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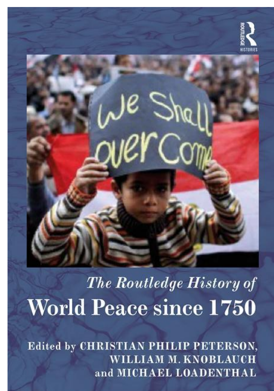

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Christian Philip Peterson, William M. Knoblauch, Michael Loadenthal

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3

LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Waqar Zaidi

Liberal internationalism, as a constellation of ideas, ideologies, and movements, came to the fore in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth century, where it flourished until the mid-1940s. Although as an overt ideology it diminished greatly during the Cold War years, liberal internationalism nevertheless remains embedded in international institutions and in parts of the international system. This chapter explores liberal internationalism in both its ideational and institutional forms, focusing particularly on its prescriptions for peace and its connections and overlaps with pacifism. It highlights proposals for an international police force as a contentious issue between muscular and pacifist strands of liberal internationalism.

Scholars use the terms "liberal internationalism" and (in the United States) "Wilsonian internationalism" to refer to a broad range of late nineteenth century and twentieth century ideas, movements, and institutions. There is consequently no single definition that can fully do justice to these varieties—but generally speaking "liberal internationalists" refers to those who looked forward to a legally and institutionally organized system of international relations in a world integrated through international trade and communications. Liberal internationalism promoted international organizations as institutions to reduce anarchy in international relations, curb the worst excesses of nation states, and solve the ills of the world—including militancy, war, poverty, and oppression. International affairs, internationalists argued, needed to be subjected to the considerations of public morality. Foreign policy had to reflect national opinion and ethical principles, and be guided by democratic oversight.

Origins of liberal internationalism

The origins of liberal internationalism date back to John Locke's (1632–1704) liberal individualism, Adam Smith (1723–1790), David Ricardo (1772–1823), and Jeremy Bentham's (1748–1832) belief in free trade's ability to spread peace and prosperity, and Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) belief that the spread of liberal republican systems of government would reduce warfare and eventually lead to political integration (see Chapter 1). Also influential was the French aristocrat Comte de Saint Simon (1760–1825), who looked forward to eventual European federation, and whose followers, the Saint-Simonians, called for men

to form both national and international "associations."[1] But it was the Victorian search for world order that elevated liberal internationalism to an influential and widespread ideology. As the British Empire expanded and consolidated in the latter half of the century, the growing ranks of the British liberal intelligentsia promoted visions of global polity. Foremost among them was manufacturer Richard Cobden (1804–1865), who became an influential voice in the growing free trade movement. Cobden argued that free trade was a natural state for mankind that led to peace and prosperity. Cobdenite internationalism became immensely influential in the 1870s, particularly during the first government of Gladstone (1668–1874) which promoted free trade and minimal government.[2]

The ideas of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900) typified the development of British liberal internationalist thinking in the late 1800s. In *Political Institutions* (1882) Spencer argued that the key emergent distinction in international affairs was between industrial and militant societies. Militant societies were warlike, whereas the urge to produce, trade, and make profit meant that industrial societies preferred individual freedom and peace. Warfare and militarism, he believed, was inimical to the growth of international prosperity and freedom. Sidgwick, pointing to the recent Italian and German unifications, and the United States of America, argued that the search for international security was pushing nations into larger agglomerations. A liberal imperialist, Sidgwick saw the British Empire as part of this natural evolution.[3]

By the beginning of the twentieth century liberal internationalists could point to growing international organizations and global interconnections as evidence of increasing international integration. As well as a tremendous growth in international trade, commerce, and travel, there were increases in the number of international organizations and conferences—for example the Universal Postal Union (1874), the International Union for Weights and Measures (1875), the International Union of Customs Tariffs (1890), and the International Office of Public Hygiene (1907). Attempts to create universal standards for weights and measures, money, time, and even language followed, as did growing interconnections in science, politics, culture, sport, imperialism, and international migration and tourism. There was also the growth of international Christian organizations, women's organizations, and relief organizations. In 1899 the first Inter-Parliamentary Union conference brought together parliamentarians from Western and Northern Europe. In nearly all walks of European life, international connections were on the rise.

The late nineteenth century witnessed a growing interest in the creation of international law. Developing from earlier religious motivations, since the late 1850s proposals for international law were driven by a (secular) desire to reduce the frequency and intensity of international warfare, and move the international system in a more peaceful direction. The *Institut de droit international*, meeting in Ghent in 1873, embodied these hopes and aspirations. Internationalist lawyers pointed to legal treaties such as the first Geneva Convention (1864) and the Treaty of Washington (1871) as evidence that international law could nurture and spread civilization globally. The international Hague peace conferences, the first two of which were held in 1899 and 1907, appeared to demonstrate that peace through international law was not a pipe dream. The liberal internationalist approach to international law was codified in Britain by academics such as the German émigré Lassa Francis Lawrence Oppenheim (1858–1919) and Hersch Lauterpacht (1897–1960). They developed nineteenth century concepts of international law in a more positivist direction, arguing that stronger international law required the formation of powerful international organizations. International lawyers would become staunch supporters of the League of Nations in the 1920s and 1930s,

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seeing in the League and the Permanent Court of International Justice the strengthening of international law and order.[4]

Pacifist organizations arose in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century, but it was only in the 1860s that organizations with an explicitly liberal internationalist character began to form. The *Ligue internationale et permanente de la paix*, formed in Paris in 1867, focused on international trade and arbitration to avert war. By 1897 over sixty French pacifist and internationalist organizations were associated with the *Bureau international de la paix* in Berne. The *Association de la paix par le droit* (founded 1887), which also focused on peace through arbitration, emerged as the leading French liberal internationalist pacifist organization at the turn of the century.[5] Such organizations laid the foundation for a French "judicial internationalism" which materialized as the dominant mode of liberal internationalism in France in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The French politician Léon Bourgeois (1851–1925), central to the crafting of France's pro-League of Nations policy in the second decade of the twentieth century, exemplified this type of internationalism. He represented France on the League of Nations Commission at the Paris Peace Conference, became the first President of the Council of the League, and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1920. Smaller European countries too became centers of liberal internationalist activity—particularly Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.[6]

Britain and new liberal internationalism 1900–1939

British liberal internationalist thinking developed into a "new liberal internationalism" pioneered by a small coterie of intellectuals writing in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Norman Angell (1872–1967), L. T. Hobhouse (1864–1929), and John A. Hobson (1858–1940) elucidated a new liberalism that was more critical of unregulated capitalism and envisaged a greater role for state regulation in creating just societies. These concerns manifested in their international relations theorizing, which incorporated their critique of industrialists and financiers and their support for international regulatory institutions. In *Democracy and Reaction* (1904), Hobhouse eschewed the Cobdenite emphasis on the peaceful effects of trade, and instead argued for the development of an internationalist moral consciousness and the growing interdependence of the world through increased international trade and communication as the "true basis of internationalism." In *Imperialism* (1902) Hobson called for an end to imperialism, arguing that it was driven by an unregulated and overly powerful aristocracy–military–trading complex. By contrast, Norman Angell's influential *The Great Illusion* (1910) was more Cobdenite in its argument that, in the modern commercially integrated world, warfare was irrational.[7] Interwar internationalist thinking took a more institutional direction by emphasizing the need for powerful international organization. For G. Lowes Dickinson (1862–1932) such institutions might tame the "international anarchy" that characterized international relations and gave rise to the insecurities of nation states and their subsequent arms races. Philip Noel-Baker (1889–1982) emphasized the importance of international multilateral arms control and disarmament, and its policing, by the League.[8]

Liberal internationalist activity reached a high point in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The League of Nations Union emerged as a leading internationalist group pushing for a strengthened League. At its peak (1933 to 1935), its nominal membership exceeded a million (though actual subscribers were probably a third that), and it ran more than 3,000 branches and youth groups. Its journal, *Headway*, had a circulation in 1928 of over 94,000, and its expenditure sometimes topped £30,000 a year. It arranged rallies, deputations, and petitions,

and played a leading role in organizing the 1934–1935 Peace Ballot campaign.[9] As Leaguist internationalism declined in the late 1930s with the rise of German power and the political failure of the League, other forms of liberal internationalism emerged in Britain. One briefly popular variety was federalism, championed by, among others, Philip Kerr (1882–1940) and Lionel Curtis (1872–1955), erstwhile members of the Round Table movement. Their Federal Union Movement, at its peak 1938 to 1940, espoused Anglo–American federal union as a precursor to wider international political federation.[10]

The League of Nations and interwar liberal internationalism

In the United States the foundations of liberal internationalism date back to the turn of the century, when internationalists and their organizations—such as Hamilton Holt's World Federation League (1872–1951)—called for greater international organization. Also increasingly prominent were calls for arbitration to replace war in international affairs—the World Peace Foundation (founded 1910) called for the creation of an "international army and navy" to police arbitration, and the League to Enforce Peace (formed 1915) stressed the need for a powerful League to embody this arbitration and policing of international disputes.[11] These calls reached a crescendo just prior to and during World War I, and laid the foundation for President Woodrow Wilson's vision for a liberal world order. As well as urging more national democracy and national self-determination, Wilson's proposed League was to keep peace through international cooperation, particularly in relation to dispute resolution and disarmament. "The world must be made safe for democracy" he declared to Congress in April 1917.[12]

The League of Nations, born in 1919, embodied this Wilsonian internationalist vision. But it was also made possible by growing liberal internationalist impulses in Britain that by 1917 had the ear of government. Influenced by internationalists such as Leonard Woolf (1880–1969) and the Bryce Group, the Foreign Office produced a proposal for a new "Council of Nations," including a draft constitution whose clauses would eventually find their way into the League's Covenant. Internationalist Conservative Party politician Robert Cecil (1864–1958) and the South African Boer imperialist Jan C. Smuts (1870–1950) were central to pushing the League idea before and during the Paris peace negotiations in 1919.[13] The United States Congress did not ratify the Covenant however and so the United States did not join the League—Wilson failing to overcome the fear of entanglement in foreign disputes and loss of national control over foreign policy. The League, consequently dominated by France and Britain, nevertheless managed to develop a "spirit of Geneva" through the internationalism of its employees, a spirit that helped ensure cooperation and discussion on political, social, and economic matters—though on the political front the League made little headway against the national interests of its most powerful member states. There were some notable achievements in peacekeeping in the early 1920s, but attempts at arms control failed (most spectacularly through the failure of the 1932–1933 World Disarmament Conference), and the League made little effort to tackle Japanese, Italian, and German aggression in the 1930s. Imperialism and colonialism too remained unchecked, though the Mandates Commission was nevertheless able to apply pressure on the Powers, and force them to justify their actions in various ways.[14]

Some inter-state internationalist initiatives, meanwhile, arose from outside the League. The most significant of these was the Kellogg–Briand Pact, signed 1928, in which signatories

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agreed to abandon aggressive war as an instrument of national policy. The concept of aggressive war promoted by the Outlawry of war movement, which lobbied for the Pact, would go on to play a significant role in the later formulation of the United Nations charter (1944–1945) and postwar Nuremberg and Tokyo war trials (1945–1949).[15]

On economic and social matters the League fared better. The Social Section of the League, for example, conducted campaigns against slavery, the opium trade, and trafficking of women and children. The International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation fostered links and connections between liberal internationalist intellectuals, although more concrete initiatives, such as intellectual property rights, remained unsettled. The League established a new Permanent Court of International Justice, an International Labor Organization, and an international health bureau. The Economic and Financial Organization of the League oversaw the monetary stabilization of Austria and Hungary and refugee resettlement in Greece and Bulgaria. At the heart of the League's internationalism sat its Secretariat, consisting of a few hundred (approaching 650 at its height) international civil servants who attempted to move beyond nationalist perspectives in solving social and political problems of an international nature.[16]

Liberal internationalism's preoccupations and limitations opened it up to a range of criticisms in the interwar years. Perhaps the most glaring omission was its accommodation with Great Power imperialism. Wilson's rhetoric on self-determination raised hopes of a quick end to imperialism, but the "Wilsonian moment" faded as the League and the United States failed to challenge imperialism. Most internationalists took the civilizing of lower races to be a chief goal of international government, and some even put empire at the heart of their visions. Smuts' calls for Anglo-American union reflected a desire to preserve white supremacy in Africa and around the world, while Alfred E. Zimmern's (1879–1957) Round Table movement looked towards the British Empire as the natural building block for internationalist peace.[17]

Detractors also attacked the idealist nature of some internationalist proposals, and internationalists' obliviousness to the extent to which their proposals dovetailed with Great Power foreign policy. English political scientist E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939) condemned liberal internationalism as unrealistically "utopian" and rooted in national self-interest.[18] Right-wing German legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) agreed, seeing liberal internationalism's legal order as reifying existing international political rivalries, especially for the dominant victors of the World Wars.[19] The Left criticized the League of Nations, and Communism offered its own internationalist alternatives, including the Third International. For Lenin the League was "an alliance of world bandits against the proletariat," and for one British socialist writing in 1933 "A League army today would be the picked police force of allied capitalism."[20]

International force

Since its inception, Liberal internationalism had been spread across a spectrum from the pacifist to the muscular. In the interwar years, particularly in Europe, internationalists became increasingly less pacifist and more likely to advocate international war. This muscular internationalism was typified by proposals for the creation of an international police force. Such proposals arose prior to World War I, and picked up again after the war (especially in Britain and France), when the proposed force would empower an overarching international

political organization, police disarmament, and arms control, and allow for the persecution of just war through collective security. In the 1920s, the League of Nations debated the formation of a League force, culminating in proposals put forward by France at the 1932 world disarmament conference. Arms control was interwoven into these schemes through proposals that advanced offensive weapons (such as bombers, submarines, and poison gas) be banned for nations and reserved for the international force. By 1933 most proposals envisioned a force that would be largely aerial in nature—an international air force. Support for an international police force declined in the late 1930s, only to pick up again during World War II on the coat tails of plans for the creation of a powerful postwar organization. Allowance for such a force was even made in the United Nations Charter, though its formation was thwarted by the growing postwar US–Soviet rivalry.[21]

Organizations and individuals on the pacifist end of the spectrum placed a strong emphasis on avoiding warfare. Though not necessarily "absolute" pacifists, nevertheless they mostly disagreed with demands for an international police force.[22] Many pacifists, as proponents of disarmament, supported the arms limitation aspects of international force proposals while opposing the force itself. Organizations such as the National Peace Council broke with League-supporting internationalist organizations (such as the League of Nations Union and the International Federation of League of Nations Societies) which began to support collective security and an international police force more forcefully by 1933. Pacifist organizations from across Europe signed a declaration sent to the World Disarmament conference in July 1932 calling for the abolition of tanks and military aviation, but not the formation of an international air force.[23] For pacifist Helena Swanwick (1864–1939) the term "police" itself was a "false analogy"—a policeman was lightly equipped with a "whistle and a truncheon" whereas an international air force "would have to be fully armed with the most modern and destructive weapons" and so would "spread terror and frightfulness."[24]

Many proposals for an international air force took inspiration from British imperial control of colonial territories in Iraq and the North West Frontier Province. This use of aerial bombardment, and the realization that any such force would serve the interests of the dominant powers, also worried pacifists. For one member of the No More War Movement, writing to the *Manchester Guardian* in 1934, "at best an international police force would only serve to perpetuate the political and economic status quo in Europe and to facilitate the repression of colonial populations."[25] As internationalist opinion became more militaristic through the 1930s, pacifist opposition to international force declined. Following fascist aggression in Spain and Ethiopia, and the advent of Hitler's expansionist foreign policies, pacifist organizations, activists, and the public increasingly came to feel that the use of military force was justifiable, especially against fascist powers.[26]

"Second chance"

Notwithstanding exclusion from the League, Wilsonian internationalism remained alive in the interwar United States. Organizations such as the League of Nations Association, the World Peace Foundation, and American Society for International Law pushed for closer ties to the League and spread internationalist sentiment in the country. Through publications, study groups, lectures, and radio programs, think tanks such as the Foreign Policy Association and the Council on Foreign Relations attempted to cultivate what internationalists such as Nicholas Murray Butler (1862–1947) called the "international mind." Philanthropic

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foundations such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Rockefeller Foundation pressed ahead with their international philanthropic and national education and academic programs. These organizations were part of a wider flourishing of private internationalist organizations in the interwar years, including an ecumenical internationalism embodied in bodies such as the World Alliance of Churches for Promoting International Friendship.[27]

Although many US pacifists aligned with internationalists, by the mid-1930s they often took stances that, while still internationalist in some ways, nevertheless opposed mainstream liberal internationalist organizations. Many pacifists argued for neutrality in international affairs, and so found themselves closer to isolationist positions on international relations. The National Council for Prevention of War, for example, supported American membership in the League and the World Court, but also supported the neutrality legislation put before Congress in 1935 (which was opposed by most internationalist groups). As the World War II approached, the Council supported the Keep America Out of War campaign, in direct opposition to many internationalists (such as the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies) who called for further intervention in Europe.[28]

Overall, World War II seemed to afford what one historian has called a "second chance" for liberal internationalists, and internationalist activity increased in vigor even before the United States joined the war. At the popular level internationalism grew to never before seen heights—one 1942 opinion poll showed that 73 percent favored US participation in a postwar international organization, compared to 50 percent in 1941 and 33 percent in 1937.[29] Publisher Henry R. Luce's (1898–1967) editorial on the "The American Century" captured the widespread feeling that the whole world now was open to American values and influence.[30] Best-selling books such as journalist Clarence Streit's *Union Now* (1939) and Ely Culbertson's *Total Peace* (1943) called for an international federation of Western democracies. Both works were instrumental in the formation of the American world federation movement in the 1940s—*Union Now* sold over 250,000 copies by the time of its eighth edition in 1961.[31] By 1945 this movement turned towards a more inclusive global internationalism—popular expositions such as Emery Reves's (1904–1981) best-selling *The Anatomy of Peace* called for a global (not Western) world federation. In the late 1940s federalists pushed for reform of the United Nations to further limit national sovereignties and create a more powerful organization.[32]

British Liberal internationalism reinvigorated after the war began. The need to cooperate in the fight against the Axis Powers gave many hopes that Britain and the United States would jointly organize the world after the war. But there was also significant interest in European integration, with many seeing the liberation of Europe as an opportunity to reduce political and economic boundaries. With the introduction of wartime logistical planning on an unprecedented global scale came an increased sense that solving many of the world's postwar problems (prominently hunger, refugees, and international transport and communication deficiencies) required specialized international technical and scientific organizations.[33] The strong impulse for Anglo–American unity eventually led to the signing of the Atlantic Charter (a joint declaration of war aims agreed in August 1941) and Britain's partnership with the United States in the formation of the United Nations Organization 1944–1945. But it boosted too the British Federal Union movement, which held on to some popularity into the postwar years, particularly under the leadership of Labour MP Henry Usborne (1909–1996).[34]

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The United Nations and beyond

At the policy level the US State Department began planning for the postwar period in early 1941, and was a remarkably liberal internationalist in its constitution and vision. President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself believed that postwar international stability should be maintained by the great powers working in concert through a new wide ranging international organization. But he also wanted to offer a "New Deal for the world" based on human rights and his "Four Freedoms." These goals found their way into the Atlantic Charter, which envisaged the war as one of internationalism versus nationalism, and set out internationalist postwar aims for the Allies. Along with liberal freedoms for the world it called for global cooperation towards international peace and security. These visions eventually materialized in the form of the United Nations Organization (UNO), which was brought into being through the signing of the United Nations Charter at San Francisco in April–June 1945. The Charter granted primary responsibility for international peace and security to a Security Council dominated by the five permanent members, each with the power to veto decisions of the Council.

The UNO owed much to the structure and activities of its predecessor, the League. Mandates became trust territories. The International Telecommunication Union, the Universal Postal Union, and the League's International Labour Organization were folded into the UNO. The Food and Agricultural Organization and the Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, both created earlier during the war, were also subsumed into it. The UNO's Security Council and General Assembly resembled the League's Council and General Assembly—crucial differences being the veto powers accorded to the five permanent members of the Security Council, and the majority voting adopted by the UNO, as opposed to the unanimous vote required to pass resolutions in the League bodies. Collective security was initially as important for the UNO as it had been for the League—Article 42 of the Charter empowered the Security Council to "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."[35] But there were important differences too. The UNO introduced a human rights orientation into its notions of social justice, present in the Charter but most evident in the formation of the Human Rights Commission (1947) and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Two powerful financial organizations (the so-called Bretton Woods organizations, named after the 1944 New Hampshire conference where their formation was agreed) promised a new era of international economic prosperity. The International Monetary Fund was created to monitor and promote international trade, ensure stability in currencies, and to make loans and technical assistance for short-term financial issues. The World Bank was to lend for long-term development needs. Both were dominated by the United States from the very beginning.[36]

This notion of peace through international technical cooperation remained influential into the 1950s and 1960s, and was particularly connected to growing European integration and the growth in scientists' international activism in the late 1950s. This argument had gained ground during World War II, when its most sophisticated elaboration could be found in political scientist David Mitrany's (1888–1975) "functional" approach to international relations.[37] The leading architects of European union in the 1950s embraced this "technocratic internationalism" which looked to materialize European union through infrastructural and economic integration.[38] Political scientists such as Karl W. Deutsch (1912–1992) and Ernst B. Haas (1924–2003) welcomed the European Coal and Steel Community, EURATOM

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and NATO as experiments in international functionalism and neo-functionalism.[39] Scientists' activism, particularly in the form of organizations such as Pugwash (formed 1957) was also hailed (not least by the scientists themselves) as an example of how technical experts, in this case natural scientists, could cross deep political and ideological divides to achieve meaningful debate and policy impact.[40]

With the deepening of the Cold War in the early 1950s, liberal internationalism waned—its prominence in public discourse dwindled, faith in international organizations and internationalist ideals declined, and most liberal internationalist institutions became pawns in the globalizing Cold War. The world federation movement reached a peak in 1950 and then declined, as did United Nations Associations around the world. The Cold War marked the great divergence of pacifism and liberal internationalism. Notwithstanding European integration, liberal internationalism, to the extent that it remained, became strongly associated with American soft and hard power. The most vivid demonstration of this occurred during the Korean War (1950–1953), in which the US military fought as a UN force (made possible by an ongoing Soviet bloc boycott of the Security Council). The elision between liberal internationalism and American power was due not only to US sponsorship of and influence in the United Nations and its associated institutions, but also to its growing economic and financial influence around the world. Pacifism, meanwhile, remained anti-militarist and pro-disarmament, but took on a more anti-war character, often setting it at odds with American foreign policy. Anti-nuclear movements, in particular, have come to be associated with pacifism rather than liberal internationalism.[41] Today, powerful liberal internationalist organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund aim to spread international peace and security indirectly—that is through economic uplift, and international trade, communications, and cooperation. Pacifist movements, on the other hand, focus on tackling armaments and protest against international conflict. This bifurcation may be one reason why warfare remains as big a scourge today as it has been for centuries. One way forward could be for these two tendencies to rediscover their shared and intertwined heritage, and for internationalist organizations to be mobilized for the direct prevention of warfare.

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