict of Fontainebleau, which was registered on 22 October 1685. Although this edict did revoke religious toleration of some Protestants, it was specific as to which sect: in particular, “supposed Reformed faith.”<sup>15</sup> The edict does not appear to contain any particular exemptions for Alsace or other newly acquired territories, and is rather insistent on the totality of the ban within lands under Louis XIV’s sovereignty.<sup>16</sup> Because of the uneven distribution of sects throughout Alsace, the direct impact of the edict upon the population varied from village to village. “Indeed, these laws were not applied as severely to Lutherans as to people of the Reformed faith, since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes did not directly pertain to them.”<sup>17</sup> A dozen years after the Revocation, within Strasbourg proper, the people following the Reformed, or Calvinist, faith comprised approximately 5.75% of the population, making it a rather insignificant minority, while Lutherans formed the overwhelming majority, with about 74.92% of the population adhering to that faith.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, emigration from Switzerland caused certain communities, such as Ste-Marie-aux-Mines, which was on the border between Alsace and Lorraine, to have more Protestant adherents who followed Reformed rather than Lutheran practices during the decade following the Revocation.<sup>19</sup> On one hand, one can ask whether the Revocation was effective in changing the religious balance between Reformed and Lutheran parishioners in Alsace. In Strasbourg, the Reformed faith had not been allowed, even

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<sup>15</sup> Translated from Louis XIV, France, *Edit du roy*, 3, originally: “Religion Pretenduë Reformée”; this was also abbreviated as “R.P.R.” within the original source.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Translated from Streitberger, *Der Königliche Prätor von Strassburg*, 89, originally: “Zwar galten diese Gesetze für die Lutheraner nicht in derselben Schärfe wie für die Reformierten; von der Aufhebung des Toleranzediktes waren sie nicht unmittelbar betroffen.”

<sup>18</sup> Percentages calculated from figures in Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 115.

<sup>19</sup> Rebecca McCoy, “Religious Accommodation and Political Authority in an Alsatian Community, 1648-1715,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52, no. 2 (April 2001): 253, <http://journals.cambridge.org/> (accessed 24 April 2008).

before the Revocation.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, the Reformed church on the Alsatian side of Ste-Marie-aux-Mines remained after the Revocation, and was protected by the 1697 Treaty of Rijswijk.<sup>21</sup> This fact alone suggests the rather foreign nature of Alsace within the French context – both within the general society and within the larger political framework.

Looking at the issue of religious divisions from another angle, an evaluation of the success of the Revocation in Alsace requires the evaluation of the implicit efforts to change the population balance to favor Catholics through immigration to Alsace or conversion. A successful, overwhelming shift in religious demographics towards the Roman Catholic faith would show the power of the regime to integrate Alsace into the larger whole rather than leave it as a third space within the kingdom. Laws passed by the king in the 1680s had tried to induce Protestants into converting to Catholicism through monetary reward, although the Alsatian Protestants in general did not take the bait.<sup>22</sup> In the three decades between 1697 and 1726, Strasbourg saw an absolute boom in the Catholic population, especially in comparison with the Protestant faiths. While the total population in Strasbourg increased by 31.49% during that time period, the Catholic population increased by 104.73%, with the percentage of Catholics in the city going from 19.33% in 1697 to 30.10% in 1726, although this was mostly due to Francophone newcomers to the region.<sup>23</sup> Although these changes were significant, they were not dramatic enough to change Alsace into a truly Roman Catholic territory, as one would have found in the other regions of France. Due to the close link between the conceptualization of France and its monarchy with the Roman Catholic Church, Alsace remained not only geographically, but also religiously, outside of the norms for greater France.

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<sup>20</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 104.

<sup>21</sup> McCoy, “Religious Accommodation and Political Authority,” 275-276; Rijswijk can also be spelled as Ryswick.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 265, 269.

<sup>23</sup> Percentages calculated from figures in Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 115-116.

One of the interesting phenomena that occurred in Alsace beginning the year before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was a private ruling by Louis XIV that shifted ownership and worship within Protestant churches (both Lutheran and Reformed) into Catholic hands should there be no space, or not enough space, for Roman Catholic worship within a town. In some cases, this meant a complete takeover or closing of the church; in many others, though, only the choir of the church was affected, meaning that Protestants and Catholics in some communities would worship within the same building.<sup>24</sup> In a sense, these buildings represented microcosms of Alsace itself during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century – having both Protestant and Catholic inhabitants, in various ratios, interacting within a third space.

Of all of the symbols that the Catholicization efforts brought forth within Alsace, one stands out as a pinnacle example of how the regime within France attempted to change the region. Since not long after Strasbourg came under French sovereignty, a few years before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the large gothic cathedral was returned to the Roman Catholic Church. While the transfer of the church from Protestant into Catholic hands in 1681 represented the attempted imposition of the monarch's faith within the city, it also had widespread political ramifications.<sup>25</sup> Not only were there an elaborate amount of festivities, but Louis XIV himself attended one of the first masses after the transfer, in October 1681, marking the symbolic nature of Catholicism within the monarchy and its direct importance to the monarch himself.<sup>26</sup> This event also marks one of the other characteristics of Louis's attempt to obtain greater sovereignty over the territory, through replacing the former practices with those of greater France; this

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<sup>24</sup> McCoy, "Religious Accommodation and Political Authority," 266-268.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Daniel Ludmann, "Fêtes et cérémonies royales à Strasbourg sous l'Ancien Régime," *Saisons d'Alsace* 75 (1981): 138-139; Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 51.

carried not only in religion, but also in the basic structures of government within the entirety of Alsace.

Although the links between sectarian difference and politics is undeniable in 17<sup>th</sup> century France, the fact that Protestants, even of the Reformed faith, had been able to continue worshipping creates a dilemma. Even with the confessional issues at play, did the way in which the region was governed change to a significant extent in order for it to significantly influence civil life and change the social hierarchy with respect to rule? One possible element that clarifies the answer is how Protestants, either Lutheran or Reformed, were represented within government, or whether they held positions of power. Although Catholics gained more representation in these territories due to laws passed before the Revocation, Protestants did not necessarily lose all of the power they had.<sup>27</sup> One measure of this is that Alsatian-German was still the preferred language in the more local forms of government, much to the chagrin of the larger French regime.<sup>28</sup> In essence, instead of integrating the German-speaking Protestants into the more traditional France and its politics, it appears that the Revocation and other laws within France barely had a direct influence on the internal politics within Alsace itself, keeping Alsace as a third space within the kingdom.

Understanding how France undertook fundamental moves in order to restructure the system of government within various parts of Alsace also gives a larger picture of how the French monarchy attempted to bring the region into the whole, even if it was not possible, in many senses. In fact, these shifts in government are some of the earliest elements that were almost purely “French” to exist in the empire. One of the first things that the French government put into place into the region, even before 1648, was a system of royal *intendants*. This not only

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<sup>27</sup> McCoy, “Religious Accommodation and Political Authority,” 265.

<sup>28</sup> Hatt and others, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, 295.

put a form of the government in place – it also gave the king more direct representation over his interests within the territory.<sup>29</sup> With respect to other institutions, such as the courts, the government put into place many new courts, while leaving some of the local ones intact. In Strasbourg the soldiers often came under different jurisdiction than others, showing their separate status within society.<sup>30</sup> This also shows the third space that their presence, and, by extension, France's presence, created in Alsace, because of the parallel sets of institutions. While systems and institutions make up an important part of how a people see the government, another element of change to evaluate becomes the way people perceive the monarchy and how his sovereignty over a territory affects them.

If one considers the fact that an absolutist state often encouraged a cult of personality surrounding the monarch, then the lack of attention by that monarch over a certain territory indicates the person's identification with the region as a part of his/her dominions. Did the monarchy really pay attention to Alsace? Louis XIV never again visited Strasbourg proper, which one could easily call the keystone city of Alsace, after his stay during the transfer of Strasbourg's Cathedral to the Roman Catholic Church. It was not until October 1744 that another monarch, in this case Louis XV, visited Strasbourg proper again, although the monarchy had visited the territory surrounding the city in June 1683.<sup>31</sup> If one just counts the royal visits to Strasbourg proper, the 1744 event occurred almost three decades after Louis XV came to power, and almost 63 years after Louis XIV's last visit had taken place!<sup>32</sup> Obviously, if a monarch neglects to visit one of the main cities in the region for that long of a time period, the territory is seen as insignificant at best – or regarded negatively at worst. It is also possible that, while the

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<sup>29</sup> Alain J. Lemaître, "L'intendance en Alsace, Franche-Comté et Lorraine aux XVIIème et XVIIIème siècles," *Annales de l'Est* 50, no. 2 (2000): 109.

<sup>30</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 91-93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Ludmann, "Fêtes et cérémonies royales," 145.

monarchy owned the lands, considered the people there his subjects, and demanded they respect his sovereignty, it did not see them as an integral part of their main kingdom, which would theoretically consist of the traditional areas of France before 1648.

Even if Strasbourg, and undoubtedly other parts of Alsace, had not been a point of frequent visitation for the French monarchy, Alsace's role as a go-in-between for rulers and other aristocrats entering the country became more and more important under Louis XV. One of the earlier examples of this was the marriage of the Dauphin, or the King's heir and successor on the throne, in 1725 in Strasbourg at the Cathedral – one of the prime symbols of the power of the Roman Catholic monarch under whom the Alsatians were subjects.<sup>33</sup> This pattern is repeated 45 years later, in 1770, when Marie-Antoinette, of Austrian Habsburg origin, entered France through Strasbourg on her way to meeting the latter Dauphin. In fact, a special building was built between Kehl, the town across from Strasbourg on the eastern bank of the Rhine River, and Strasbourg in which Marie-Antoinette was accepted by the French court. In that this building was both “Austrian” and “French” in construction and ownership, it contained elements of both dynasties, considering the long distance of this transfer point from both Versailles and Vienna. In addition, it represents a concrete example of the symbolism evoked by the monarchy in using third spaces for diplomacy and other royal, stately functions.<sup>34</sup> Although Alsace appears to be important as a place that people pass through on their way to Versailles and traditional France, one must dig deeper to find how the government uses Alsace to its advantage.

Considering the relatively little personal attention paid to Alsace during both the reigns of Louis XIV and his successor, Louis XV, except as a territory for the facilitation of relations between France and territories to the east, such as those held by the Habsburg dynasties, it is

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<sup>33</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 164; Ludmann, “Fêtes et cérémonies royales,” 142-143.

<sup>34</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 164; Ludmann, “Fêtes et cérémonies royales,” 154-157.

debatable as to what value Alsace held for the Bourbons. In considering the territory's apparent symbolic role for relations with other nations, the force of the military, especially forces directly under the monarch's power, plays into these considerations. After all, having a third space in between the traditional territories of France and other countries would allow the sovereign to fight wars on "French soil" with people who are "French" subjects, regardless of their place of origin or native language, while lessening the direct risks of military combat within the Île-de-France (i.e., in Paris and/or Versailles), or in other central French territories. In fact, during certain times, according to Lemaître, such as in 1673, "it [was] directly from Louvois, the Secretary of War, that the *intendant* receive[d] his orders."<sup>35</sup> An analysis of whether royal troops or military fortifications in Alsace became a main concern for the government in Alsace, and how the government used the military to gain this space, would show whether Alsace was more of military concern rather than of civil concern.

In considering the military presence within Alsace, one cannot neglect how the majority of territories within Alsace came under the direct power of the French monarchy: through warfare and subsequent international treaties. In addition to the warfare during the Thirty Years' War, which mostly took place outside of France, and the subsequent treaties comprising the Peace of Westphalia, more military campaigns within the region of Alsace led to not only conquest, but the strengthening of the French sovereign's expressed rights as written in international treaties. During the 1670s, France used the wars against the Netherlands as a pretext, in some ways, for furthering its interests within Alsace and around the Rhine – especially important considering the Rhine River drains further downstream from Alsace into the

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<sup>35</sup> Translated from Lemaître, "L'intendance en Alsace," 213, originally: "C'est désormais de Louvois, secrétaire d'Etat à la guerre, que l'intendant reçoit directement les ordres."

Netherlands. These efforts paid off for the monarchy during the later Treaty of Nijmegen<sup>36</sup>, which took place in 1679. Although the French did gain the territory, they mostly did so in territories whose sovereignty was of a debatable nature – with many of the cities having still claimed to be part of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>37</sup> With the Treat of Rijswijk in 1697, France was able to solidify its position within the region even more so. Since it now held much territory on the Rhine River, construction along the river became easier. At this point, France worked so that it could defend what it had gained with less fear, and was able to construct a third space militarily with fewer problems from the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>38</sup>

One of the territories most fought for during the multiple wars that occurred during the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the area on both sides of the Rhine River near the modern-day town of Breisach.<sup>39</sup> Although the town was on the right side of the Rhine River, and is not part of modern-day Alsace, its role in the historic region, as well as the fact that it was geographically linked by the river to the modern-day territory of Alsace, gives it merit as a base for military discussion. Perhaps one of the reasons why Breisach was so desired was because it was one of the many toll stops along the Rhine River – obviously useful as a source of income for the crown.<sup>40</sup> Not only is Breisach a river crossing, similarly to Strasbourg; it was also the location of an immense military fortress, and acted initially as the capital of the new territories in Alsace that France conquered in 1648.<sup>41</sup> Of course, having soldiers within a certain area has the potential to cause tensions, as Livet illustrates, drawing from an administrative text:

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<sup>36</sup> Nijmegen is also spelled Nymwegen in certain documents.

<sup>37</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*,

<sup>38</sup> Livet, *L'Intendance d'Alsace*, 627-628.

<sup>39</sup> Note that the French name for the city is Brisach, while the German name is Breisach. Because modern-day Neuf-Brisach is now on the French side of the Rhine River, and Breisach is on the German side, I am using the conventional names as used today.

<sup>40</sup> Livet, *L'Intendance d'Alsace*, 507.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 68; Hatt and others, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, 277-279.

In Breisach, the complaints of the inhabitants do not stop. They are endlessly forced to house the members of the military. With the families of the soldiers growing ever larger, the people in the middle classes are threatening to leave. [...] The *intendant* is now planning the construction of barracks out of the inhabitants' funds. In addition, the members of the military keep unlawful music halls, and deprive the city of its rights to *Umgeld*, which are its only resource.<sup>42</sup>

In this case, military domination in the region forces the creation of a third space, mirroring the segregation between soldiers and the native civilians as mentioned earlier. In the later fight for Breisach around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the French monarchy decided on the construction of new fortifications on the other side of the Rhine River from the city, leading to the creation of Neuf-Breisach, with the word *neuf* signifying “brand new” in English.<sup>43</sup> This extended effort in construction did apparently strengthen France's military defenses in the region, considering that some foreign military forces were not able to cross the Rhine River around the fortresses during the War of Austrian Succession.<sup>44</sup>

The strengthening of military might in Strasbourg is another clear indication of France's intentions within the region. Because of Strasbourg's key location as a river crossing on the Rhine River, and, like Breisach, another spot in which tolls are collected, keeping the city in a state where it can defend itself can only be advantageous on the part of the regime under Louis XIV and his successors.<sup>45</sup> Because of this position, the city had been a strategic military site within the Holy Roman Empire, especially considering it already hosted soldiers within its garrison.<sup>46</sup> After the French took over the city and further analyzed its weak points, this led to

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<sup>42</sup> Translated from Livet, *L'Intendance en Alsace*, 223, originally: “A Breisach, les plaintes des habitants ne cessent pas. Les militaires les obligent à fournir sans cesse des logements. Les familles des soldats s'agrandissant tous les jours, les bourgeois menacent de quitter les lieux. [...] L'intendant prévoit la construction de baraques aux frais des habitants. Par ailleurs, les militaires tiennent des cabarets illicites et privent la ville des droits d'*Umgeld* qui sont sa seule ressource.”

<sup>43</sup> Isabelle Coutenceau, “Neuf-Breisach (1698-1705) : la construction d'une place forte au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue historique des Armées* 171, no. 2 (June 1988): 17.

<sup>44</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> Livet, *L'Intendance d'Alsace*, 507.

<sup>46</sup> Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition*, 37.

quite extensive amounts of construction in order to bolster the city's defenses after 1681. This included building a citadel, amongst countless other buildings. Ford also suggests that this construction and the fortresses could have been used against the inhabitants of Strasbourg itself.<sup>47</sup> Although this third space benefitted the interests of the monarchy, especially with respect to the ability to place troops within the region, for the people of Alsace, this third space could be detrimental.

Although Alsace did become a part of the Kingdom of France in many ways during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the things that remained the same left the territory segregated from the rest of France in many fundamental ways. The geographically disparate parts which comprised Alsace before the Peace of Westphalia did eventually fall under the sovereignty of Louis XIV, yet the strongly Roman Catholic monarch could not overcome the strong Protestant practice and inclinations of the region, regardless of the numerous declarations and edicts, as well as acts heavily laden with symbolism, which tried to encourage Catholicism and discourage Protestant worship. During this time period, the stage was set for how the people of the region perceived the monarchy and how the sovereign saw fit to use the land to his benefit, during an era when many European governments used and abused the territories they held and the subjects whose allegiance they demanded, for power and wealth. The increased attention upon Alsace for military uses, along with the practically incessant warfare before, during, and after the acquisition of the various territories, caused problems due to the fact that the monarchy forced this territory to become a third space. By understanding how Alsace developed into a third space, primarily under Louis XIV during the 17<sup>th</sup> century for military purposes, later movements that made Alsace a pawn in international relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be understood as not merely the byproduct of avarice, but also the byproduct of France's creation of a third space

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

within the region, which will continue to linger in many ways long after the absolutist monarchy in France is bloodily toppled.

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