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ARTICLE

# Public Opinion and Governance: State formation in Savoy Following the French Annexation (1860–1861)

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## Abstract

This article will explore the interplay between public opinion and local governance through the lens of state formation in Savoy in the first two years of French rule. Savoy and the county of Nice, formerly Piedmontese provinces, officially became French *départements* on 14 June 1860. Napoleon III wanted to use state-building in Savoy as a propaganda tool aimed at both internal and external (European) public opinion, to showcase the grandeur of his regime and the benefits of French rule. Following the April plebiscite in Savoy – which established the importance of popular sovereignty in international politics – state formation in Savoy was also characterised by mutual links with public opinion. The new state agents in Savoy attempted to win Savoyards’ ‘hearts and minds’ through a moderate implementation of French laws in the first two years, with scope for flexibility and accommodations. They also ensured – through an active policy of political communication – that the large financial investment of the French state in Savoy was not lost on the Savoyard population. This example therefore provides an interesting lens to study the beginnings of modern local governance, attuned to public opinion and aware of the need to complement public action with political communication.

**Keywords:** state formation; local governance; public opinion; political communication; Savoy

The permanent presence and pressure of public opinion – exposing political faults, evaluating public policies, voicing the demands and concerns of citizens – is a major counterweight to political power and a central tenet of democracy. Its influence on policymaking is undisputable in modern democracies and grew in importance after the middle of the nineteenth century, as a result of relaxed press censorship, an increase in the number of newspapers and other political prints, and the rise of a wider, more politicised reading public.<sup>1</sup> The influence of public opinion on policymaking seems

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Clark, ‘After 1848: The European Revolution in Government’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 22 (2012), 191–4.

more obvious in liberal democracies such as Britain and America than in an authoritarian regime such as France's Second Empire, but Napoleon III was a 'political operator who knew how to adapt to a changing world'.<sup>2</sup> His decision to retain universal suffrage – albeit, in many cases, only a parody of universal suffrage due to widespread electoral manipulation – and to start liberalising his regime from 1859 is testament to the political importance of popular sovereignty at that time. This was also made apparent in his frequent direct 'appeals to the people' through plebiscites to legitimise his rule. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau asserted that, during the Franco-Prussian War, Napoleon III 'always showed great attention to the reactions of public opinion and took them into account, even if it meant directing or modifying his decisions accordingly'.<sup>3</sup> This was also true in peacetime, and even more so in Savoy than in other parts of France due to the intense European scrutiny and criticism of the French annexation of Savoy in the spring of 1860.

Savoy and the Nice country, formerly Piedmontese provinces, officially became French *départements* on 14 June 1860, following the 1858 Agreement of Plombières and a successful plebiscite. The annexation process established the importance of popular sovereignty in international politics by making the annexation itself conditional on a positive vote by Savoyards in a plebiscite held in April 1860.<sup>4</sup> After the annexation, Savoyards wished to keep on influencing local politics in their region.

This article will investigate the interplay between public opinion and state formation in Savoy in the first two years of French rule (1860 and 1861), under the pressure of both local and international public opinion. In a context of international tensions – rising Italian irredentism and persistent Swiss opposition – a successful transition period in Savoy was seen as key to prevent local protests and placate international opposition, but, beyond this, Napoleon III wanted to use Savoy to illustrate the grandeur of his regime and to showcase the benefits of French rule;<sup>5</sup> in a nutshell, he wanted Savoy to become a model of successful territorial annexation and border change. This confirms contemporary and historical representations of Napoleon III as a statesman 'with an intense sense of personal destiny and faith in his historical mission'.<sup>6</sup>

Savoy was described, in Napoleon III's speech to parliament on 1 March 1860, as a remote and barren land, one of the poorest parts of Europe.<sup>7</sup> The challenge set to the new local authorities was to integrate it into the French territory and bring it to the same level of economic development as 'historic' French *départements* in just a few years. The objective of state-building in Savoy – or of what could be called a 'civilising mission' – was eminently political. The aim was to show Savoyards and, perhaps even more so, 'Europe, through a manifest example, how fruitful [French] institutions are for the good of the people'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup>James F. McMillan, *Napoleon III* (1991), 54.

<sup>3</sup>Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *1870: La France dans la guerre* (Paris, 1989), 20–1.

<sup>4</sup>Marie-Cecile Thorat, 'After Vienna: The French Annexation of Savoy and the Introduction of Self-determination in International Relations (around 1860)', *European History Quarterly*, In press.

<sup>5</sup>Archives Départementales de Savoie (ADS), 2FS-1, Prefect to civil servants, 18 June 1860.

<sup>6</sup>Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (New York, 2001), 44.

<sup>7</sup>*Le Moniteur Universel*, 2 Mar. 1860, 1.

<sup>8</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to civil servants, 18 June 1860.

The study of the state has been enjoying something of a ‘renaissance’ in political sciences, economics and sociology over the last decades.<sup>9</sup> Although historical studies on state-building in and of itself – rather than in connection with another topic such as counter-revolution<sup>10</sup> – remain few and far between, there has recently been a renewed interest in the study of state formation with an emphasis on the broader social and cultural processes shaping it.<sup>11</sup> This article is part of this recent historical trend,<sup>12</sup> but, unlike the few existing studies on state formation, it will assess the interaction between state formation and public opinion. In further contrast to existing studies, it will also explore governance at a local – rather than national – level, focusing on the secular, civilian local government.

This article is part of a renewed historiography of the Second Empire. Long overlooked by historians because of its authoritarian regime and military failures, the Second Empire has undergone a profound reassessment since the 1980s. Several scholars such as Alain Plessis, Adrien Dansette, Roger Price, Eric Anceau and Thierry Lentz have highlighted the significance of the period for the modernisation of France in all areas – political, social and economic, military and diplomatic.<sup>13</sup> A number of recent studies have pursued and expanded this work by focusing on global or more specific aspects of the modernity of Napoleon III’s rule, such as his use of festivities, political travels as a form of political governance, and the liberalisation of his regime in the 1860s.<sup>14</sup>

This article is also part of a renewed historiography of the 1850s. The traditional view of the period as a reactionary decade has recently been challenged. Christopher Clark, David Barclay, Pieter Judson and Daniel Banks have reassessed the modernising policies of state-builders in the wake of the 1848 revolutions and highlighted the revolutionary nature of this decade of radical change in government practices.<sup>15</sup> As Clark has shown, the 1850s saw a ‘revolution in government’ marked by a ‘renegotiation of

<sup>9</sup>S. Van de Walle and Z. Scott, ‘The Role of Public Services in State- and Nation-Building’, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre Research Paper, July 2009.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Tilly, ‘State-Building and Counter-Revolution in France’, *Social Research*, 56 (1989), 71–97.

<sup>11</sup>Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009), 19.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*; Anna Ross, *Beyond the Barricades: Government and State-Building in Post-revolutionary Prussia, 1848–1858* (Oxford, 2018); Jasper Heinzen, *Making Prussians, Rasing Germans: State-Building, Conquest and Royal Sovereignty in Prussia 1815–1871* (Cambridge, 2021); Martin Maguire, ‘From State-Destruction to State-Building: The Civil Service in Revolutionary Ireland’, *Irish Political Studies*, 39 (2024), 320–43.

<sup>13</sup>Alain Plessis, *De la fête impériale au mur des fédérés, 1852–1871* (Paris, 1973); Adrien Dansette, *Naissance de la France moderne. Le Second Empire* (Paris, 1975); Price, *Second Empire*; Eric Anceau, *Napoléon III: un Saint-Simon à cheval* (Paris, 2012); Thierry Lentz, *Napoléon III: La modernité inachevée* (Paris, 2022).

<sup>14</sup>McMillan, *Napoleon III*; Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III* (Paris, 2006); Jean-Claude Yon, *Le Second Empire: Politique, Société, Culture* (Paris, 2022); Miquel de la Rosa, *French Liberalism and Imperialism in the Age of Napoleon III* (New York, 2022); Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849–1870* (Oxford, 1997); Xavier Mauduit, *Le Ministère du faste. La Maison de l’Empereur Napoléon III* (Paris, 2016); Rémi Dalisson, *Au plus près du peuple: Les voyages politiques de Napoléon III* (Paris, 2022); Eric Anceau, Dominique Barjot, *L’Empire libéral: Essai d’histoire globale* (Paris, 2021).

<sup>15</sup>Clark, ‘After 48’; David Barclay, *Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the Prussian Monarchy* (Oxford, 1995); Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Daniel F Banks, ‘Ships, Guns and Money: The Logistics of Revolution and Garibaldi’s Campaign of 1860’, *Past & Present*, 270 (2026), 150–84.

the relationship between government and its public'.<sup>16</sup> This 'revolution in government' was also at play in local governance.

The beginning of French rule in Savoy, however, has not attracted much attention from historians. It has been addressed in sections of broader studies on the history of Savoy, in studies on the rise of a Savoyard nationalist movement and on the Savoyard army; but none of this work has examined state-building.<sup>17</sup> The only studies of civilian local government in Savoy are two book chapters by Christian Sorrel on institutional changes between March and June 1860; these, however, have focused only on the selection of prefects and *sous-préfets*.<sup>18</sup>

This article will adapt the method suggested by Daniel Hucker to assess the role of public opinion in international relations in the pre-opinion polls era to the local governance context, focusing on the perception of public opinion by state actors. As Daniel Hucker has shown, when assessing the impact of public opinion on governance, what is most significant is not so much what the public *actually* thought but rather what policy-makers *thought* the public wanted.<sup>19</sup> This article will thus confront administrative sources and representations of public policies in newspaper articles, using mostly the local press as a barometer of public opinion. Savoy then had two regional newspapers – in addition to more local newspapers limited to one city – the *Courrier des Alpes* and the *Gazette de Savoie*, the former being the most influential,<sup>20</sup> and the only one retaining a specific section on local politics throughout the period.

By exploring mutual links between public opinion and local public governance in Savoy, this article will shed some light on one of the most pressing issues in modern politics – 'citizen politics'.<sup>21</sup> In a context of rising public distrust in politics and public administration, an emphasis on public opinion and interaction with the public is considered a key driver for administrative reform. A study of governance practices in post-annexation Savoy can thus provide a valuable and timely insight into the necessity of a two-way interaction between state and society for a well-functioning government. This article also has a bearing on important debates over the history and chronology of national identity formation in nineteenth-century France, as will be highlighted in the conclusion.

<sup>16</sup>Clark, 'After 1848', 173, 191.

<sup>17</sup>Paul Guichonnet (ed.), *Histoire de la Savoie* (Toulouse, 1973); André Palluel-Guillard, *La Savoie, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Rennes, 1986); Jacques Lovie, *La Savoie dans la vie française de 1860 à 1875* (Paris, 1963); Mark Sawchuk, 'The Daily Plebiscite: Political Culture and National Identity in Nice and Savoy, 1860–1880' (University of California at Berkeley Ph.D. thesis, 2011); Hubert Heyriès, *Les militaires savoyards et niçois entre deux patries, 1848–1871* (Montpellier, 2001).

<sup>18</sup>Christian Sorrel, 'Quatre-vingt-trois jours décisifs: La Savoie de la signature du traité de Turin à la prise de possession par la France (24 mars–14 juin 1860)', in *Consentement des populations, plébiscites et changements de souveraineté*, ed. Marc Ortolani and Bruno Berthier (Nice, 2013), 301–11; Christian Sorrel, 'De la Sardaigne à la France, de l'intendance à la préfecture: en Savoie, 1859–1860', in *Intendants et intendance en Europe et dans les Etats de Savoie XVIIe–XIXe siècle*, ed. Marc Ortolani (Nice, 2015), 471–9.

<sup>19</sup>Daniel Hucker, 'International History and the Study of Public Opinion: Towards Methodological Clarity', *International History Review*, 34 (2012), 775–94.

<sup>20</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Comte de Boigne to the editor of *Courrier des Alpes*, 28 Feb. 1861.

<sup>21</sup>Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies: Public Opinion and Political Parties in the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and France* (1988).

What follows is structured in three sections. The first section will assess the impact of international events on Savoyard public opinion and French state-building. The second section will investigate the way state-building was used to win Savoyards' hearts and minds. The third section will explore the introduction of political communication as a central tool of governance or statecraft.

### International events, public opinion and French state-building objectives

On the opening of the Conseil Général's session of 1861, Prefect of Savoie Hippolyte Dieu highlighted the challenges he faced in overseeing state formation in Savoy at a time when 'political and administrative issues were confused and hampered each other'.<sup>22</sup> State formation in Savoy was indeed deeply politicised as Savoy remained at the centre of European attention after the annexation.

King Victor Emmanuel II set two conditions for Savoy to be officially ceded to France: a consultation of the local populations, and the ratification of the Italian parliament. The first condition was met by a plebiscite, the results of which were officially published on 29 April.<sup>23</sup> The last part of the annexation process consisted in a majority vote of the Italian parliament. After Victor Emmanuel's Treaty of cession with France on 24 March and after the positive plebiscite, this seemed a mere formality. Yet, by mid-May 1860, no parliamentary discussion on the annexation had yet taken place.

Some observers thought that the reason for this delay lay in Cavour's political strategy, deliberately overestimating the threat of the Italian political opposition during the negotiations with France to obtain some territorial advantages.<sup>24</sup> Cavour's private correspondence seems to confirm this. Although he was aware that he and his government had been 'extraordinarily weakened' by the cession of Savoy and Nice,<sup>25</sup> in the spring of 1860 he confided to a 'close friend' that he was fairly confident that the vote would confirm annexation.<sup>26</sup> He proved to be right as the cession was approved by a large majority in both houses of parliament, but after long and heated debates as the political opposition, led by Nice-born Garibaldi, seized the opportunity to try to topple Cavour's government.<sup>27</sup> Nationalist deputies and senators – the so-called 'italianissime' – were in the minority, but they were supported by a large part of the Italian population.<sup>28</sup> Buoyed by this support, they were very vocal in their criticism of what they labelled an 'anti-Italian policy' or even an act of high treason (because the treaty of cession had been countersigned without prior consent by the Italian parliament).<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie*, 1861, Session of 26 Aug., Report by the Prefect, 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Courrier des Alpes*, 3 May 1860, 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 May 1860, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Cavour to Farini, Ministro dell'Interno, 24 Apr. 1860, in *Lettere edite ed inedite di Camillo Cavour*, ed. Luigi Chiala (3 vols., Turin, 1884), III, 240.

<sup>26</sup> Cavour to a close friend, 11 Mar. 1860, *ibid.*, 227.

<sup>27</sup> *L'Opinione*, no date (May 1860), quoted in *Gazette de Savoie*, 12 May 1860, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Cavour to Farini, Ministro dell'Interno, 24 Apr. 1860, in *Lettere*, III, 240.

<sup>29</sup> Senato, Tornata dell' 8 Giugno 1860, 'Discussione del Progetto di legge per l'approvazione del trattato de cession della Savoia e del circondario de Nizza alla Francia', 8 June 1860, in *Atti del parlamento subalpino, sessione del 1859* (Rome, 1875), 78; Cavour to a close friend, 11 Mar. 1860, in *Lettere*, III, 227.

This delay angered and worried the Savoyards. Thirty years later, a Savoyard writer recalled the atmosphere of doubt, uncertainty and fear in the mountains and valleys, especially after the words uttered by Prince Umberto – the son of King Victor Emmanuel II – just a few days after the annexation, saying that, even though his father had ceded Savoy, ‘he would take it back’.<sup>30</sup> Savoy newspapers conveyed the public mood in a series of articles, in May 1860, pointing to the negative economic consequences of this ‘unexplainable delay’, as all branches of business and agriculture were hit by this state of uncertainty which hindered both demand and investment.<sup>31</sup> Everything was on hold: ‘trade, industry, public works; all professions suffer’.<sup>32</sup> François Renand, a Savoyard magistrate very active during the plebiscite campaign, even wrote a short pamphlet on this subject, *Sabaudia dolorosa* [Sorrowful Savoy], which he later sent to the Italian deputies.<sup>33</sup> Some excerpts were read by members of the opposition in the Italian parliament to question Cavour’s policy.<sup>34</sup>

As the newly appointed Mayor of Chambéry put it, it caused an ‘atony inseparable from the state of transition’ which badly hit the working classes.<sup>35</sup> Trade relations with France were limited because nobody wanted to pay hefty customs duties when these taxes were to be removed as soon as Savoy was definitively annexed.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, businessmen, waiting for the annexation to remove trade barriers, lost their summer season.<sup>37</sup> Farming was also hit because, as Savoy conscripts were still in Italy, there was a labour shortage in the countryside.<sup>38</sup> Many construction workers were also left unemployed as the new Italian state would not fund new public works in provinces they were about to lose, and Savoy and Nice were not yet officially part of France.<sup>39</sup> The time of the year when this took place compounded the difficulty as the spring–summer season was the most suitable part of the year for undertaking public works.

Savoyards also complained about the ‘misguided ways’ and ‘brutal rule’ of the Piedmontese administration in Savoy during the interim period, even neglecting basic public services such as public safety.<sup>40</sup> This was compounded by an aggressive fiscal policy, as could be seen in the decision, after the plebiscite, to change the status of Savoy roads, from provincial to national, which led to the imposition of a very heavy new local tax while neglecting public works and other improvements.<sup>41</sup> For example,

<sup>30</sup>Prince Umberto quoted in Robert Princet, *La Savoie et la Triple Alliance, Par un Savoyard* (Bordeaux, 1890), 16.

<sup>31</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, ‘Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie’, 1859–60, 27.

<sup>32</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 3 May 1860, 1.

<sup>33</sup>François Renand, *Sabaudia Dolorosa* (Bonneville, 1860).

<sup>34</sup>Jules de la Tournelle, *La question savoissienne: notes rapides à compléter* (Versailles, 1871), 16.

<sup>35</sup>ADS, 12 Fi-184., ‘Allocution du nouveau maire de Chambéry Frédéric d’Alexandry’, 15 June 1860.

<sup>36</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, ‘Texte de l’exposé des motifs soumis au Conseil à l’appui de la résolution proposée et votée’, 21 May 1860.

<sup>37</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 17 May 1860, 1.

<sup>38</sup>Savoyard soldiers remained enrolled in the Italian army and subject to abuse by Italian soldiers after they overwhelmingly voted in favour of a French annexation (6,033 ‘Yes’ votes out of 6,350 voters).

<sup>39</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 17 May 1860, 1.

<sup>40</sup>ADS, 2FD-7, Dagand, doctor and syndic of Alby, to Prefect of Savoie, 23 May 1860; ADS, 2FS-3, ‘Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie’, 1859–60, 9; ADS, 2FS-2, Memo by Deputy Governor of Savoy, Dupasquier, 4 Apr. 1860.

<sup>41</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, ‘Texte de l’exposé des motifs soumis au Conseil à l’appui de la résolution proposée et votée’, 21 May 1860, 38.

the roads damaged by the floods of the autumn of 1859 had not yet been repaired in May 1860, leading the provincial councillors to conclude that the Piedmontese local government in Savoy no longer existed in practice, or rather 'existed only to hinder everything'.<sup>42</sup>

On 9 May, the provincial council of Chambéry sent a petition to the French and Italian governments, complaining about the conduct of the Italian government which 'hesitated or seemed to hesitate' about the cession of Savoy to France.<sup>43</sup> In an apparent denial of the plebiscite, they were still appointing new civil servants, introducing new codes, reforming the judiciary system 'as if Savoy was not to become a foreign land in a few days [so that] nobody can make plans between an administration which is going and another one which has not arrived yet'.<sup>44</sup> One of the political mistakes made by the new Italian government was indeed not to exempt Savoy from the administrative and judiciary reorganisation which was then taking place in the rest of Italy. The French government tried to persuade Piedmont to pause Italian reforms in Savoy after the plebiscite but Cavour remained inflexible, arguing that until the parliament's ratification vote, Nice and Savoy remained Italian lands.<sup>45</sup> Elections were therefore held in Savoy in April 1860 but the newly elected deputies, upon receiving an invite to the parliamentary session, sent their apologies on 13 May 1860, explaining that they could not take their seats in the Italian parliament and swear allegiance to the Italian king after the positive plebiscite, and asking Italian officials to end the transition period, 'which only presents inconvenience for everybody'.<sup>46</sup>

An 'ever increasing unrest' and an insurrectional, almost revolutionary mood were starting to take hold in Savoy, with a growing number of Savoyards asking for the creation of a provisional government in Chambéry to declare unilaterally the definitive annexation.<sup>47</sup> The former central French annexionist committee of Chambéry even reconvened on 21 May 1860, posting a proclamation to Chambéry residents denouncing a form of passive resistance by the Italian government which 'continued to rule over Savoy as if the plebiscite had not taken place and Savoy was to remain Italian'.<sup>48</sup>

Following pressure from Savoyard public opinion, through the statement of its provincial deputation on 23 May, the Italian parliament finally opened discussions on this question on 25 May.<sup>49</sup> The treaty was approved by the Italian House of Commons on 30 May 1860, by 229 'Yes' votes against 33 'No' (23 abstentions), and then by the Senate

<sup>42</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, 'Texte de l'exposé des motifs soumis au Conseil', 21 May 1860, 38.

<sup>43</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Memoir by Bérard, former member of the Savoyard delegation to Paris [spring 1860].

<sup>44</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, 'Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie', 1859-60, 28; ADS, 2FS-1, Dispatch from Governor of Savoy to *syndics*, 10 May 1860; *Courrier des Alpes*, 10 May 1860, 1.

<sup>45</sup>Cavour, quoted in Emile Ollivier, *L'Empire libéral: études, récits, souvenirs* (17 vols., Paris, 1899), IV, 403.

<sup>46</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, *Savoisiens* deputies to the Italian parliament, 15 May 1860.

<sup>47</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, 'Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie', 1859-60, 33; *Courrier des Alpes*, 21-22 May 1860, 1.

<sup>48</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 20 May 1860, 1; ADS, 2FS-1, Proclamation by the Central French committee of Chambéry, no date [May 1860].

<sup>49</sup>ADS, 2FS-3, 'Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie', 1859-60, 34; *Courrier des Alpes*, 25 May 1860, 1.

on 10 June by 92 votes out of 102.<sup>50</sup> After the Treaty of Promulgation was signed, Savoy and Nice became officially French on 14 June.<sup>51</sup>

The negative impact of the late Italian ratification on Savoyard public opinion had a direct influence on French state-building. To win over the local population by minimising any disruption to key services, a six-months transition period, until 1 January 1861, was granted to Savoy.<sup>52</sup> This transition period was meant to enable local administrators to gather knowledge on the administrative organisation and the needs of the two new *départements* to target public investment at priority areas.<sup>53</sup> French laws and institutions were to be brought in gradually during this period. The currency was changed from Piedmontese *lires* to French francs in November 1860 and the new French fiscal system was introduced, but the Piedmontese public accounting system was retained during the first six months to provide enough time for the training of new agents in French public accounting rules and regulations.<sup>54</sup> During this 'tiresome but necessary' transition period, former Piedmontese administrators played a central part in providing their invaluable 'local knowledge of men and things'.<sup>55</sup> On 16 June, the newly appointed prefects – Hippolyte Dieu in Savoie (formerly Prefect of Haute-Garonne) and Gustave Pompon-Levainville in Upper Savoy (formerly *sous-préfet* of Valenciennes) – proceeded to the appointment of the *sous-préfets*. In most cases, they retained the former Piedmontese administrators to speed up the transition period.<sup>56</sup> Three out of the four *sous-préfets* were already in place during the transition period in the spring of 1860.<sup>57</sup> They were given the same remit as *intendenti* (Piedmontese local administrative officials) so that business could carry on as usual until a French imperial decree laid out the new French administrative organisation on 25 June 1860.<sup>58</sup> This pragmatic approach to state-building met the expectations of the Savoyards, and the swift replacement of Piedmontese institutions with French ones was praised by Savoyard newspapers.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to Italian nationalism, the first months following the plebiscite were also plagued by the persistent opposition of the Swiss to the French annexation of Upper Savoy, who were eager to seize any French political mistake to stir up Savoyard opposition. The establishment of a 'free zone' – a zone free of customs duties on selected goods – in Upper Savoy is a case in point. It was promised by the French government, during the plebiscite campaign, to undermine the propaganda of the pro-Swiss movement (asking for a Swiss annexation of Chablais and Faucigny). However, post-annexation Savoyards were divided over this question. In May 1860, residents and

<sup>50</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 31 May 1860, 1; *Courrier des Alpes*, 11 June 1860, 1.

<sup>51</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Edouard Thouvenel, 'Rapport à l'Empereur', no date (June 1860).

<sup>52</sup>ADS, 2FS-11, Prefect to *sous-préfets*, 11 Dec. 1860.

<sup>53</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to civil servants, 18 June 1860.

<sup>54</sup>*Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1860, Session of 17 Dec., 13.

<sup>55</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to civil servants, 18 June 1860; ADS, 2FS-13, 'M. Cordier, ancien secrétaire en chef de l'intendance générale de Chambéry', 1 Aug. 1861.

<sup>56</sup>Anon, 'Organisation du département des Alpes-Maritimes en 1860', *L'intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux*, 30 Apr. 1902, 637.

<sup>57</sup>Sorrel, 'De la Sardaigne à la France', 478.

<sup>58</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Dispatch from Governor of Savoy to *Intendenti*, 8 Feb. 1860; ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to Savoy civil servants, 18 June 1860; *Délibérations du Conseil général de Haute-Savoie*, 1861, 37.

<sup>59</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 28 July 1860, 3.

newspapers from Annecy started a press campaign for the free zone to be restricted to a very small part of Upper Savoy, arguing that it was in favour of Chablais residents only and at the expense of the rest of Upper Savoy.<sup>60</sup> Swiss newspapers then claimed that the French government, sensitive to the opinion of the anti-zone movement, was considering dropping this measure, presenting this as evidence of the deception and duplicity of the French authorities, using the promise of a free zone 'as a bait' to entice Upper Savoyards and convince them to vote 'Yes and zone' and then after 'the trick [had] worked ... to bring the local populations themselves to reject the bait as unnecessary and even as dangerous'.<sup>61</sup> This rumour was later denied by the French government, and the electoral promise to establish a free zone was implemented in full, but the episode shows the pressure of Swiss and pro-Swiss public opinion. This directly influenced French state-building in Savoy, as can be seen by the choice of a new prefect for Upper Savoy after Pompon-Levainville was appointed to Tarn-et-Garonne in July 1860.<sup>62</sup> Rather than selecting a career civil servant as was customary, the government chose to appoint a Savoyard lawyer and writer, Anselme Pétetin, well known at home and abroad for his active support to the annexation and his fierce opposition to the Swiss annexationist movement. His appointment in this strategic post was received 'with great favour' by public opinion and was interpreted as a response to the persistent Swiss and international opposition.<sup>63</sup> In the words of the *Courrier des Alpes*, it was 'a solemn invitation sent by the French government to Europe in general, and to Switzerland in particular, to renounce any project on Savoy'.<sup>64</sup>

The beginnings of French rule therefore took place in an inauspicious context. An effective local government was key to ensure a 'smooth, skilful and neat' transition, as the French authorities knew that they could not afford to make political mistakes which could be exploited by both local and international opposition.<sup>65</sup>

### Winning Savoyards's hearts and minds

In this tense international context, the stakes were therefore high for the new local authorities. The reputation for excellence of the French public administration, considered as 'a model' by Savoyard public opinion, played an important part in the overwhelming positive vote of the plebiscite.<sup>66</sup> The Savoyards also had heightened expectations due to numerous political promises made by the French government during the plebiscite campaign.<sup>67</sup> For example, to convince their fellow Savoyards to vote 'Yes', the pro-annexation committees of Chambéry and Annecy asserted that 'the French government will contribute for a large part towards the expenses that [Savoyard] communes bear alone today: churches, town halls, schools, roads, bridges,

<sup>60</sup> Anon., *Inconvénients de la zone* (Annecy, 1860), 1–3; *Courrier des Alpes*, 16 May 1860, 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Journal de Genève*, 13 May 1860, 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Courrier des Alpes*, 22 Jul. 1860, 3.

<sup>63</sup> *La Patrie*, 20 Jul. 1860, cited in *Courrier des Alpes*, 20 Jul. 1860.

<sup>64</sup> *Courrier des Alpes*, 20 Jul. 1860.

<sup>65</sup> ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to civil servants, 18 June 1860.

<sup>66</sup> *Courrier des Alpes*, 15 Apr. 1860, 1; *Courrier des Alpes*, 14 Feb. 1860, 1; ADS, 12FI-156, 'Appel à voter OUI du Comité Central de Chambéry et d'Annecy lors du vote pour l'Annexion' [April 1860].

<sup>67</sup> Victor Advielle, *Etude sur l'administration en Savoie avant et depuis l'annexion* (Vienne, 1868), 9.

dams'.<sup>68</sup> The new local authorities thus needed to win over all classes of the Savoyard society, from peasants to industrial workers, from liberal-leaning students and urban dwellers to conservative rural elites.

Savoy was then a predominantly agrarian region, with a marked political dichotomy between the rural and urban population, the latter being predominantly liberal, while the former were conservative and Catholic.<sup>69</sup> The largest cities – Chambéry and Annecy – had 19,953 and 10,737 residents respectively. According to the official census for 1861, the urban population of Savoy – the residents of the *chefs-lieux* (capital cities) of *département* or *arrondissement* – amounted to no more than 48,638 inhabitants, that is less than 9 per cent of the total Savoyard population of 542,535.<sup>70</sup>

The liberal element in Savoy was thus in a minority compared to conservative Savoyards, but they were the most vocal in their opposition to a French annexation in the spring of 1860 due to their opposition to the authoritarian rule of Napoleon III.<sup>71</sup> They actively campaigned for Savoy to remain Piedmontese, even sending a delegation to Turin on 11 March 1860 to this effect.<sup>72</sup> Their opposition lessened after the adoption of universal suffrage for the plebiscite, but there was always a risk of their opposition resurfacing. The national and local authorities were thus particularly attuned to the perceived needs and wishes of these segments of Savoyard society, which could very easily move to overt political opposition if they were dissatisfied with post-annexation state-building.

The administrative reorganisation is a good example of targeted state-building as it was deliberately used to win over the liberal urban population of Savoy, and especially that of Upper Savoy due to the threat of a pro-Swiss movement there. The drawing of new administrative boundaries generated much interest in the region and the local authorities received numerous, sometimes conflicting, petitions from municipalities to try to influence this, as the establishment of a seat of administrative power was a significant source of additional income for a city due to the direct and indirect employment opportunities it generated. The departmental boundaries were thus a major bone of contention between Annecy and Chambéry, especially around the fate of the *mandements* of Faverges and Albens. The municipal authorities of Annecy, who wanted their city to become the capital of a large *département*, asked for these two *mandements* to be allocated to Upper Savoy based on topography, trade relations and the wish of their population, and in order 'to almost even out the total population of the two *départements*'.<sup>73</sup> Their request was successful and, on 25 June 1860, Savoy was divided into Savoie and Haute Savoie (Upper Savoy), the latter including Albens and part of the

<sup>68</sup>ADS, 168-J6, 'Adresse des comités centraux pro-annexionnistes de Chambéry et d'Annecy aux habitants de la Savoie' [April 1860].

<sup>69</sup>Albert Blanc, *La Savoie et la monarchie constitutionnelle* (Chambéry, 1859), 8–13.

<sup>70</sup>*Statistique de la France: Résultats généraux du dénombrement de 1861 comparés aux cinq dénombremens antérieurs* (Strasbourg, 1864), 62.

<sup>71</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Memoir by Bérard [Spring 1860].

<sup>72</sup>Jean-Jacques Rey, *Quelques mots sur la situation politique de la Savoie avant et après le traité du 24 Mars, 1860* (Chambéry, 1860), 4.

<sup>73</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Address of the Municipal council of Annecy to Napoleon III [April 1860]; ADS, 2FS-7, Petitions by several municipalities, April 1860; ADS, 2FS-7, Appeal by the municipal junta of Annecy to Prefect, 25 Apr. 1860.

*mandement* of Faverges.<sup>74</sup> The population was almost evenly split, with 275,039 inhabitants in Savoie and 267,496 in Upper Savoy in 1861.<sup>75</sup> The urban elites of Annecy were also pleased to retain their assize court.<sup>76</sup> As for the urban elites of Chambéry, their main wish was to retain their appeal court and their permanent garrison, which were the main source of income for the city. The French government's guarantee to retain the appeal court and to establish more permanent garrisons and more administrative seats in the city after the annexation was thus well received by public opinion.<sup>77</sup>

French officials also concentrated their efforts on liberal-leaning Savoyard students and graduates. Following the annexation, Turin lost its previous role as a cultural and higher education centre for the inhabitants of Savoy. Grenoble became the new centre for legal learning, but the solution was less straightforward for medicine as there was no university of medicine nearby. This encouraged Lyon's medical and municipal authorities to ask for their existing medical school to be upgraded to the status of university. This wish predated 1860, due to the prestige associated with being a university town and the economic revenue generated by the presence of students.<sup>78</sup> However, they renewed their request in 1860, arguing that it was now imperative to provide a French substitute so that 'Savoy students should not regret their vote for a French annexation by being forced to travel back to Turin to get their grades, with more expenses than before'.<sup>79</sup> This was not granted by the French government until 1874,<sup>80</sup> but Savoyard students were given generous studentships to fund their studies and maintenance in French universities in the immediate aftermath of the annexation.<sup>81</sup> In addition, through the decrees of 24 and 25 October 1860, diplomas awarded by the universities of Piedmont-Sardinia before 1 January 1861 were recognised as equivalent to their French counterparts.<sup>82</sup> The significant reduction in the number of Savoyard young men hit by military conscription (17,000 conscripts enrolled for seven years under Piedmontese rule versus 4,000 conscripts enrolled for four years under French rule)<sup>83</sup> was also well received by Savoyard public opinion.

The French authorities also tried to win over former Piedmontese civil servants. The fate of all former Piedmontese state employees had to be settled by 1 January 1861, whether they continued in their former job, were given an alternative position, retired or were dismissed.<sup>84</sup> According to 1857 data, there were 1,275 civil servants

<sup>74</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Haute-Savoie*, 1861, 37.

<sup>75</sup> *Statistique*, 62.

<sup>76</sup> ADS, 2FS-1, Speech by Dullin, President, on the opening of the Assize Court of Upper Savoy [June 1860].

<sup>77</sup> *Courrier des Alpes*, 25 Mar. 1860.

<sup>78</sup> Pierre Moulinier, *Les étudiants étrangers à Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Migrations et formation des élites* (Rennes, 2012), 38.

<sup>79</sup> ADS, 2FS-3, Report by the Doyen of the Faculty of Literature in Lyon, no date [1860].

<sup>80</sup> *Le Progrès médical*, 1875, iii, p. 652.

<sup>81</sup> ADS, 2FS-53, Minister of Education to Prefect of Savoie, 17 Jan. 1861; ADS, 2FS-53, Leopold Weiz to Recteur, no date [Autumn 1860].

<sup>82</sup> Exupère Caillemer, *L'Équivalence des Études et des Grades dans les Universités françaises et étrangères* (Lyon, 1894), 5–6; Charles Brunet, *Conséquences juridiques de l'annexion de la Savoie et de Nice à la France* (Paris, 1890), 40.

<sup>83</sup> ADS, 12 FI-156, Appel à voter OUI du Comité Central de Chambéry et d'Annecy' [Apr. 1860].

<sup>84</sup> ADS, 2FS-11. *Sous-Prefet* of Moûtiers to Prefect, 19 Dec. 1860.

in Savoy under the Piedmont regime and 1,087 of them were Savoyards (the others being Piedmontese).<sup>85</sup> As the French state had pledged not to harm any established interest,<sup>86</sup> its officials tried to steer clear from what could appear as a purge. This corresponded to a public demand, as can be seen in the Prefect of Savoie's endorsement of a request for a pension by the former chief secretary of the *Intendance*, asserting that 'public opinion would welcome with great favour a measure which would secure a livelihood for this former employee'.<sup>87</sup>

The political objective was therefore to try to retain in post those Savoyards who had formerly been employed by the Piedmontese regime. When, as a result of the annexation, their posts had disappeared, the local authorities were in principle expected to secure suitable alternative employment. However, in February 1860, the prefect showed the difficulty of this process by explaining that, although he recommended all the former Piedmontese policemen to the *Conservateur des Forêts* for the positions of forest wardens, he thought they may not have the relevant level of education for that position.<sup>88</sup> There were indeed higher expectations, in French Savoy, about the level of qualifications of administrators. The new *Conservateur des Forêts*, André Jaquot, observing the low level of education of the existing forest wardens (most of them deemed illiterate and corrupt) and chief wardens (allegedly only selected on the basis of their ability to read and write), proceeded to a full reorganisation of the service, bringing in new agents with relevant botanical knowledge.<sup>89</sup>

At municipal level, former Piedmontese officials were often replaced with Savoyards, as can be seen with the example of the appointment of two forest wardens at Beaufort in January 1861.<sup>90</sup> However, the situation was very different at *département* level. Christopher Fischer noted that, following the German annexation of Alsace in 1870, 'the region's administrators overwhelmingly hailed from across the Rhine'.<sup>91</sup> Savoy too received 'an army of French civil servants' – schoolteachers, postmen and many others.<sup>92</sup> This caused some resentment among the local population as some of them were criticised for their arrogance and lack of knowledge of the local area.<sup>93</sup> The zeal of some of those 'missionaries of the state' in enforcing the 'civilising mission' among what they saw as 'a half-savage tribe' offended Savoyard pride.<sup>94</sup> However, even the fiercest critics made a distinction between the arrogant behaviour of some of those French officials and the overall success of state formation.<sup>95</sup> The fact that not

<sup>85</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 5 Jan. 1860, 1.

<sup>86</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Speech by Prefect Dieu, 15 June 1860.

<sup>87</sup>ADS, 2FS-13, 'M. Cordier', 1 Aug. 1861.

<sup>88</sup>ADS, 2FS-11, Prefect to sous-Préfet de Moûtiers, 10 Feb. 1861.

<sup>89</sup>*Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1860, Session of 19 Dec. 1860, Report by Jaquot, Conservateur des Forêts.

<sup>90</sup>ADS, 208E-407, 'Délibérations du Conseil Municipal de Beaufort', 27 Jan. 1861.

<sup>91</sup>Christopher J. Fischer, *Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism, 1870–1939* (New York, 2010), 14.

<sup>92</sup>Advielle, *Etude*, 15.

<sup>93</sup>Tournelle, *Question savoisiennne*, 18; *Courrier des Alpes*, 30 Jul. 1860, 3.

<sup>94</sup>Jules Philippe, *Profession de Foi du Patriote Savoyard* (Annecy, 1868), 41.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

all Piedmontese administrators remained in place therefore did not alienate the local population.<sup>96</sup>

French authorities also focused their efforts on the conservative rural elites who, according to Liberal Savoyards, rallied the project of a French annexation only 'to maintain their influence and safeguard their positions at the head of all the country's [local] institutions'.<sup>97</sup> In effect, the members of all local deliberative councils (*conseil général, conseils d'arrondissement*, town councils) were, for the main part, chosen from within the ranks of the former councils of Piedmontese Savoy.<sup>98</sup>

Clergymen were also the subject of close attention because, although the French authorities tended to take the support of the clergy for granted due to their opposition to Cavour's anti-clerical policy and their 'profound antipathy for the Piedmontese and Sard civil servants',<sup>99</sup> they were aware of their influence in a very religious province.<sup>100</sup> After the annexation, Archbishop of Chambéry Alexis Billiet thus sent the French government a list of requests in return for the support of the clergy during the plebiscite campaign. His main request was for an exemption from the French law on civil marriage for Savoy – allowing civil registrars to register civil marriages only if preceded by religious ones. This could not be conceded because it went against French laws (the Concordat of 1801) but the government offered to suspend its implementation during a vague 'transition period' during which only religious marriages were allowed.<sup>101</sup> However, this was deemed insufficient by the Savoyard clergy. Archbishop Billiet thus wrote to all parish priests on 28 December 1860 to remind them that civil marriage was not recognised by the Church and even encouraged a form of civil resistance by asking Savoyard priests 'to reread this letter from the pulpit every year in all the parishes of the diocese'.<sup>102</sup>

Several other requests made by Billiet proved more successful, however. These show that the French authorities did make some significant concessions to try to win over clergymen and devout Catholics, such as retaining the dioceses of Maurienne and Tarentaise – which was a measure of exception as they were significantly smaller than all other French dioceses – and appointing only Savoyards as bishops or archbishops in Savoy.<sup>103</sup> Savoyard clergymen were paid directly by the state rather than by municipalities, which met a public demand of Savoyards,<sup>104</sup> and the French state even increased their salaries.<sup>105</sup> The French state also funded the construction, repair or extension of

<sup>96</sup> Advielle, *Etude*, 12.

<sup>97</sup> Rey, *Quelques mots*, 2.

<sup>98</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie*, 1860, 17 Dec. 1860, 8.

<sup>99</sup> ADS, 2FS-54, Report to Minister of Worship on the remuneration of the Savoyard clergy, 15 Dec. 1860.

<sup>100</sup> Anselme Petetin, *De l'annexion de la Savoie* (Paris, 1859), 23.

<sup>101</sup> Jean Maurain, *La politique ecclésiastique du Second Empire de 1852 à 1869* (Paris, 1930), 416–17.

<sup>102</sup> Alexis Billiet to Senator of Castagnetto, 15 Mar. 1865, in 'Tornata del 21 Marzo 1865', *Rendiconti del parlamento italiano discussioni del Senato del Regno Sessione del 1863–64*, 8th Legislatura, 3, 2639.

<sup>103</sup> *Annales du Sénat et de la Chambre des Députés, 1876–1880* (Paris, 1877), 1, 27 Nov. 1876, 446; Christian Sorrel, 'Figures et illusions du pouvoir: les évêques savoyards sous la Troisième république', in *Élites et pouvoirs locaux: La France du Sud-Est sous la Troisième République*, ed. Bruno Dumons and Gilles Pollet (Lyon, 1999), 217–34, at 217.

<sup>104</sup> ADS, 12FI-156, 'Appel à voter OUI du Comité Central de Chambéry et d'Annecy' [April 1860].

<sup>105</sup> ADS, 2FS-54, Report on the remuneration of the Savoyard clergy, 15 Dec. 1860.

churches or vicarages in thirty-two communes of Savoie in February 1861.<sup>106</sup> However, the imposition of French laws on the *État civil* (civil registry) in Savoy – which put the civil registry under the remit of the mayor rather than the clergy – dramatically reduced the temporal power and influence of Savoyard priests. Some Savoyard liberals asserted that, in rural areas, ‘the priest directed the mayor’.<sup>107</sup> This was certainly true in Piedmontese Savoy, but many Savoyard priests in 1860 deplored the loss of their ‘omnipotence’ caused by the rising power and influence of the mayor in French Savoy.<sup>108</sup>

Evidence of the increased centrality of mayors in local governance can be found in the caution and flexibility of the new French authorities in the controversy over the appointment of municipal secretaries, who were key assistants for rural mayors. Under Piedmontese rule, this role was generally undertaken by solicitors,<sup>109</sup> given a stipend for their time. This system was abrogated by the French Minister of Justice, so that, from 1 January 1861, the role of municipal secretary was filled by the commune’s schoolmaster as was already the case in ‘historic’ French *départements*.<sup>110</sup> However, in rural Savoy, schools often opened for five months at most.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, many schoolteachers, who themselves only had limited education, were not deemed able to do all the writing entailed by the secretary’s work.<sup>112</sup> Many mayors in the small rural communes were ploughmen (*laboureurs*) who cultivated their parcel of land themselves, as can be seen in the apologies sent by several of them for the official ceremonies surrounding the travel of Napoleon III to Savoy in August 1860 due to being busy with harvest work.<sup>113</sup> Their now-unpaid work as mayor was therefore a significant investment in time, hence the necessity for qualified assistants.<sup>114</sup> The *sous-préfet* of Moûtiers, receiving letters of mayors asking for the right to resign on a daily basis over this issue, thus alerted the prefect about the extent of the mayors’ difficulties.<sup>115</sup> Following the *sous-préfets*’ advice, it was thus decided, for the communes where proof of the incompetence of the schoolmaster was provided, to allow the mayors to appoint someone else.<sup>116</sup> This confirms the distinctive significance of public opinion in Savoy, as no mayors in any other French *département* were granted a similar prerogative. The government indeed insisted on the ‘exceptional and completely temporary’ nature of this arrangement.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>106</sup>ADS, 2FS-20, Allocation of a subsidy of 300,000 francs, no date [Feb. 1861].

<sup>107</sup>Anon., *Le Clergé et la Paysanne: Considérés au point de vue politique. Par un Savoyard* (no place, 1871), 12.

<sup>108</sup>Abbé Jean-Charles-Benjamin Poisson, *Italie-Rome* (Orleans, 1893), 1, 54.

<sup>109</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, *Sous-Préfet* of Albertville to Prefect, 30 Mar. 1861.

<sup>110</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, Prefect to mayor of La Motte Servolex, 18 Feb. 1861; ADS, 2FS-19, *Sous-Préfet* of Moûtiers to mayors, 5 Feb. 1861; ADS, 2FS-19, Prefect of Savoie to Mayor of Mollard d’Hery, 18 Feb. 1861.

<sup>111</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, Mayor of St Avrex to the Prefect, 9 Jan. 1861; ADS, 2FS-19, Mayor of Montendry to the Prefect, 17 Jan 1861.

<sup>112</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, *Sous-Préfet* of Moûtiers to the Prefect, 29 Dec. 1860.

<sup>113</sup>Letters from mayors of Brides les Bains, Bonneval, Champlarent, Les Frasses, no date [Aug. 1860], ADS, 2FS-6.

<sup>114</sup>ADS 2FS-19, Mayor of Montendry to Prefect, 17 Jan. 1861.

<sup>115</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, *Sous Préfet* of Moûtiers to Prefect, 13 Sept. 1861.

<sup>116</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, Minister of Interior to Prefect, no date [Nov. 1860]; ADS, 2FS-19, Prefect to Minister of Interior, 26 Nov. 1860.

<sup>117</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, *Sous-Préfet* of Moûtiers to mayors, 5 Feb. 1861.

The French government then proceeded to undertake a complete overhaul of the municipal system, replacing the Piedmontese municipal 'juntas' (councillors acting collectively as mayor) with individual mayors appointed by the Minister of the Interior (for communes with populations of over 3,000 inhabitants) or by the prefect.<sup>118</sup> This new process of selecting mayors by appointment rather than through local election – as had been the case under Piedmontese rule – came under fire from all sides.<sup>119</sup> Communal power was indeed essential for the democratisation of society. As Tocqueville famously stated, elected municipal institutions were 'to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the reach of the people'.<sup>120</sup> The mayor who, in Savoy as elsewhere in France, had to wear national symbols such as the tricolour scarf embodied the nation and its 'invented traditions'.<sup>121</sup> The popular protest at the French centralisation of communal power was therefore taken very seriously. Although the mode of appointment could not differ in Savoy because the government wanted to retain some control over mayors, French officials were instructed to deploy 'political pedagogy' to explain the 'benefits' of the French method of selection to the Savoyards: removing the electoral party spirit to ensure that the mayor was not 'the man of the majority' but rather 'the man of all without exception'.<sup>122</sup>

The reform of the municipal system was not the only area where the effects of French centralisation could be felt. To some extent, state formation in Savoy was aimed at creating a standardised state, moving towards a fully-fledged 'Weberian' state characterised by the imposition of impersonal norms and codes.<sup>123</sup> The first few months of French rule saw a flurry of surveys on all areas of public life, from the number of post offices to the places and dates of fairs and markets; and *sous-préfets*, mayors or inspectors of finances were each time reminded of the necessity to comply with French administrative practices and use the correct proformas.<sup>124</sup> Civil servants in senior positions were explicitly asked to train new officials in French administrative methods. The *Receveur général* of Finances of Savoie thus reminded the *Receveur particulier* of Moutier in October 1860 that his duty was 'not limited to bookkeeping, collecting revenues and paying expenses; [he also had to] supervise and direct [his] tax collectors in their collections, payments, etc'.<sup>125</sup> However, although the French authorities tried to standardise administrative practices and centralise power, they also made some significant exceptions in order to win over the Savoyards. Alison Carrol has observed that the imposition of French rule in Alsace-Lorraine – after the two provinces were returned to France in 1919 – were marked by the introduction, often resisted by the Alsatians, of

<sup>118</sup>Jocelyne George, *Histoire des maires, 1789-1939* (Paris, 1989), 141.

<sup>119</sup>*Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1860, Session of 17 Dec., 10.

<sup>120</sup>Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* (3 vols., Brussels, 1835), I, 94.

<sup>121</sup>ADS, 2FS-19, Prefect of Savoie to mayors, 18 Sept. 1860; Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), 7.

<sup>122</sup>Anselme Pétetin, 'Allocution du Préfet', no date [spring 1861], in *Discussions de politique démocratique et mélanges, 1834-1861*, ed. Anselme Pétetin (Paris, 1862), 451.

<sup>123</sup>Max Weber, 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions', in *Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1958), 295.

<sup>124</sup>ADS, 2FS-23, Receveur général to Inspector of La Rochette, 13 Oct. 1860; ADS, 2FS-19, Prefect to the mayor of Montendry 18 Feb. 1861.

<sup>125</sup>ADS, 2FS-23, Receveur général of Savoie to Receveur particulier of Moutier, 19 Oct. 1860.

French centralisation.<sup>126</sup> This was also the case in Savoy,<sup>127</sup> but only to an extent. Unlike Alsace, some significant exemptions were granted, as can be seen in the sensitive area of reforestation.

In Savoy as in many other mountainous areas, the enforcement of the French Forest Code, forbidding grazing and other uses of woods where trees were not high and big enough to resist damage caused by cattle, was resented by the populations of these areas. This had been a cause of violent conflict in the early nineteenth century.<sup>128</sup> Under lax Piedmontese rule, large tracts of Alpine forests in Savoy had disappeared by the time of the annexation.<sup>129</sup> The French government therefore decided on a strict implementation of the 1827 Forest Code. This corresponded to a public demand: in Savoy as in other places in nineteenth-century Europe, concern was mounting about the negative environmental effects of deforestation.<sup>130</sup> A law of 28 July 1860 provided for a reforestation of mountainous areas (through financial grants or gifts of seeds and plants to communes, and through the establishment of tree nurseries). This was well received by the communes as they were increasingly aware of the ecological importance of forests and the role they played in preventing natural disasters (avalanches, floodings).<sup>131</sup> But the prohibition on grazing where the trees were not mature enough to resist damage caused by cattle was resented by the poorest peasants. It was therefore decided to allow forest wardens to grant ‘temporary concessions’, based on the number of hectares of pastureland which could be opened to peasants in each *canton* without risk to tree cover.<sup>132</sup> As a result, the implementation of the Forest Code was not met with significant violence in Savoy.

The new administration therefore showed a willingness to try to mitigate the impact of the introduction of French rule on Savoyard livelihoods. It implemented the new laws in an ‘impartial but moderate’ manner, with scope for flexibility and accommodations when necessary.<sup>133</sup> It also understood the importance of ‘political pedagogy’ to justify unpopular French rules and laws – such as the appointment of mayors – to prevent popular opposition. This desire to convince the local population of the benefits of French rule also led to a growing awareness of the importance of political communication as a tool of governance.

### Governing for impact: state investment, political communication and public opinion

With a few exceptions,<sup>134</sup> political communication – the various ways in which messages are constructed and communicated from public officials and politicians to

<sup>126</sup> Alison Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France, 1918–1939* (Oxford, 2018), 65–9.

<sup>127</sup> ADS, 2Fs-19, Prefect to mayor of Montendry, 18 Feb. 1861.

<sup>128</sup> See Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

<sup>129</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1860, Session of 17 Dec., 10.

<sup>130</sup> ADS 208E-407, ‘Délibérations du Conseil municipal de Beaufort, 1860–1865’, 1 Mar. 1861; Caroline Ford, *Natural Interests: The Contest over Environment in Modern France* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 31.

<sup>131</sup> ADS 208E-407, ‘Délibérations du Conseil municipal de Beaufort’, 1 Mar. 1861.

<sup>132</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1860, Session of 19 Dec., 105.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, Session of 17 Dec., 27.

<sup>134</sup> Cristina Rosillo Lopez (ed.), *Political Communication in the Roman World* (Leiden, 2017), 2.

citizens – is mostly studied for the contemporary period. However, its origins as a tool of statecraft can be traced back to the nineteenth century. The French writer Prosper Rambaud observed in 1860 how, ‘In the times we live in, political advertising has become as significant as commercial advertising. Appealing words are thrown to the masses, who readily fall for them.’<sup>135</sup> In the context of mass enfranchisement, the political need to secure the support – or at least prevent the active opposition – of the population gained even more saliency. External constraints sometimes combined with domestic priorities to heighten the importance of political communication, as could be seen during the First World War,<sup>136</sup> or indeed in post-annexation Savoy.

A good example of effective political communication can be seen in public discourse about the levels of activity of civil servants in Savoy. Although their positions officially started on 14 June, the new prefects arrived in their *départements* earlier.<sup>137</sup> Subsequent accounts placed strong emphasis on the early presence in Savoy of the new prefects and other civil servants. For example, Prefect Dieu praised the engineers of the *Ponts et Chaussées* for starting work in Savoy early, planning new transport infrastructures even before the official start of French rule, ‘[roaming] our valleys and our mountains ... with an activity for which the country owes them gratitude’.<sup>138</sup> Dieu’s strongly worded commendation suggests the existence of a conscious policy of political communication aimed at highlighting the diligence and vigour of French civil servants. It was in any case duly noted by the local press.<sup>139</sup> On 10 May 1860, the *Courier des Alpes* reassured its readers – concerned by the delay in implementing the results of the plebiscite – that the French government had already started organising the new local government of Savoy without waiting for the Italian parliament’s ratification so that, ‘on the happy day when the Sard Parliament [would] lift the last obstacle to the ... [annexation], [they would] see [...] a competent local government functioning, trade thriving, industry flourishing’.<sup>140</sup>

To facilitate more effective political communication, state agents were instructed to be visible and approachable, and to prioritise discussion and pedagogy over coercion and discipline. A good example of this can be seen in the instructions given in 1860 by the *Receveur général* of Finances to his subordinates, the Inspectors of Finances. These emphasised the importance of a subtle, conciliatory and diplomatic approach to the recovery of debts from taxpayers and reminded them of the importance of very frequent visits to their constituencies. On 13 October 1860, he thus asked the Inspector of La Rochette ‘to try persuasion before resorting to legal action, and above all, to offer taxpayers every possible means of settling their debts’, before meaningfully adding: ‘I am convinced that many debtors would not fall behind if tax collectors visited the municipalities more frequently.’<sup>141</sup>

French officials also deployed an active communication policy on the state funding of public works, which were seen as conducive to the economic growth that was

<sup>135</sup> Prosper Rambaud, *La France et le Piémont: Italie et Savoie* (Paris, 1860), 7.

<sup>136</sup> John Griffiths (ed.), *Communication and the First World War* (Abingdon, 2020), 3, 7.

<sup>137</sup> ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to Savoy civil servants, 18 June 1860.

<sup>138</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1861, Session of 26 Aug., 12.

<sup>139</sup> *Courier des Alpes*, 27 March and 6 Apr. 1860.

<sup>140</sup> *Courier des Alpes*, 11 May 1860, 1.

<sup>141</sup> ADS, 2FS-23, *Receveur général* to Inspector of La Rochette, 13 Oct. 1860.

the main objective set by the French government in order to provide Savoyards with 'the serious benefits of [the French] institutions for well-being and general prosperity'.<sup>142</sup> In Savoy as elsewhere, the Second Empire saw a dramatic expansion of transport infrastructure.<sup>143</sup> However, for state agents in Savoy, decision-making was only one part of their mission. In order to showcase the benefits of French rule to the population – and to Europe – it was necessary clearly to communicate the advantages resulting from public works for the region, duly highlighting the significant investment of the French state. New roads, railway lines and bridges were therefore actively used as a propaganda tool. Each time a large grant was offered to the *département*, this was communicated to the population, with an emphasis on the heavy economic investment that it entailed. For example, on 23 August 1860, the Prefect of Savoie sent a letter to the *sous-préfets* and mayors asking them to communicate to all citizens the latest example of large state investment: the opening of two new railway lines, the repair and maintenance cost of six departmental roads for five years and the permanent funding of four imperial roads. To ensure that the extent of this investment was not lost on the population, the prefect asked local officials to provide the exact figures and highlight in their announcement to the Savoyards that 'this [was] a very significant grant awarded to the *département*': 3,060,000 francs for imperial and departmental roads plus 246,000 France per year for maintenance cost.<sup>144</sup>

The savings made thanks to this state grant were used to build seven new departmental roads. Savoyard communes were also offered a very significant long term loan by the *Crédit Foncier* (5,292,701 francs and 8 centimes).<sup>145</sup> For the most indebted ones, additional state support (300,000 francs per *département* in August 1860) was extended to fund the building or repair of town halls, schools, churches, local roads, bridges and dams.<sup>146</sup> This was well received by the local population as most communes were debt-ridden after years of Piedmontese 'predatory' fiscal policy, which saw most local taxation retained by the state, and little in the way of public funding for the development of infrastructure.<sup>147</sup> The small market town of Beaufort thus made 2,000 francs of savings thanks to the classification of the road from Beaufort to Albertville as departmental, allowing it to dedicate this sum to other areas of public interest, such as repairs to paths and bridges after damage caused by floods and snow during the winter.<sup>148</sup>

In Savoy as elsewhere in nineteenth-century Europe, political tours were a significant tool of political communication.<sup>149</sup> However, in Savoy, the visit of Napoleon III to Savoy in August–September 1860 was also accompanied by a series of decrees granting exceptional funding for a wide array of local projects, all of them duly communicated to the population with great attention to detail, not least in respect of the financial outlay involved: the designation of three existing roads as 'departmental roads', the

<sup>142</sup>ADS, 2FS-1, Speech by Prefect, 15 June 1860.

<sup>143</sup>Roger Price, *The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914* (2018), 207–89.

<sup>144</sup>ADS, 2FS-49, Prefect to *sous-préfets* and mayors, 23 Aug. 1860.

<sup>145</sup>*Délibérations du Conseil Général de Savoie*, 1861, Session of 27 Aug., 16.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, 1860, Session of 17 Dec., 11; ADS, 2FS-20, 'Etats de répartition de la subvention de 300,000 francs', 28 Dec. 1860.

<sup>147</sup>ADS, 2FS-20, Prefect of Haute-Savoie to Prefect of Savoie, 3 Feb. 1860.

<sup>148</sup>ADS, 208E-407, 'Délibérations du conseil municipal de Beaufort', 29 Mar. 1861.

<sup>149</sup>Dalisson, *Au plus près du peuple*.

construction of a new bridge over the Rhône at Ruffieux (in addition to the bridges of Seyssel and La Balme), the grant of 300,000 francs for the *département's* communes to launch new public work projects, the opening of a new road in Chambéry to connect it with the imperial road from Lyon (200,000 francs), repair works to the town hall and the building of a covered market and a botanical garden in Chambéry (500,000 francs).<sup>150</sup> Prefect Dieu then added that 'the simple enumeration of these measures [was] enough to show both the extent of this generous act and the fruitful thought of the Emperor'.<sup>151</sup>

The main objectives of this ambitious programme of public works were laid out in the Prefect of Savoie's speech: 'to give some work to workers, embellish the cities, and provide the local populations with the means of transportation they need'.<sup>152</sup> This met a public demand as, in Savoy as elsewhere, the large-scale projects of Prefect Haussmann in Paris were widely reported in local newspapers.<sup>153</sup> A deputation of Chambéry's workers sent an address to Napoleon III specifically asking for 'public works of embellishment and sanitation'.<sup>154</sup> Their petition to the Emperor being communicated to the prefect, the latter wrote to the mayor of Chambéry to ask him to appoint a committee to oversee a programme of improvement in response to the workers' demands. Most importantly, he added that it should be communicated clearly to the petitioning workers that their request was granted, with a strong emphasis on the 'large gifts made by His Majesty' or the grant.<sup>155</sup> The building of transport infrastructures also fulfilled a social and political role, by providing some work for unemployed workers. This helped showcase 'how fruitful [French] institutions are' by exposing the sharp contrast between the economic 'atony' of the Piedmontese period and the activity of the French period. Napoleon III prioritised social peace throughout France,<sup>156</sup> but perhaps even more so in Savoy because of continuing international opposition after the annexation. Since prosperity was seen as conducive to political peace, providing work to unemployed construction workers who had been badly hit by the slump of the interim period was deemed critical to win over the local population.

Funding public works also conduced to population stability. As in many other mountainous areas, Savoyards, especially in upland areas, were accustomed to seasonal migration.<sup>157</sup> A large part of the population of Chablais and Faucigny were construction workers and in the winter, they often moved to big cities for work.<sup>158</sup> The 1850s and 1860s were indeed the high point of construction workers' seasonal migration in France.<sup>159</sup> 'Preventing such large-scale movement of workers – 'always so fatal to the

<sup>150</sup> ADS, 2FS-1, Proclamation by the Mayor of Chambéry, 28 Aug. 1860; ADS, 12FI-227, Proclamation by the Prefect, 31 Aug. 1860.

<sup>151</sup> ADS, 2FS-1, Proclamation by the Mayor of Chambéry, 28 Aug. 1860.

<sup>152</sup> ADS 12FI-227, Proclamation by the Prefect, 31 Aug. 1860.

<sup>153</sup> David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, 2025), 4.

<sup>154</sup> ADS, 2FS-1, Prefect to Mayor of Chambéry, 28 Nov. 1860.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Rosa, *French Liberalism*, 51.

<sup>157</sup> Laurence Fontaine, 'Montagnes et migrations de travail: Un essai de comparaison globale (XVe–XXe siècles)', *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, 52 (2005), 26.

<sup>158</sup> Grégoire Hudry-Menos, 'La Savoie depuis l'annexion. II. L'économie et la vie rurale dans les plaines et la vie pastorale dans les montagnes', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 1864, 51, no. 3, 591–637, at 635.

<sup>159</sup> Alain Corbin, *Archaisme et modernité en Limousin au XIXe siècle, 1845–1880* (Paris, 1975), 204.

country whose depopulation they bring' – corresponded to a nationwide policy of preventing rural migration.<sup>160</sup> It was also seen as crucial for the economic development of Savoy. This was clearly communicated by the two prefects to the population. As the Prefect of Upper Savoy Pétetin eloquently said, through the 'inexhaustible generosity' of the Emperor 'the mountain worker no longer needs to go far away to look for work; work comes to him'.<sup>161</sup>

Napoleon III's focus on social policy is well known to historians.<sup>162</sup> This was also a focus of his political communication. Widespread publicity was given to his acts of generosity to charitable institutions and to the poor. The first official visit of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie to Savoy in August–September 1860 provided an opportunity for the Emperor to show his concern for the well-being of his new subjects. On the last day of this official visit, Marquis Costa de Beauregard, President of the *Conseil général*, stated hyperbolically that 'each of [His Majesty's] steps in [Savoyard] towns and valleys has brought a new benefit'.<sup>163</sup> This imperial philanthropy was not unusual as Napoleon III's social policy until the mid-1860s amounted primarily to the disbursement of funding to charities.<sup>164</sup> This is consistent with the reputation of Napoleon III as a generous man attuned to the needs of the paupers.<sup>165</sup> However, what was distinctive for our purposes here was the personal involvement of the emperor in philanthropic gifts in Savoy. As elsewhere in France, some of these grants came from the national budget, but others came directly from his private funds.<sup>166</sup> Among other gifts, the Emperor pledged some financial aid for the *département's* asylum at Bassens (400,000 francs), as well as a grant of 25,000 francs of relief for the poor and for the local charitable institutions of the *département*, all of which was duly communicated to the people by the Prefect of Savoie.<sup>167</sup> There were also isolated gestures of generosity during his visits to different places in Savoy,<sup>168</sup> all of them reported in great detail in the official newspaper *Le Moniteur*.

This conscious effort at explaining and communicating to the public the aims and results of public policies was instrumental in securing the support of the Savoyard population for the project of state formation. The *Courrier des Alpes* asserted, in July 1860, that 'anything that can improve the moral and material condition of the population is the object of constant concern from the imperial government'.<sup>169</sup> A successful policy was not deemed sufficient if its success was not fully grasped by the citizens. A diligent policy of political communication therefore appeared as a natural complement to political action. Political communication was embedded in local governance.

<sup>160</sup>Pétetin, 'Circulaire', 20 Mar. 1861, in *Discussions*, ed. Pétetin, 446.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup>Anceau, *Napoléon III*, 257–63; Lentz, *Napoléon III*, 99; Yon, *Second Empire*, 172.

<sup>163</sup>Frédéric d'Alexandry d'Orengiani (ed.), *Voyage en Savoie de l'Empereur Napoléon III et de l'Impératrice Eugénie* (Chambéry, 1881), 45.

<sup>164</sup>Yon, *Second Empire*, 172.

<sup>165</sup>Lentz, *Napoléon III*, 99.

<sup>166</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 26 Aug. 1860, 3.

<sup>167</sup>ADS, 12FI-227, Proclamation by Prefect, 31 Aug. 1860.

<sup>168</sup>D'Orengiani (ed.), *Voyage*, 41.

<sup>169</sup>*Courrier des Alpes*, 19 Jul. 1860, 3.

## Conclusion

The administrative transition from Piedmontese to French rule was complete by 1861; French institutions had by then replaced the Piedmontese ones in all branches of local government. The communes had cleared their debts. New infrastructures were planned and new public buildings rose in all parts of Savoy. French administrative processes and practices had been internalised by mayors and local councillors. The Prefect of Savoie marvelled at the speed of this swift and effective transition, asserting that no difference could by then be noticed between the functioning of institutions in Savoy and in other parts of France.<sup>170</sup> His counterpart in Upper Savoy, Anselme Pétetin, concurred, asserting that ‘the sense of French law reigns effortlessly over this country so naturally French’.<sup>171</sup>

The success of post-annexation state formation in Savoy was achieved at a very high cost. Modernising the agriculture and industry and achieving in Savoy, in just a few years, what took ‘thirty years of sustained efforts’ in historic French *départements* required massive state investment.<sup>172</sup> From 14 June 1860 to 1 April 1865, Savoie paid 31,913 francs in various taxes and received 38,592,735 francs from the central state (excluding municipal and departmental investments).<sup>173</sup> The proportion was the same in Upper Savoy.<sup>174</sup> This caused some resentment in other parts of France, which was exacerbated by the fact that public expenditures in Savoy had been decided by the government alone, as a measure of exception that was not subject to any form of parliamentary control.<sup>175</sup> Even before the annexation, French journalist Edmond About predicted that ‘Savoy [would] add a great deal to our expenses and very little to our income’.<sup>176</sup> After the annexation, it was then believed by some, ‘[counting] the sums spent on the new *départments* and those that come from them’, that Savoy had been a ‘very expensive acquisition’ with little return on investment other than the strategic importance of the ‘frontier of the Alps’.<sup>177</sup>

However, this significant investment was critical to meet the high expectations of the Savoyards. The construction of new roads, railway lines and public buildings transformed Savoy. The authors of a musical comedy on Chambéry as a French city in 1869 thus credited the French state for the modernisation of Savoy, observing that ‘everywhere a new city arises’.<sup>178</sup> The replacement of Piedmontese with French institutions and the introduction of French laws and codes were received positively by the Savoyard population. This can be seen in the absence of major protests or riots, even after the introduction of unpopular laws such as the reforestation of mountains or the introduction of a tax on alcoholic beverages.<sup>179</sup> Politically, this massive state

<sup>170</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1861, 27 Aug., 16.

<sup>171</sup> Anselme Pétetin, ‘Le Préfet de la Haute-Savoie à MM les sous-préfets, maires et chefs de service’, 16 May 1861, in *Mélanges*, ed. Pétetin, 455–6.

<sup>172</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1861, Session of 26 Aug., 13.

<sup>173</sup> Saint Genis, *Histoire de Savoie*, III, 369.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Sénat, Session of 20 Dec. 1861, in *Annales du Sénat et du Corps législatif* (Paris, 1862), I, 29.

<sup>176</sup> Edmond About, *Lettres d’un bon jeune homme à sa cousine Madeleine* (Paris, 1861), 230.

<sup>177</sup> Hudry-Menos, ‘Savoie depuis l’annexion’, 420.

<sup>178</sup> ‘Chant de la ville de Chambéry’, in Albert Laporte, *Chambéry, hier et aujourd’hui, grande revue locale en quatre actes et quatorze tableaux* (Chambéry, 1869), 22.

<sup>179</sup> *Délibérations du Conseil général de Savoie*, 1860, Session of 17 Dec., 16.

investment paid off, as it secured the support of the Savoyards for the administrative transition from Piedmontese to French rule. This was confirmed by the strong contribution of Savoy to the war effort in 1870 and the predominantly pro-French sentiment in Savoy thereafter, with only a limited and short-lived northern Savoy separatist movement in the 1870s.<sup>180</sup> By the 1890s, Savoyards had turned into full-fledged Frenchmen. An anonymous Upper Savoyard thus exclaimed in 1892: 'we are French through and through ... throughout the territory, in all classes of society and in all political parties'.<sup>181</sup> This powerful expression of a strong sense of national identity by Savoyards challenges the chronology of French nationalism proposed by Eugen Weber in his seminal book, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, in which he argued that French people did not develop a strong sense of national identity until the late nineteenth century, between 1880 and 1910.<sup>182</sup> Several French historians have since then critiqued Weber's chronology, arguing that the politicisation of the French peasantry and the development of a sentiment of national identity in France were already well advanced by 1870.<sup>183</sup> This article furthers this point by providing evidence of a conscious policy of state- and nation-building during the Second Empire in Savoy, resulting in a strong sense of French national identity among Savoyards in the 1860s.

The growing sensitivity to the importance of public opinion in politics, which was demonstrated by the resort to a plebiscite to decide on the French annexation of Savoy, could be seen again in the early years of French rule in Savoy post-annexation. The persistence of opposition to the French annexation of Savoy by Switzerland and Italy after 1860 raised the stakes and made a successful state-building effort in Savoy a political priority for Napoleon III. Not only was it crucial for the French government to keep to its electoral promises and to invest for the economic development of Savoy, but it was also necessary to communicate this clearly so that the efforts made and the impact of the policies implemented were not lost on the Savoyard population.

The contribution of the Second Empire to the social and economic modernisation of France is a familiar topic for historians but it was also, as this article has shown, a critical period for the introduction of a modern form of local governance, attuned to public opinion and skilful in its use of political communication. The example of Savoy yields some lessons for present-day state-building. It highlights the importance of an active and dynamic interplay between state and society. Successful governance is not only about listening to public opinion and making concessions whenever possible to adapt to local needs. It also requires a diligent and systematic approach to political communication, one able to deploy 'political pedagogy' to explain potentially unpop-

<sup>180</sup>Heyriès, *Militaires savoyards*, 461–2; anon., *Le Clergé et la Paysanne*, 13; Sawchuk, 'Daily Plebiscite', 208–29.

<sup>181</sup>Anon., *A l'occasion du centenaire de 1792: la Savoie est-elle française? Par un Savoisien* (Annecy, 1892), 2.

<sup>182</sup>Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA, 1976), 493.

<sup>183</sup>For a useful discussion of this debate, see Miguel Cabo and Fernando Molina, 'The Long and Winding Road of Nationalization: Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* in Modern European History (1976–2006)', *European History Quarterly*, 39 (2009), 264–86.

ular measures; and able also to emphasise, in a comprehensible fashion, the positive impact of public policies on citizens' daily lives.

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