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# Digesting the League of Nations: Planning the International Secretariat of the Future, 1941–1944

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**Abstract:** This article examines the administrative debates on the structure of the post-war international order that took place during the Second World War. By focusing on a multinational study group composed of former high ranking League of Nations civil servants affiliated with the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, it elucidates the activities of international civil servants after they left the League. It is shown how the group claimed to represent the experiences of the international secretariat of the League of Nations on a comprehensive scale by publishing a report on the evaluation of the League's secretariat. An examination of the report investigates how the group defended the League of Nations and their own participation in the League.

**Keywords:** internationalism, League of Nations, Second World War, international civil servants, international secretariat, Chatham House

## Introduction

Between 1941 and 1944, the former League of Nations servant Joseph Vivian Wilson initiated a London-based investigation into the bureaucratic structure of the League of Nations. As Assistant Director of Research at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), the New Zealander Wilson used the infrastructure of the institute to gather an unofficial group of former colleagues under the chairmanship of Eric Drummond, the erstwhile Secretary-General of the League of Nations. The results were published in a 1944 report entitled *The International Secretariat of the Future: Lessons from Experience by a Group of*

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former *Officials of the League of Nations*,<sup>1</sup> and claimed to have influenced discussions about the plans for the post-war international order and international administration by a study of the League of Nations's administrative history. In Wilson's words, what came to be known as the *London Report* was part of wider discussions "to 'digest' the League's experience."<sup>2</sup>

Even though the group's report and an accompanying article by Wilson published in *International Affairs*<sup>3</sup> are frequently cited in studies on the League of Nations,<sup>4</sup> to this day historians have failed to pay much attention to the specific circumstances surrounding the genesis of the report. This article provides a historicization of the emergence of the *London Report*.

But why should historians be interested in the Chatham House study group? It is the contention of this article that the historiographical relevance of the *London Report* relies on the context of its historical genesis during the Second World War. The question concerning the genesis and predictions of the *London Report* is a vehicle for investigating the history of the international civil service in the interim period between a dwindling League of Nations and the emergent United Nations. It shows how the members of the group were trying to counteract the declining image of the League of Nations and to portray the institution of the international secretariat, composed of nationally independent civil servants, as one of the most successful innovations in international relations. Recent research indicates that the Second World War was not only a dispute over territories, but also a renegotiation of world organization.<sup>5</sup> Madeleine Herren has highlighted the long-term significance of the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919. Admittedly, the League failed to prevent the outbreak of a

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1 The Royal Institute of International Affairs (=RIIA), *The International Secretariat of the Future. Lessons from Experience by a Group of Former Officials of the League of Nations*, 5th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1944).

2 Joseph V. Wilson to Alexander Loveday, 22 October 1942, in National Library of New Zealand, Wellington (=NLNZ), Papers of Joseph Vivian Wilson, 78-145-07.

3 Joseph V. Wilson, "Problems of an International Secretariat," *International Affairs* 20:4 (1944): 542–554.

4 See for example Stephen M. Schwebel, *Justice in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 249; John R. Mathiason, *Invisible Governance: International Secretariats in Global Politics* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2007), 144; Jean Siotis, "The Institutions of the League of Nations," in *The League of Nations in Retrospect* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), 19–30, 27.

5 Madeleine Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2009), 111; Emily S. Rosenberg, "Transnational Currents in A Shrinking World," in *A World Connecting, 1870–1945*, ed. Emily S. Rosenberg (Cambridge M. A.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 846. Emily Rosenberg emphasizes the role of what she calls "transnational ties of all kinds" during the war, such as transportation, communication and access to raw materials.

second global war, but its establishment as the first comprehensive international governmental organization deeply changed the architecture of international relations.<sup>6</sup> Thus, one important – and hitherto frequently neglected – battlefield between 1939 and 1945 was the debate over the role and the design of international organizations as key structural elements in an international order.<sup>7</sup>

The writing up of the *London Report* is considered as part of the multi-layered negotiation of the new organization's global claims. At the end of these debates stood the founding of the United Nations Organization in San Francisco in 1945 as “the newest experiment in twentieth century internationalism.”<sup>8</sup> Strikingly, the League was barely mentioned during the discussions in San Francisco, even though there were obvious continuities between the new United Nations Organization and its predecessor.<sup>9</sup> Though officially still extant, the League was regarded as a failed initial attempt at large-scale international organization, so that decision-makers feared even mentioning it would spoil the hopeful birth of the new body. Indeed, the League was represented in San Francisco,<sup>10</sup> but observers at the conference noted that its representatives had “a very rough and difficult time”: the League delegation was “very much to the side and not given the recognition that they should have had.”<sup>11</sup>

On a methodological level, this article approaches the history of the *London Report* by following the activities of its organizer and main author, Joseph Vivian Wilson. Consequently my argument draws not simply on the report itself, but

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6 Madeleine Herren, “Der Völkerbund – Erinnerung an ein globales Europa,” in *Europäische Erinnerungsorte* vol. 3. Europa und die Welt, ed. Hein Duchardt et. al. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2012), 271–280, 280; Madeleine Herren, Martin Rüesch and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History. Theories, Methods, Sources* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 1.

7 Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865*, 111. Increasing research has drawn attention to the claims of the National Socialists on the international system. Cf. Madeleine Herren, “‘Outwardly ... an Innocuous Conference Authority’, National Socialism and the Logistics of International Information Management,” *German History* 20:1 (2002): 67–92; Mark Mazower emphasizes that even the extreme nationalist Nazis were “obliged, once Europe lay at their feet in 1940, to articulate their own vision of international order.” Cf. Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 154 and 192. Very recently: Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge M. A.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

8 Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 88.

9 Mazower, *Governing the World*, 154.

10 Victor-Yves Ghebali, “La transition de la Société des Nations à l’Organisation des Nations Unies,” in *The League of Nations in Retrospect* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), 73–92, 76.

11 Arthur Sweetser to Vera Ward, 6 June 1945, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (=LoC), Arthur Sweetser Papers, Box 41, League at San Francisco (1945).

above all on the papers of Joseph Vivian Wilson kept in the National Library of New Zealand, and augments this information with material from the Chatham House archive, the League of Nations Archive in Geneva, and the British Foreign Office Correspondence.

The first part introduces the main conceptual and historiographical trajectories of the article, which is to say: the dissolution of the secretariat and the history of post-war planning. The second part examines the formation of the Chatham House study group, and examines the group's genesis and networking activities. This is followed by a third section which analyses the concrete suggestions made in the report.

## Placing the *London Report*

The decision alone to publish a report reveals a deliberate reference on the part of the London group to an important and established form of communicating change or the need for change in international organizations, especially in times of crisis. Although the London group had no institutional connection with the still existing League, contemporary observers placed them together with a whole series of major reports concerning administrative reform that were conducted for the League of Nations throughout its existence.<sup>12</sup> Usually the historiography mentions four such major reports from the League of Nations: the *Balfour Report* of 1920, the *Noblemaire Report* of 1921, the *Report to the Committee of Thirteen* of 1930, and the *Bruce Report* of 1939.<sup>13</sup> Each of these responded to specific moments of upheaval: the *Balfour Report* and the *Noblemaire Report* were central documents for the definition and creation of the secretariat of the League of Nations. Against this, the *Report to the Committee of Thirteen* and the *Bruce Report* responded to critical situations concerning the international secretariat.<sup>14</sup> Significantly, the *Bruce Report*, which suggested an increased commitment on the part of the League with regard to technical cooperation, was completed in August 1939 – which was already too late to be executed by the League.<sup>15</sup> The drafting of the *London Report* was thus the next consequent step:

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<sup>12</sup> Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat. A Great Experiment in International Administration* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), 375.

<sup>13</sup> Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *International Secretariat*, 25–30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Of all the reports, the *Bruce Report* is the best researched. Cf. Wendy Way, *A New Idea Each Morning. How Food and Agriculture came together in one International Organisation* (Canberra:

in response to the crisis of the 1940s and the inevitable end of the League, the authors evaluated the bureaucracy of an organization that only barely existed, with the decided aim of transferring this to a potential successor organization of the League.

By reading the *London Report* as part of the League's reform reports, this article contributes to two areas of historical research. Firstly, the report is interpreted as the result of a noticeable networking activity on the part Wilson and a group of former colleagues after they left the League. Thus, an analysis of the *London Report* contributes to the historiography of the League of Nations during the Second World War and places it in the context of the dissolution of the League in the early 1940s. Secondly, the report must be understood as a part of a discourse on post-war order between 1939 and 1945. The commitment of the Allied Powers to international cooperation made it clear that the end of the Second World War would mean the re-organization of the collective security system, with strong American participation.<sup>16</sup> As a Chatham House employee, Wilson had *ex officio* access to its networks and used them as levers to gain discursive power to promote the concerns of his study group.

For a long time, scholarship on the League of Nations had a tendency to limit the scope of investigation to a period up until the late 1930s. The history of the institution during the Second World War was often only told as a kind of 'appendix,' or as a 'short prelude' to the San Francisco Conference in 1945 – especially when viewed from a national perspective.<sup>17</sup> In 1969 and 1979, James Barros published monographs on the terms of the first two Secretaries-General, the Scotsman Eric Drummond and the Frenchman Joseph Avenol,<sup>18</sup> but not until as late as 1999 was the first book-length study published on the last head of the League administration, Sean Lester (1941–1946).<sup>19</sup> In the 820 pages of his

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Australian National University E Press, 2013), 175–210; Martin D. Dubin, "Toward the Bruce Report: The Economic and Social Programs of the League of Nations in the Avenol Era," in *The League of Nations in Retrospect* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), 42–72.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Mazower clearly emphasizes the role of the United States of America in the history of international organization by terming the second part of his history of world order "Governing the World the American Way." Cf. Mazower, *Governing the World*, 189.

<sup>17</sup> For example: Gerald Chaudron, *New Zealand in the League of Nations: The Beginnings of an Independent Foreign Policy, 1919–1939* (Jefferson: Mc Farland, 2012); Warren F. Kuehl and Lynne K. Dunn, *Keeping the Covenant. American Internationalists and the League of Nations, 1920–1939* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> James Barros, *Betrayal from Within: Joseph Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1933–1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969); James Barros, *Office Without Power. Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond 1919–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Gageby, *The last Secretary General. Sean Lester and the League of Nations* (Dublin: Town House and Country House, 1999).

monumental *A History of the League of Nations*, the former League official Frank Paul Walters dedicated only 10 pages to the timespan of 1939 to 1945. By contrast, the chapter on the First Assembly of the League in 1920 alone is 15 pages long.<sup>20</sup>

The prevailing narratives of the League's wartime years were set down in the late 1940s and early 1950s by the works of the two former League of Nations officials, Walters<sup>21</sup> and Ranshofen-Wertheimer.<sup>22</sup> In their emotional accounts, the authors described how the "political work of the League came to a standstill"<sup>23</sup> in 1939, and how drastic financial cuts led to massive reductions in personnel. Research has tended till now to adopt this view, along with their strong dislike of the second Secretary-General Avenol as "less than half-hearted in regard of the League."<sup>24</sup> Even in 2006, Paul Kennedy compared the status of the League in the 1940s to a "receivership," and asserted that the institution "gathered dust" during the Second World War.<sup>25</sup>

In 2014, Sandrine Kott underlined the necessity of uncovering the history of international organizations in times of war to gain a better understanding of how these institutions "were able to survive the war, providing human and technical resources to national governments during the war, but also striving to keep alive the international spirit they used to promote."<sup>26</sup> Recently several studies have begun to draw a livelier picture of the activities of the League of Nations during the Second World War, especially regarding the so-called 'technical' organizations. For example, Patricia Clavin has demonstrated how the America-based Economic and Financial Organization of the League influenced the "architecture of a New World Order" between 1940 and 1946.<sup>27</sup> New studies point to the manifold intellectual, institutional, political, and personnel continuities between the League of Nations and the system of the United Nations that

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<sup>20</sup> Frank P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 801–815.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *International Secretariat*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>24</sup> Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, 810. For a critical reflection on the historiographical evaluation of Avenol cf. Bob Reinalda, "Avenol, Joseph, League of Nations, 1933–1940," *IO BIO*, accessed 27 January 2016, <http://www.ru.nl/publish/pages/531985/avenol-j-21august2012-mar15.pdf>, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Kennedy, *Parliament of Men. The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations* (New York: Random House, 2006), 24.

<sup>26</sup> Sandrine Kott, "Internationalism in Wartime: Introduction," *Journal of Modern European History* 12:3 (2014): 318–322, 318.

<sup>27</sup> Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy. The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 267–304.

emerged during the Second World War.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the outbreak of war in 1939 remains an important watershed in the historiography of the League.<sup>29</sup>

In his article from 2015 about the staff of the League of Nations, Klaas Dykmann re-emphasized the necessity of investigating its personnel because recent studies “convincingly underline the continuities between the League and the United Nations.”<sup>30</sup> Jaci Eisenberg has argued though that there are surprisingly few studies that back up these continuities with concrete historical evidence.<sup>31</sup> What is more, in many accounts, any such continuity remains hidden as historical actors tried to prevent links being made between a ‘failed’ League and the ‘new’ United Nations.<sup>32</sup>

It is the contention of this article, however, that historians of the League of Nations and the United Nations should expand their interests beyond questions of direct (or indirect) institutional continuities, to include the activities of all those international civil servants who were dismissed by Joseph Avenol in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As Susan Pedersen has pointed out, it was indeed a “Geneva-centered world”<sup>33</sup> that emerged around the League in the 1920s and 1930s. However, historians have not yet provided adequate explanations regarding the impact of the ‘disintegration’ of the League’s cosmos in Geneva. From a

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**28** This point has been stressed in various studies. Especially the so-called technical organizations of the League were the basis for the specialized agencies of the UN-system. The following selection of literature covers (recent) notable publications in this area of research: Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation, 1921–1946* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2009); Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Anna-Katharina Wöbse, *Weltnaturschutz. Umweltdiplomatie in Völkerbund und Vereinten Nationen, 1920–1950* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 2012). Already in 1983 Victor-Yves Ghebali analyzed the transition from the League of Nations to the United Nations. Cf. Ghebali, “La transition.”

**29** Cf. for example the recently published study of the mandates system by Pedersen which tells the history of the mandates system until 1939. Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

**30** Klaas Dykmann, “How International was the Secretariat of the League of Nations,” *International History Review* 37:4 (2015): 721–744, 721.

**31** Jaci Eisenberg, “The status of Women: A Bridge from the League of Nations to the United Nations,” *Journal of International Organizations Studies* 4:2 (2013): 8–24, 8.

**32** Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 149. Walters already asserted in the 1950s that the responsible leaders preferred “to think of themselves not as reviving the past but as planning the future.” Cf. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, 812.

**33** Susan Pedersen, “Back to the League of Nations,” *American Historical Review* 112:4 (2007): 1091–1117, 1112. A similar line of thought is followed by Daniel Gorman, who sees the League of Nations as centerpiece of an international society emerging in the 1920s. Cf. Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

rather institutional perspective, the League was ‘globalized’ during the Second World War; the Economic and Financial Organization went to Princeton, the Opium Board to Washington, the Treasury to London, the International Labour Organization to Montreal, and there were plans to relocate the Health Section in Australia. But what happened to the former international civil servants who became victims of the drastic financial cuts in the League’s budget, or left Geneva to escape the menace the Axis posed to Switzerland and the League?

In general accounts, the former League’s servants usually disappear from the history of international organization in the early 1940s, then to reappear in the expanding international sphere of the United Nations.<sup>34</sup> Few existing studies indicate the diversity of the activities and agendas of former League servants during the war and emphasize the significance of actor-centered approaches.<sup>35</sup> David Ekbladh, for instance, has investigated the transfer of the Economic and Financial Organization of the League into its “American Asylum.”<sup>36</sup>

This point leads directly to the second area of research in which this article is rooted. As already shown, the *London Report* is clearly part of a late history of the League of Nations, but this article interprets it likewise as part of an early history of a post 1945 international order.

Historians and political scientists have pointed out a key difference between the peace-agreements of 1919 and 1945. In contrast to the Paris Peace Conference, all the major powers (even the still hesitant United States of America) were willing in 1945 to commit themselves to the organization of a new international security system.<sup>37</sup> Several works have emphasized America’s contribution in shaping the new order.<sup>38</sup> Yet although historians have begun to take “post-war” seriously as a subject of study,<sup>39</sup> they have hitherto focused too much on what happened in 1945 and disregarded its immediate prehistory. Only recently have scholars challenged the idea of an all too clear global caesura

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**34** Ghebali points to the fact that in 1946 200 former League servants were transferred to the United Nations Secretariat. Cf. Ghebali, “La transition,” 86.

**35** Mary Kinnear, *Mary McGeachy and International Cooperation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

**36** David Ekbladh, “The United States and the Campaign to Transplant the Technical League, 1939–1940,” *Diplomatic History* 39:4 (2015): 629–660.

**37** Paul Kennedy, *Parliament of Men*, 45.

**38** William Keylor, *A World of Nations: The International Order since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

**39** Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent. Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Penguin Books, 2013); Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).



in 1945<sup>40</sup> and indicated that post-war history had already begun during the Second World War.<sup>41</sup> In 2011, Dan Plesch pointed out the importance of the wartime alliance of the United Nations for the genesis of the United Nations Organization and described “how the United Nations developed from war making to peace planning.”<sup>42</sup> Most recently, Stephen Wertheim emphasized the role the co-option of internationalism by American actors during the Second World War played in the founding of the United Nations Organizations.<sup>43</sup> At the latest, the Atlantic Charter of 1941 – as the “defining ‘intellectual moment’ of the Anglo-American relationship”<sup>44</sup> – expressed the commitment of the United States as well as the United Kingdom to the “establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security.”<sup>45</sup> Conventional historiography usually credits the Moscow Conference (1943), Dumbarton Oaks (1944), and Yalta (1945) as steps towards the Conference of San Francisco (1945), which meant the nascence of the United Nations Organizations.<sup>46</sup>

These conferences led to what Ian Buruma believes to be one of the key questions of the Second World War, namely “how to transform the wartime alliance into a stable post-war international order for peace.”<sup>47</sup> A closer inspection of this question shows that numerous allied bureaucrats, planners, and diplomats were occupied with planning this transformation. Furthermore, this should by no means be perceived as a teleological history of the genesis of the United Nations. Andrew Williams points out that during the Second World War, “for a brief instant of history the planners and dreamers get a chance to make a

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**40** For an overview of the major historiographical discussions about the idea of a ‘global 1945’ cf. Christoph Kleßmann, “1945 – welthistorische Zäsur und ‘Stunde Null,’” *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, accessed 27 January 2016, <https://docupedia.de/zg/1945>.

**41** For example Stefan Hoffmann, Peter Romijn, Sandrine Kott and Olivier Wieviorka, eds., *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War, Europe, 1943–1947* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

**42** Dan Plesch, *America, Hitler, and the UN: How the Allies Won World War II and Forged a Peace* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2011), 2. Dan Plesch traces this idea back to the British military historian Michael Howard.

**43** Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy in World War II* (Boston M. A.: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

**44** Andrew Williams, *Failed Imagination? New World Orders of the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 83.

**45** Atlantic Charter, 14 August 1941, accessed 9 March 2016, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>.

**46** Volker Barth, “International Organisations and Congresses,” *European History Online (EGO)*, accessed 4 April 2016, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/barthv-2011-en>; Stephen Schlesinger, *Act of Creation. The Founding of the United Nations* (Westview: Boulder, 2003).

**47** Ian Buruma, *Year Zero. A History of 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), 316.

real mark and to suggest ways of improving the lot of humankind for the next period.”<sup>48</sup> And, even though prominent politicians like Winston Churchill considered planning as untimely,<sup>49</sup> ‘Post-war planning’ was one of the most frequently used catchwords of these groups throughout the Second World War.<sup>50</sup> A manifold universe of committees and groups came into existence around the Foreign Ministries in Great Britain and the United States. Furthermore, the Institutes of Foreign Relations,<sup>51</sup> influential American philanthropic foundations, as well as many other civil society initiatives likewise participated in these discussions.<sup>52</sup> Admittedly, these planning processes were primarily Anglo-American, but it is striking that the conceptions articulated by thinkers in the United States, Great Britain and (Free) France had a global claim.<sup>53</sup> Yet there are surprisingly few historical studies that seriously investigate this cosmos of post-war planning. The case study of the *London Report* explores the dynamics of post-war planning processes by following the claims of former League of Nations officials – a group of actors that has often been neglected by historians of post-war planning.

What is especially interesting is the London group’s attachment to one of the most important political advisory institutions of the early twentieth century: Chatham House. Going back to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Royal Institute of International Affairs and its sister institutes – the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, and the Institut für Auswärtige Politik in Hamburg – evolved to become major political advisory bodies during the 1920s and 1930s, especially the London-based Chatham House, which “assumed a position as

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<sup>48</sup> Williams, *Failed Imagination*, 6. Williams acknowledges that this discourse was by no means restricted to specific ideological blocs: not only the wartime alliance of the Allied Powers, but similarly the Axis powers began hammering out conceptions of new world orders and the means for implementing them. Mazower for example has pointed to plans largely focused on economics. Cf. Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire. Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 121–122.

<sup>49</sup> Mazower, *Governing the World*, 194.

<sup>50</sup> A WorldCat search of the term “post-war planning” gives a rather clear picture: while there are only 33 search results for books published in 1939, the number of results grows rapidly in the following years: 91 (1940) 112 (1941), 292 (1942), 649 (1943), 791 (1944) and 554 (1945) until it then falls to 255 (1946) and 169 (1947) again. Cf. WorldCat, accessed 5 November 2016, <https://www.worldcat.org/>. For a similar analysis cf. Stuart Macintyre, *Australia’s Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2015), 13.

<sup>51</sup> Christian Haase, *Pragmatic Peacemakers. Institutes of International Affairs and the Liberalization of West Germany, 1945–74* (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2007), 56.

<sup>52</sup> Kennedy, *Parliament of Man*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Williams, *Failed Imagination*, 79.

*primus inter pares*”<sup>54</sup> as the oldest of the three institutes and through its connections with British financial and political elites, as well as with the Foreign Office.

Regarding the existing literature, Christian Haase’s assessment from 2007 still stands<sup>55</sup>: research on the Royal Institute of International Affairs is fragmented, and in spite of the publication of important studies in the last few years,<sup>56</sup> there is yet to be a book-length study of Chatham House.<sup>57</sup> For the history of Chatham House during the war, there are primarily two strands of historical research. Firstly, the works of Inderjeet Parmar have shed light on the interconnections between Chatham House and the United States, and their significance for the Anglo-American relationship.<sup>58</sup> The second strand is interested in the contribution of Chatham House, and other institutes, to a nascent international order.<sup>59</sup> The transformation of these institutes from “gentlemen’s clubs”

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54 Christian Haase, “In Search of a European Settlement: Chatham House and British-German Relations, 1920–55,” *European History Quarterly* 37:3 (2007): 371–397, 371.

55 *Ibid.*, 372.

56 The central book on Chatham House’s formative history until 1939 remains the edited volume by Andrea Bosco and Cornelia Navari published in 1994. Cf. Andrea Bosco and Cornelia Navari (eds.), *Chatham House and British Foreign Policy, 1919–1945. The Royal Institute of International Affairs During the Inter-War Period* (London: Lothian Foundation, 1994). Besides that there is a vast body of biographical studies on leading members of Chatham House such as Arnold Toynbee, Philipp Kerr and Lionel Curtis. R. M. Butler, *Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) 1882–1940* (London: Macmillan, 1960); William H. Mc Neill, *Arnold J. Toynbee. A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Deborah Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth. A Biography of Lionel Curtis* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). Christian Haase has investigated in several publications the relations between Chatham House and Germany. Cf. Haase, *Pragmatic Peacemakers*; Haase, *In Search of a European Settlement*. Unfortunately, a much needed analysis about the tight relations between the League of Nations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs still remains a desideratum of study.

57 The only existing monograph about Chatham House was published by the institute itself. Cf. Charles Carrington, *Chatham House: Its History and Inhabitants*, revised by Mary Bone (London: Chatham House, 2004).

58 Inderjeet Parmar, “Anglo-American Elites in the Inter-War Years: Idealism and Power in the Intellectual Roots of Chatham House and the Council of Foreign Relations,” *International Relations* 16:1 (2002): 53–75; Inderjeet Parmar, “Chatham House and the Anglo-American Alliance,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 3:1 (1992): 23–47; Inderjeet Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy. A Comparative Study of the Role and Influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1939–1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

59 In spite of its misleading title, the dissertation has two chapters on the time span between 1919 and 1948 and the planning of post war order. (“The German Problem and the Struggle for Global Order, 1919–1939” and “From the Second World War to the Division of Germany, 1939–48”) cf. Haase, *Pragmatic Peacemakers*, 18–55 and 56–79.

into “brain trusts”<sup>60</sup> during the Second World War is especially important for this article. As the next section demonstrates, Chatham House provided Wilson’s research group with an environment to circumvent the hegemonic authority of the British Foreign Office concerning the future international order.

## Joseph V. Wilson, Eric Drummond and the ‘Old Boys Club’ in wartime London

Although the *London Report* took part in global discourses on international organization and administration, it was first and foremost a product of a London-based group of former League of Nations servants. The aim of this section is to introduce the formation of this group and to show that already the compilation of the authors was itself a claim to defining an official interpretation of the experiment of the League of Nations.

The actual formation of the group was a complex process as not only the international order itself was in a constant state of transition but also the authors of the report had just gone through a phase of re-orientation after leaving the League of Nations. Wilson stated later in regard to the report that his prime idea was to assist the reconstruction work of Chatham House by taking “advantage of League officials in this country.”<sup>61</sup> Presumably, the report must be regarded rather as an attempt by its authors to fight against the decline in the image of the League of Nations. After all, with the outbreak of war in Europe, the League was regarded by most politicians, and by public opinion as a complete failure.<sup>62</sup> Obviously its former officials, who were described just seventeen years earlier as a cosmopolitan bureaucratic avant-garde,<sup>63</sup> were now connected to this failure as well. The idea of the group was thus to fight the declining reputation of the League by portraying the institution of the international secretariat, composed of nationally independent civil servants, as one of the most successful innovations of international relations.

But the immediate catalyst for the formation of the report was a short confrontation between the Foreign Office and former Secretary-General of the

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Wala, *Winning the Peace*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> Margaret Cleeves to Chester Purves, 28 February 1943, Chatham House Archive, London (=CHA) 16/63.

<sup>62</sup> For example Harold Cardazo, “League of Nation Dies,” *Daily Mail*, 29 July 1940, 6.

<sup>63</sup> For example William A. DuPuy, “300 Look After Business of 52 Nations at Geneva,” *New York Times*, 29 July 1923, 24.

League of Nation, Eric Drummond, at the beginning of 1941. This incident reveals the political volatility that discussions about the League of Nations had in the 1940s. After “meditating about the original concept of the League,”<sup>64</sup> Drummond sought to stimulate debates about international organizations in the United States with a short article for a popular American journal. The Foreign Office strongly opposed his ambitions. In February 1941, before the United States entered the war, the Foreign Office feared that the very mention of the League would cause widespread “national dislike”<sup>65</sup> in the United States, and could therefore obstruct America’s support for the British. As one Foreign Office official pointed out:

So much is this the case that if we ever determined to set up something like the L of N again it would have to be given another name + declared to be something quite new. To enter into a defense of the L of N, however reasonably stated, will only arouse old prejudices.<sup>66</sup>

To play down the importance of the League of Nations was essential for the Foreign Office officials because there were few other topics which emphasized the global dimension of international relations as much:

Americans have an old and deep-seated dislike of European ‘entanglements’ + a part of their opposition to coming to our assistance now results from a confused belief that such action would result in a more or less permanent entanglement. They are not yet ready to face the fact that unless they are permanently ‘entangled’ there will be no sensible kind of World for them to live in; it would be a mistake, I think, to frighten them off by raising this issue prematurely.<sup>67</sup>

Eventually, Drummond agreed and withdrew his article, but this dispute led directly to the formation of the *London Report* group. The tendency of the Foreign Office to play down the mere existence of the League of Nations threatened the very people whose lives and careers were closely interwoven with the League, including first and foremost Drummond’s former subordinates in the League’s secretariat.

Apparently Drummond thought that a report which purportedly covered just the technical side of the bureaucratic structures of international institutions could be used as a vehicle to articulate certain opinions. The decision to compose an unofficial report on the League’s history seemed to have less

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<sup>64</sup> Eric Drummond to Foreign Office, 9 February 1941, The National Archives, London (=TNA) C5533/972/98.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Memorandum, 19 February 1941, TNA C5533/972/98.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

political dynamite than an article in an American journal. On the contrary, it could be argued that acknowledging the shifts in international relations since the *Bruce Report*, a new evaluation report was in fact necessary. Drummond found an ideal ally for this enterprise in his former ‘Chef de Cabinet’, the New Zealander Joseph Vivian Wilson.<sup>68</sup> As one of his closest collaborators, Drummond praised Wilson’s capacities and already emphasized in the 1930s his administrative qualities.<sup>69</sup> Wilson was likewise eager to point out the relevance of the experiences of the League experiment for the post-war international order, and had already established contacts with former League officials. Due to his ties to Chatham House, Wilson served as the main organizer and driving force behind the *London Report*.

The course of Wilson’s life in the late 1930s and early 1940s is not untypical of what happened during the disintegration of the ‘Geneva-centered world.’ After the drastic financial cuts of the late 1930s, the staff at the League was dramatically reduced in number in the 1940s. Wilson resigned in June 1940 in order to bring his family out of Switzerland, and moved to London.<sup>70</sup> There he became Assistant Director of Research on Chatham House’s influential “Committee of Reconstruction,” which was a part of Chatham House’s attempts to study possibilities for reconstruction programs to be used after the end of the War. While Wilson’s area of responsibility was mainly to coordinate the meetings of different committees, subcommittees and study groups, he was at the center of post-war reconstruction debates in Great Britain. This position provided him with the opportunity to associate his own study group with Chatham House.

The London group’s affiliation with Chatham House allowed it to use one of the most eminent political think tanks as an institutional home for its meetings. The transatlantic contacts of Chatham House thus served to boost its claim. The inclusion of the *London Report* in Chatham House’s prestigious series *Post War Problems* alone helped the group around Wilson to gain attention in the discussions.<sup>71</sup> Presumably in the first half of 1941, Wilson and Drummond began to

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**68** Regarding the career of Wilson in the League of Nations and afterwards in the New Zealand Diplomatic Service cf. Benjamin Auberer, “‘The Ultimate Backroom-Boy’: The Border-Crossing Career of Joseph Vivian Wilson in the League of Nations Secretariat,” *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 23:6 (2013): 76–99.

**69** *Ibid.*, 86.

**70** Diary of Sean Lester, 29 May 1940, League of Nations Archives, Geneva (=LoNA), Pp 274.

**71** The *Post-War Problems* series was one of the main series of Chatham House during the war. Several of its most important studies, such as David Mitrany’s study of the post-war peace system were published in this series. Cf. David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: An Argument*

approach several former League of Nations officials and started holding regular meetings – supported by Chatham House’s research infrastructure.<sup>72</sup>

However, the British Foreign Office regarded the formation of this group with great skepticism, already suspecting it would be political dynamite. In July 1942, a Foreign Office official told Wilson he should keep the acting Secretary-General of the League Sean Lester “acquainted with what he was doing [ ... ] and also that his studies should be confined to general problems of international administration.”<sup>73</sup> By limiting his range of study to administrative matters, the Foreign Office hoped to avoid political tensions. Wilson remained in close touch with the Foreign Office, which he visited regarding matters of the *London Report* several times between 1941 and 1944.<sup>74</sup> Although the list of authors seems at first glance to be a coincidental gathering of former League employees residing in London, a closer look reveals that the members were carefully selected from a lively community of former League of Nations servants. The reference to regular gatherings of former members of the secretariat remains a frequent motif in Wilson’s correspondence. In January 1941, Wilson wrote in a letter to the former Director of the League’s Information Section, Arthur Sweetser, who was then Deputy Director at the Office of War Information in Washington, D.C.:

Before Christmas almost a hundred past and present members of the Secretariat met in this city for lunch, and I can tell you that it had more of the League in it than all the Assembly dinners put together: nearly all British, naturally, but with Comert, Hoden, Pierre Denis (in French Captain’s uniform) [ ... ] amongst those you would know.<sup>75</sup>

Especially in his letters to Lester in Geneva and to the former League colleagues in America, Wilson emphasized the regularity and extents of these meetings and the prevailing connections between Geneva and London. In June 1941 Wilson declared to Sweetser in an unusually euphoric manner:

Again I have timed a letter to you to follow a Secretariat lunch. Unfortunately I could not stay for the meal, but met the crowd beforehand. I wish I could send you a list, I shall if I possibly can. The person we remember as Eric Drummond was in good form, Frank of course, Colban, Azcarate, Comert, Jacklin of the old guard, Mrs. Winant representing the

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*for the Functional Development of International Organisation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943).

<sup>72</sup> Roger Morgan, “‘To advance the Sciences of International Politics ...’: Chatham House’s Early Research,” in *Chatham House and British Foreign Policy, 1919–1945*, ed. Andrea Bosco and Cornelia Navari (London: Lothian Foundation, 1994), 124.

<sup>73</sup> Roger Makins, Memorandum, 11 July 1942, TNA C6928/36/98.

<sup>74</sup> Reconstruction of the League, undated, TNA C6425/36/98.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph V. Wilson to Arthur Sweetser, 3 January 1941, NLNZ 78-145-07.

transition period. Skylstad was also there, he left Geneva in April to take charge of the Norwegian Foreign Office here.<sup>76</sup>

By mentioning these meetings, Wilson emphasized the activity and exposed London's position, and demonstrated that not only Britons were part of this community but also former (and current) secretariat members of many nationalities. The selection of names represented a broad range of former high ranking League officials. The participation of the Norwegian diplomat and former Director of the League's Minorities Section, Rasmus Skylstad, who "seems to enjoy the change from cramped impotence to some kind of action,"<sup>77</sup> showed that the former League of Nations officials had a certain political influence in London. We may be certain that those letters were aimed at showing how paramount the idea of the League of Nations remained in wartime London, and for this reason featured their activity.<sup>78</sup> Wilson's correspondence demonstrates that there was a lively community of former League of Nations servants in London. Their self-designation as "Old Boys Club,"<sup>79</sup> clearly reflects on the community's gender ratio. In those letters Wilson asserted his own eminent position within this community, and he further depicted himself as a kind of 'spokesman' – especially towards Lester, with whom Wilson kept up an amicable correspondence.

Wilson observed in 1944 that some of the group's members "could not have taken part in the work except on this basis of informality and intimacy"<sup>80</sup> which Chatham House provided. Wilson's correspondence also shows that he had kept the exact composition of the group secret until the late summer of 1943. This suggests that the list of the 'official' authors of the publication does not reveal who actually participated in the meetings, but an analysis of the list of authors clearly shows the claim they were trying to make.

All five members of the group were former high ranking members of the international secretariat<sup>81</sup>; Eric Drummond was the first Secretary-General of the

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<sup>76</sup> Joseph V. Wilson to Arthur Sweetser, 6 June 1941, NLNZ 78-145-07.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> In September 1941 he wrote to Sean Lester: "Yesterday I attended a meeting comprising many mutual friends and acquaintances. The first speaker opened with a tribute to yourself and to those 'qui sont restés la-bas'" cf. Joseph V. Wilson to Arthur Sweetser, 16 September 1941, NLNZ 78-145-07.

<sup>79</sup> Sean Lester to Joseph V. Wilson, 16 May 1941, NLNZ 78-145-07.

<sup>80</sup> Joseph V. Wilson, Memorandum, 7 June 1944, CHA 2/1/9A.

<sup>81</sup> For basic biographical information regarding the engagement of the group members in the Secretariat of the League of Nations and afterwards, see the entries in the database project League of Nations Search engine, which provides the information of the personnel index cards of the Secretariat. Eric Drummond, <http://lonsea.de/pub/person/5456>; Frank P. Walters, <http://lonsea>.



League; Frank Paul Walters and the Norwegian Erik Colban served as Under-Secretaries-General; Wilson, the Greek Thanassis Aghnides and the Dutch Adrianus Pelt had the ranks of Chief or Director of Section. Together they represented most of the fields of the League's work; Walters served as Director of the Political Section, Colban and Aghnides as Directors of the Minorities and the Disarmament Section, Adrianus Pelt was Director of the Information Section, and Wilson as former Chief of the Central Section was an expert in internal administration. The national distribution obviously tried to ward off any accusation that the study was exclusively a British Empire project by including a Greek, a Norwegian and Dutch member. All of them numbered among the longest-serving international civil servants: Drummond, Colban, Aghnides and Walters had joined the League in 1919.

It is notable that not a single French official was among the final authors of the report. Most likely the antipathy towards Drummond's successor Joseph Avenol was too strong, and the London group tried to distance itself from him. Nor was there an American component to the group of experts, but Chatham House supported that faction by assigning the American Chatham House fellow Robert Kull the role of the group's secretary. A Rhodes student, Kull was described by Wilson as having no "previous knowledge of the subject, but trained in research methods and of good capacity."<sup>82</sup> All members were in London during the war. Aghnides and Colban served as ambassadors in London, Pelt was Director of the Royal Netherlands Government's Information Bureau, Walters lived in Oxford, and Eric Drummond worked at the British Foreign Office. Only Walters had already published on the international secretariat before his work on the *London Report*.<sup>83</sup> The group was almost limited to the war alliance of the 'United Nations' but with Pelt included a participant from a neutral state. Indeed, there was no participation by non-European members, but as Dykmann has shown on the basis of the League's appointment policy, "the League's secretariat [...] was a place to establish a European understanding of

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de/pub/person/4880; Adrianus Pelt; <http://lonsea.de/pub/person/4968>; Erik A. Colban, <http://lonsea.de/pub/person/5353>; Thanassis Aghnides, <http://lonsea.de/pub/person/4860>.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph V. Wilson, Memorandum, 7 June 1944, CHA 2/1/9A. However, Wilson asked Loveday in 1942 if the London group could give his "name as a kind of reference to selected candidates (two or three at the most) with the idea if they call they might get from you a better notion of what we are like and what we are up to, than so possible to give by correspondence." Joseph V. Wilson to Alexander Loveday, 20 February 1942, NLNZ 78-145-07.

<sup>83</sup> Frank P. Walters, *Administrative Problems of International Organization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).

‘international’.”<sup>84</sup> This understanding of international civil service as a European project born of the traditions of the British civil service, in which Walters, Drummond, and Wilson were rooted, was the very conception of international administration the group represented.

A second incident between the London Report group and the Foreign Office shows how politically charged the composition of the group was.<sup>85</sup> In 1942, Wilson brought his plans to include the former Spanish ambassador to Great Britain, Pablo de Azcárate, who had served as Under-Secretary-General of the League until 1936. However, the Foreign Office expressed grave misgivings:

As Mr. Wilson mentioned Senor Azcarate, I made the purely personal comment that Senor Azcarate was very ‘political’ in these days, and that perhaps it might be embarrassing if he was drawn into connexion with Chatham House.<sup>86</sup>

Obviously, the Foreign Office suspected that the participation of Azcárate could be perceived as a slight by the authorities in Franco’s Spain. Azcárate, who was replaced by Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart y Falco after the British recognition of Franco Spain, remained an eminent Spanish politician in exile.<sup>87</sup> As a result, Azcárate was never again brought in connection with the report, at least not officially. A speech by Azcárate on the “politico-administrative machinery” of the future international organization, held at the London International Assembly in 1943,<sup>88</sup> nevertheless shows a remarkable resemblance to the conclusions of the *London Report*.<sup>89</sup> Since Wilson was a member of the assembly as well, it is

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**84** Dykmann, “How International,” 739. For an elaborate discussion cf. Klaas Dykmann, “The Homo Europaeus as a Blueprint for International Organizations?,” *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 25:5–6 (2015): 165–190.

**85** Mazower terms the League as “politically toxic.” Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 14.

**86** Roger Makins, Memorandum, 11 July 1942, TNA C6928/36/98.

**87** “The Door Opened Only Twice,” *Daily Mail*, 1 March 1939, 14; Sean Fielding, “Amelia at 6 Becomes Exile from London’s Spain,” *Daily Mail*, 28 February 1939, 9; “January Reviews,” *The Times*, 4 January 1941, 2; “Senor Don Pablo de Azcarate Y Florez,” *The Times*, 16 December 1971, 17; Regarding the activities of the Spanish exiles in London cf. Francisca M. Rayo, “Enseñanza y política republicana en el exilio el Instituto Español de Londres (1944–1950),” in *Exilio y universidad (1936–1955)*, vol. 2., ed. José A. Arrieta et al. (San Sebastian: Editorial Saturraran, 2008), 1195–1210.

**88** Regarding the London International Assembly as a platform founded in the context of the British League of Nations Union and composed of members of the allied nations, cf. Kerstin von Lingen, “Setting the Path for the UNWCC: The Representation of European Exile Governments On The London International Assembly and The Commission For Penal Reconstruction and Development, 1941–1944,” *International Criminal Law Forum* 25:1 (2014): 45–76.

**89** Pablo de Azcárate, International Civil Service, 4 May 1943, L.I.A. Commission VIII Documents, CHA 10/3.

safe to assume that Azcárate was at least in steady communication with the group.

However, the actual contribution of the individual group members should not be overestimated, as an episode in spring 1943 showed. Aghnides informed Wilson that he wanted to leave the study group because he could no longer attend the meetings regularly.<sup>90</sup> Apparently Wilson immediately informed Drummond, who was able to convince Aghnides in the course of several letters to remain one of the authors of the report. In this correspondence, Drummond emphasized that Aghnides's collaboration on the report "will add greatly to its weight."<sup>91</sup> The importance of Aghnides as one of the closest confidants of acting Secretary-General Sean Lester is obvious: his participation showed the close link to the remaining League organization in Geneva.<sup>92</sup> Drummond pointed out that without Aghnides participation, the report would be seen as "too 'Nordic' – Norwegian, Dutch + British only."<sup>93</sup>

In a review of the report, the American lawyer and political scientist Pitman B. Potter described the authors as "persons who were, incidentally, all well known at Geneva as among the most perceptive and thoughtful persons on the scene."<sup>94</sup> Already by its composition, the London Report group claimed to represent the experiences of the international secretariat of the League of Nations on a comprehensive scale, presented it (implicitly) as a European undertaking, and showed its own attachment to the still existing League in Geneva.

During the 1940s, Wilson relentlessly advertised the workings of his group to important actors around the world. He regularly corresponded with Sean Lester during the 1940s, who agreed with Wilson on the importance of the study for the future international order and stressed, "you do not tell me who the others are with whom you are meeting, but I am inclined to think it may be a more practical bunch"<sup>95</sup> than American groups working in the same direction. Furthermore, Wilson also informed Arthur Sweetser and Alexander Loveday about the outline of his group.<sup>96</sup> In his correspondence, Wilson showed a

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**90** Eric Drummond to Thanassis Aghnides, 5 November 1943, LoNA Agh/Pp1-7/3-18.

**91** Eric Drummond to Thanassis Aghnides, 10 November 1943, LoNA Agh/Pp1-7/3-18.

**92** Position of Mr. Lester and Mr. Aghnides, 29 April 1942, TNA C4548/518/98.

**93** Eric Drummond to Thanassis Aghnides, 5 November 1943, LoNA Agh/Pp1-7/3-18.

**94** Pitman B. Potter, review, "The International Secretariat of the Future: Lessons from experience by a Group of Former Officials of the League of Nations," *Journal of Political Economy* 54:1 (1946): 91.

**95** Sean Lester to Joseph V. Wilson, 30 June 1943, NLNZ 78-145-07.

**96** Joseph V. Wilson to Arthur Sweetser, 3 January 1941, NLNZ 78-145-07; Joseph V. Wilson to Alexander Loveday, 22 October 1942, NLNZ 78-145-07.

clear awareness that the USA would have a hegemonic position in any discussions about fundamental issues of the future international order.<sup>97</sup> In 1943 he wrote to the Director of the Economic and Financial Organization of the League in Princeton, Alexander Loveday, concerning any questions of the architecture of the future international order that “if the U.S.A. come out authoritatively [ ... ] the cry would no doubt be taken up here.”<sup>98</sup> Sweetser, Loveday, and Wilson undertook a steady exchange of material on international organizational and post-war reconstruction plans to improve the flow of information between the USA and Europe. Loveday recommended to Wilson the law professors Percy Corbett and Manley Hudson as well as the Director of Carnegie’s International Law Division, Philip C. Jessup as centers of “quite useful work”<sup>99</sup> regarding international organization.

Wilson’s correspondence with Corbett shows again the London group’s self-confidence in its claim regarding its authority about the international secretariat. Wilson could not really regard Corbett as an adequate candidate to conduct a study on the future international system.

Corbett, who was professor of law at Yale, had only served on a temporary basis as a translator for the League’s secretariat in the early 1920s –the very opposite to the long-time practical experience in internal administration processes shared by the Chatham House group. In Wilson’s letter to Corbett in spring 1943, a feeling of supremacy is shown:

One of my correspondents on the other side has mentioned without going into any detail, and without I hope committing an indiscretion that you are engaged on an important study of international organization. From which angle you may be attacking which part of the subject I have not heard, and if you care to enlighten me I should be very pleased. In return I send you for your personal and confidential information, a copy of a rough syllabus on which a small group of ex-League officials (a strong sense of hierarchy makes me add ‘high officials’) has been working here. You will see that the study has been confined to administrative problems, on the ground that these are likely to be very much the same as under the League dispensation, whatever the political basis of the new organization or organizations may be.<sup>100</sup>

The specific mention that the group consisted of “high officials” undoubtedly shows that Wilson tried to support the group’s claim concerning international administration by making it very clear that this group had practical experience in precisely this field, way beyond the competence of Corbett. The enclosed

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**97** Joseph V. Wilson to Frank P. Walters, 20 August 1941, NLNZ 78-145-07.

**98** Joseph V. Wilson to Alexander Loveday, 2 February 1943, NLNZ 78-145-07.

**99** Alexander Loveday to Joseph V. Wilson, 10 November 1942, NLNZ 78-145-07.

**100** Joseph V. Wilson to Percy Corbett, 21 March 1943, NLNZ 78-145-07.

syllabus was supposed to demonstrate to Corbett how advanced the work of the group was, and that the American group should take them seriously. But Corbett was associated with the American Council of the Institute of Pan Pacific Relations, and could rely on the networks of the Hawai'i based institute.<sup>101</sup> In his reply Corbett confronted Wilson with his own networks by underlining his contacts with leading US-Canadian Economist Jacob Viner, and Yale-based professor F. S. Dunn.<sup>102</sup> Corbett made it clear that he was near the center of the American discussions about post-war reconstruction, and that he was definitely in a strong position. Corbett already established himself as a key thinker within the American discourses on international administration through his 1942 monograph *Post-War Worlds*.<sup>103</sup>

Interestingly, Wilson's papers do not contain any surviving correspondence with Ranshofen-Wertheimer, who together with Philip C. Jessup was deeply engaged in Carnegie's work on international organization. The American Carnegie Endowment for International Peace began to consider the consequences of the League's experience for large-scale international administration after the war at about the same time as the London group. But they could rely on the nearly unlimited financial means of the Carnegie Endowment. In preparation for an anticipated peace conference, the Carnegie Endowment hosted two symposia during the 1940s presided by Jessup: the "Exploratory Conference on the Experience of the League of Nations Secretariat" in 1942, and the "Conference on Experience in International Administration" in 1943.<sup>104</sup> In order to secure the highest possible independence, the names of the participants of both conferences were omitted from the texts. Only the officials of the Carnegie Endowment were mentioned. Ranshofen-Wertheimer was responsible for the editorial work of both conferences.<sup>105</sup> For his own monograph on the international secretariat in 1946, Ranshofen-Wertheimer emphasized the importance of these two

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**101** Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations, 1919–1945* (London: Routledge, 2003), 250.

**102** Percy Corbett to Joseph V. Wilson, 27 April 1943, NLNZ 78-145-07.

**103** Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, 250; Percy E. Corbett, *Post-War Worlds* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942).

**104** The proceedings of these conferences are stored at the Hoover Institution Archives. Cf. Overview of the Exploratory Conference on the Experience of the League of Nations Secretariat Proceedings (1942), Hoover Institution Archives (=HIA) YY441b; Overview of the Conference on Experience in International Administration Proceedings (1943), HIA YY107; cf. Schwebel, *Justice in International Law*, 249.

**105** Overview of the Conference on Experience in International Administration Proceedings (1943), HIA YY107 2.

conferences “composed of former and present League officials.”<sup>106</sup> In light of this comment on the participants, we can conclude that although there is no correspondence with Jessup and Ranshofen-Wertheimer preserved in Wilson’s papers, it is most likely that some of Wilson’s correspondents participated in this conference, and that the two groups were well aware of each other.

Wilson’s networking activities show how politically tense the discussions about the international order were during the 1940s. To substantiate their claim that they were publishing the authoritative study of the League experience, the group dissociated itself from other groups working on the future international order. The following section aims to investigate the concrete suggestions in the report.

## Influencing the post-war organization – The *London Report* and its after life

In January 1944, the final form of the *London Report* was published in Chatham House’s own series *Post War Problems*. Further audiences were reached by a summary presentation that Wilson gave at a meeting of the Royal Institute on 21 March 1944 under the title *Some Problems of an International Secretariat*,<sup>107</sup> which was subsequently included in the institute’s journal *International Affairs*.<sup>108</sup> Since the report was published under the mutual authorship of the five group members, it is not possible to identify who exactly wrote which specific passage, apart from a concluding appendix by Adrian Pelt on the organization of a secretariat information section.<sup>109</sup> However, the correspondence on the report indicates that most of the actual writing of the report was done by Wilson.

In his foreword to the *London Report*, the Chairman of Chatham House’s Council, Lord Waldorf Astor, stressed that the study focused on “practical

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**106** Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat*, xv.

**107** Record of Meeting Held at Chatham House, 21 March 1944, CHA Speeches 8/1010.

**108** Wilson, “Problems of an International Secretariat.” Wilson already indicated on the first page that he “traverses much the same ground as the group.”

**109** RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 61–64. Pelt emphasized the 20 years of experience behind the League’s information section, but pointed out that a future information section could not rely mainly on journalists but should involve film experts, radio commentators and photographers. But he stressed that “an information section must carefully avoid ‘propaganda’ methods.” Pelt’s main argument was, that the information section of the coming organization should be radically ‘modernized’.

lessons,” and refrained from suggesting concrete recommendations for the post-war order. Nevertheless, Astor acknowledged that “the authors of the study inevitably make certain assumptions regarding the broader issues of policy on which administrative actions depend,”<sup>110</sup> and qualified the responsibility of Chatham House by saying the authors alone are responsible for all the views expressed.<sup>111</sup>

As will become apparent, the authors had a more fundamental aim than suggesting mere practical improvements. On close examination, the report turns out to be a wholehearted defense of the organization of the League of Nations and its former employees. The authors of the report highlighted the success of the League’s bureaucratic organization, and emphasized the value of the experiences obtained during the existence of the League. Wilson’s article will be included in the subsequent analysis as it is mainly a pointed summary of the group results.

As the overarching question of the whole study, the research group asked in the introduction whether the experience of the League of Nations proved that an efficient international administration was possible. The authors affirmed this emphatically:

Without claiming perfection for the League’s administrative machine, we submit that it has been decisively proved by experience that these fears were unjustified and that if there is agreement on policy an efficient international service can be organized to carry it out.<sup>112</sup>

The consequences of this conclusion for the post-war planning process were emphasized, as the peace makers “take it for granted that an efficient international administration can be set up to carry out their plans.”<sup>113</sup>

In his article Wilson argued “it is idle to attempt to define in advance the exact functions which we might expect to be exercised by international institutions after the war. Certain broad assumptions may, however, be made.”<sup>114</sup> Of the 61 pages of the *London Report*, only 6 pages convey assumptions about the post-war international system.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, a close examination of the chapter “The General Framework,” shows that they had a clear policy in mind.

The authors put forward three postulates about the future international organization. Firstly, the concept of sovereign states remained fundamental for

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**110** Ibid., 3.

**111** Ibid.

**112** Ibid., 9.

**113** Ibid., 10.

**114** Wilson, “Problems of an International Secretariat,” 543.

**115** Namely the Chapters “Introduction” and “The General Framework.”

the future international organization.<sup>116</sup> Thus, they rejected the idea of a world hegemony and argued that the key question of the post-war order would remain “how to promote better co-operation among sovereign entities, not how to abolish them.”<sup>117</sup> Secondly, they presumed that the future organization would have a “worldwide scope” – although they acknowledged the possibility of a combination of regional alliances modelled after the Pan-American Organization and an overarching ‘supra-organization’.<sup>118</sup> Although they saw conclusive advances of regional organizations, they argued that,

[i]t seems most probable that in actual fact post-war international organisation will have this world-wide character, starting with the United Nations –themselves drawn from all parts of the world – and expanding rapidly to include neutral countries and ultimately the ex-enemy countries<sup>119</sup>

Thirdly, they assumed that what the authors call “welfare” would remain an important field of work for the future international organization.<sup>120</sup> This field contained the so-called technical work of the league, such as economics, health, transport etc. By drawing on the experience of the League of Nations, they argued that “[t]here were periods when only a small portion of its [the League’s] energies and machinery was required for major political problems [ ... ] however, it was kept continuously occupied by the vigorous and conscious development of its welfare functions.”<sup>121</sup> Clearly inspired by the League’s experience, they emphasized the interconnection between political and technical aspects of international life, although they admitted that there might be a tendency to establish an international organization along the lines of joint agencies.<sup>122</sup> Yet the authors of the *London Report* were even sure that

there may be in existence, soon after the war, more or less separate organizations dealing with such matters as labour, surface and air transport [ ... ] most of these would on our view tend to become linked, sooner or later, in a general organization comprising at

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**116** RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 11.

**117** *Ibid.*, 11–12. Though, they agree that consequent international cooperation could lead to a redistribution of state-sovereignty.

**118** *Ibid.*, 12.

**119** *Ibid.*, 13. Erez Manela has recently emphasized how the war-time alliance of the United Nations was consciously ‘globalized’ by Franklin D Roosevelt by highlighting the participation of China. Cf. Erez Manela, “The Fourth Policeman: Franklin Roosevelt’s Vision for China’s Global Role,” in *The Significance and Impact of the Cairo Declaration*, ed. Wu Sihua et al. (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2014).

**120** RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 13.

**121** *Ibid.*, 14–15.

**122** *Ibid.*, 15.



least a central secretariat and an annual assembly, in which all participating States would be represented.<sup>123</sup>

These presumptions led to one conclusion; the authors of the report argued, more or less, for a continuation of the pre-war League of Nations as a global and universal organization composed of sovereign states. By referring repeatedly to the League's reform reports, the authors conveyed that they wanted to be regarded as on a par with the existing reports. The idea of welfare work corresponded to the League's shift to technical cooperation during the Avenol era, which led to the adoption of the *Bruce Report* in August 1939. What the authors called a "central secretariat" would face in their view the same problems and requirements as the authors had already experienced in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus the authors argued that the new international order should learn from the League's system. They proposed several fields where they had special expertise. The scope of the report's inquiry embraced what the authors called "political-administrative" problems. They were interested in the intersection of political interests and administration's limitations and argued that "political implications will be found in those features of international administration, where close similarity to national administrations disappears."<sup>124</sup> The authors identified six core areas of such intersections; (1) Loyalties, National Composition, (2) Directorate of the Service, (3) External Relations, (4) Languages, (5) the Site of the Organization, and (6) Budget and Financial Questions.

The aim in the following part is not to give a full reproduction of the report, but to show its general line of argument through several examples. At the beginning of the first analytical chapter, the authors defined the key problem for the working of the international secretariat as being the balance of composition, loyalty, and recruitment. They distinguished two major dilemmas: whether the secretariat "should demand strict international loyalty from its employees or build on national loyalties,"<sup>125</sup> and whether "the efficiency of candidates [should] receive priority over considerations of national distribution in the appointment of personnel."<sup>126</sup> This is as well also a fundamental issue in the history of the League's bureaucracy regarding the impact national governments have on the working of the supposedly independent international bureaucrats.<sup>127</sup> The authors of the report were keen to emphasize how successful

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123 Ibid., 16.

124 Ibid., 17.

125 Ibid., 18.

126 Ibid.

127 Dykmann, "How International," 721.

employees of the League were at creating and promoting this idea of international loyalty and an *esprit de corps*. In his article Wilson pointedly summarized the results of the group in regard to the achievements of the first generation of international civil servants, stating that,

Cosmopolitans and national misfits of all kinds will, of course, press at the doors of the international institutions but they should be kept out. A certain deviation from type may not matter. In Geneva it was possible to encounter a tongue-tied Frenchman, a stupid Italian, a breezy Spaniard, an uncensorious Norwegian, a repressed Australian, and an egalitarian Englishman; but the majority conformed<sup>128</sup>

In general the group could “affirm on empirical evidence that an administration based on international loyalty – to the organization in general and its secretariat in particular – can be highly efficient.”<sup>129</sup> In the view of the authors this decision proved correct until such time as “the league became the direct object first of subtle, then of open sabotage.”<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, in the chapter on the directorate of the future organization, the authors highlighted the performance of the first Secretary General of the League, Eric Drummond who according to the group, decided that international loyalty should be the guiding principle of the secretariat, contrary to the opinion of previous secretariats of the Inter-Allied organizations.<sup>131</sup> Though no name is given in the report, it is obvious that the description of the ideal head of service is a barely veiled description of the first Secretary General of the League, and at the same time an implicit rejection of his successor, the Frenchman Joseph Avenol:

The qualities which the head of the service should possess are not easy to define. He should be young. Political experience, but not necessarily great fame or eminence, is an advantage. Above all, ability for administration in the broadest sense is important, implying a knowledge of when to be dynamic, to take the initiative and to force an issue; when, at the other extreme, to be content as a purely administrative official; and when, on a middle course, to be a moderator impartially smoothing over difficulties, a catalytic agent in negotiation. [...] In a new organization, it may well be that the only qualities which must under all conditions be demanded of the director are those of common sense, courage, integrity and tact.<sup>132</sup>

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**128** Wilson, “Problems of an International Secretariat,” 543.

**129** RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 19.

**130** *Ibid.*

**131** RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 19. Already in 1983 Martin Dubin convincingly proved that the actual process was far more complex. Martin Dubin, “Transgovernmental Processes in the League of Nations,” *International Organization* 3:7 (1983): 469–494.

**132** RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 31.

In his article Wilson says:

The new institution will be fortunate if it secures the services of one who was as gifted a moderator, as impartial a negotiator, as trusted and well-informed a political confessor – for I can think of no better term – as Sir Eric Drummond, the first Secretary General of the League.<sup>133</sup>

Even more obvious is the chapter about the seat of the future international organization. Whereas many voices argued for a clear cut between the Geneva organization and its successor, the report argued the opposite:

The factors of communications and language, and in particular, the existence of buildings specially designed for the purpose which the new organization will have to fulfil, favour the choice of Geneva. A return to the site of the League would save the new organization from having to go through a period of trial and error in respect of many material and administrative questions.<sup>134</sup>

In particular a location within the national area of a smaller power seemed favorable to the authors so as to protect the organization from control by larger powers.<sup>135</sup> Then the authors concluded:

Politically, a balance must be struck between the possible disadvantages of Geneva as a name associated in the public mind with efforts which were not always either popular or successful, and which did not in the end succeed in preserving peace, and its possible advantages as the centre which, for a good many years, embodied the aspirations of vast numbers of people in every country, many of whom still believe that the resolute application of the Covenant might have established the peace of the world on a firm basis.<sup>136</sup>

Wilson went as far as to suggest taking over the buildings of the League of Nations and creating a small internationalized city within Geneva which should be named “Ariana City.”<sup>137</sup> The arguments concerning the site of the successor to the League of Nations clearly shows how closely the study group was still related to the ‘Geneva-centered world’ of the 1920s and 1930s.

The report thus argued taking the League of Nations as an example for the future international organization, and emphasized the smooth working of the administrative machinery of the League of Nations. Hence the *London Report* contended that the architecture and design of the League of Nations – the Covenant of the League – had been absolutely adequate for its purpose, but

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133 Wilson, “Problems of an International Secretariat,” 547.

134 RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 49.

135 Wilson, “Problems of an International Secretariat,” 553.

136 RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 49

137 Wilson, “Problems of an International Secretariat,” 554.

that it had failed, obviously, because the members of the League had failed to use it correctly. In the chapter concerning financial problems, the authors argued for a generous budgetary policy as they had experienced a “vicious circle: restrictive budget, ineffective League; ineffective League, restrictive budget,” and claimed that “[r]elatively small increases in the budget would have enhanced the value of the League’s services and strengthened its position.”<sup>138</sup> Their report concluded by emphasizing that to ensure the success of the future organization, “[i]t will be of vital importance to have the best possible machinery; but the quality of the machinery does not and cannot offer an adequate substitute for the will to use it.”<sup>139</sup>

An analysis of the *London Report* shows that by emphasizing the success of the League of Nations, the authors clearly fought against the declining image of the League. The structure and machinery of the League were according to them absolutely adequate, but the nation states failed to use them in the right way. Obviously, the report was based on a certain romanticism about the heyday of the League of Nations secretariat, when a young and cosmopolitan staff seemed to be in charge of the world’s problems. The authors placed emphasis on the international civil service as one of the main achievements of the League of Nations, and further highlighted their own expertise as an important starting point for the post-war international order.

But what reception did the group’s report meet with after publication? The *London Report* was issued in three editions within three months, which indicates that it met with significant interest. It was reviewed in several international journals during the 1940s, which likewise reflected this interest, especially in North America most of the reviewers being based in the United States. And generally the opinion was favorable because “all the right questions are asked and answers given from which one would differ with great hesitation.”<sup>140</sup> American internationalist and political scientist Potter even called the “pamphlet a little gem for the student of international administration.”<sup>141</sup> Even more significantly, the review Ranshofen-Wertheimer published in 1945, just a year before his own monograph about the League’s secretariat came out, praised the *London Report*. According to Wertheimer, the report “merits a special place and

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138 RIIA, *The International Secretariat of the Future*, 52.

139 *Ibid.*, 61.

140 Andrew McFadyean, review, “The International Secretariat of the Future: Lessons from experience by a Group of Former Officials of the League of Nations,” *International Affairs* 20:3 (1944): 412–413, 413; Archibald A. Evans, review, “The International Secretariat of the Future: Lessons from Experience by a Group of Former Officials of the League of Nations,” *Public Administration* 22:2 (1944): 64–74.

141 Potter, review, 91.

more attention than its size suggests.”<sup>142</sup> Ranshofen-Wertheimer concluded his review by arguing that “in order to be properly appreciated and used the booklet requires considerable familiarity with the inner workings of the League Secretariat. It is certainly not a primer in international administration.”<sup>143</sup>

When Ranshofen-Wertheimer published his monograph the following year it had definitely the claim to be such a primer. In the introduction to his book Ranshofen gives the *London Report* a most prominent place:

The present monograph is the first comprehensive study of the Secretariat undertaken by a former member of the staff. The author is, of course, aware of and familiar with a booklet issued by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London entitled *The International Secretariat of the Future*. The value of this study is unique, reflecting as it does the views and suggestions with respect to his subject of a group of former high officials of the League. The proposals set forth are based upon the experience gained by these men, most of whom have served the League for twenty years or more. For these reasons, this pamphlet is absolutely indispensable for anybody interested in the question and seeking concrete suggestions for the future international secretariat.<sup>144</sup>

However, it is still difficult to evaluate the direct impact of the *London Report*. The reviews as well as the mentions of the report in various monographs in the 1940s and 1950s show that it was well known, at least in Great Britain and North America.<sup>145</sup> But did it affect the actual process of planning the future of international organization? Wilson’s correspondence shows that Chatham House’s publication machinery distributed it widely to policy makers and international activists. Wilson assessed this step in June 1944 in a letter he wrote to Sean Lester:

Doubtless you have received ‘The International Secretariat of the Future.’ This has proved a useful publication and we have had some very laudatory comments from the United States, but, so far as the public in general is concerned, I think it may be said that it has come out a few months in advance of the time at which the public can be expected to attend seriously to this class of question.<sup>146</sup>

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**142** Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer, review, “The International Secretariat of the Future: Lessons from Experience by a Group of Former Officials of the League of Nations,” *The American Journal of International Law* 39:2 (1945): 371–372.

**143** Ranshofen-Wertheimer, review, 372.

**144** Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *International Secretariat*, xiii–xiv.

**145** For example, Kline R. Swygard, *The International Halibut and Sockeye Salmon Fisheries Commissions: A Study in International Administration* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1948), 571.

**146** Joseph V. Wilson to Sean Lester, 21 June 1944, NLNZ 78-145-07.

A look at Wilson's activities shows that his work concerning the League of Nations did not end with the publication of the *London Report*. In an internal memorandum at Chatham House, he tried to encourage the institute to persuade Frank Paul Walters to complete his History of the League of Nations, which Walters had already begun before the war.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, he already arranged in 1943 for former Director of the League's Personnel Office, Chester Purves, to write a pamphlet called *Problems of the Internal Administration of an International Secretariat*,<sup>148</sup> which was published in 1945 as a successor to the *London Report*.<sup>149</sup> Thus, Wilson made sure that Chatham House maintained a focus on the role of the League of Nations and its bureaucratic structure and that, through the institute's transatlantic networks, the voices of Wilson and his colleagues were augmented.

But the publication of the *London Report* was not the end of the engagement with international administration by the group members. In late 1944, Wilson left Chatham House and entered the newly established Foreign Office of New Zealand as a political advisor.<sup>150</sup> In this function, he was assigned to New Zealand's delegation to the conference in San Francisco, where the principles for the Charter of the United Nations Organization were discussed. And although the official delegation of the League was ignored at the Conference, the former international civil servants were represented in national delegations. Wilson was a member of the commission on the bureaucratic structure of the international organization, together with his colleague from the *London Report* Adrianus Pelt, who was a member of the Dutch delegation. Together Wilson and Pelt were able to raise the points they already made in the *London Report*, and thus influence the structure of the new international organization. Sweetser commented on their effort in a letter in June 1945: "The Committee on the Secretariat for the new organization is interesting, Joe Wilson and Pelt carrying the ball magnificently for some real organization."<sup>151</sup> Within this committee, the New Zealand delegation was successful in securing "an efficient and loyal administration" for the new organization and in preventing its reduction to "a small group of national representatives."<sup>152</sup> A speech by New Zealand's Prime Minister Peter

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147 Joseph V. Wilson, Chatham House Planning Committee, memorandum, 16 June 1944, CHA2/1/9A.

148 Chester Purves, *The Internal Administration of an International Secretariat* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1945).

149 Joseph V. Wilson to Chester Purves, 28 February 1943, NLNZ 78-145-07.

150 Auberer, "The Ultimate Backroom-Boy," 96.

151 Arthur Sweetser to Vera Ward, 6 June 1945, LoC AS41 League at San Francisco (1945).

152 United Nations Conference on International Organisation. Commission 1 Committee 2, General Provisions: Membership, New Zealand National Archiv, Wellington (=NZNA)

Fraser held at the San Francisco Conference, clearly shows Wilson's influence even on a semantic level: "The Prime Minister referred [...] to the fact the League of Nations [...] failed because of the moral failure on the part of the individual members and not through any fundamental defect of the machinery of the League."<sup>153</sup> Afterwards, Wilson was part of New Zealand's delegation to the General Assembly to the United Nations until 1955, where he regularly advocated an independent international civil service.<sup>154</sup> An entry in the major biographical dictionary of New Zealand still remembers Wilson as one New Zealander who made a "significant contribution to the drafting of the United Nations Charter."<sup>155</sup>

While Wilson stayed in the diplomatic service of New Zealand after the war, the remaining authors of the *London Report* were even able to influence the new UN system and its international secretariat from the inside<sup>156</sup>: Adrianus Pelt was elected Under Secretary-General responsible for international conferences under Trygve Lie, and was later appointed last High Commissioner for Libya.<sup>157</sup> Although Walters supposedly had no full-time employment after he left the League, he was engaged by Lie in a large scale project to evaluate the qualifications of several hundred staff members at the United Nations Secretariat.<sup>158</sup> After quitting his position as ambassador to Great Britain, Erik Colban returned to the international civil service as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for International Trade Organizations and later as personal representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding the Kashmir conflict until 1950.<sup>159</sup> Thanassis Aghnides participated as well as representative of Greece at

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EAW261986/111/8/32/2. For a published version cf. Department of External Affairs, *New Zealand and the San Francisco Conference. Amendments to the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals for the Establishment of a General International Organisation Advanced by the Prime Minister of New Zealand* (Wellington: Department of External Affairs, 1945).

**153** New Zealand Prime Minister's Speech at Plenary Session, 1 May 1945, NZNA EAW261985/111/8/7/1.

**154** *Ibid.*

**155** Malcolm Templeton, "Wilson, Joseph Vivian," *Te Ara – The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, accessed 8 March 2016 <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w39/wilson-joseph-vivian>.

**156** With the obvious exception of Eric Drummond, who indeed, left the world of international organizations conclusively and returned to domestic politics as deputy leader of the Liberal Party.

**157** Jeroen Bosmans, "Pelt, Adrianus," in *Biographisch Wordenboek van Nederland*, accessed 15 September 2016, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn2/pelt>.

**158** Martin D. Dubin and Carole Fink, "Walters, Frank Paul," in *Biographical Dictionary of Internationalists*, ed. Warren F. Kuehl (London: Greenwood Press, 1983), 751–752.

**159** Carole Fink, "Colban, Erik Andreas," in *Biographical Dictionary of Internationalists*, ed. Warren F. Kuehl (London: Greenwood Press, 1983), 162.

the San Francisco Conference and served afterwards as Chairman of the International Civil Service Advisory Board (ICSAB).<sup>160</sup> As head of the ICSAB he was in an influential position and shaped the UN's international civil service. In the second meeting of an ICSAB discussion group in New York, Aghnides emphasized in a programmatic speech the importance of the League's experience for the conception of the United Nations international civil service.<sup>161</sup> The ICSAB was authorized by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the 1950s to define standards of conduct for the international civil service.<sup>162</sup> This resulted in the compilation of a guidebook titled *Report on Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service* first issued in 1954.<sup>163</sup> This report, which was a comprehensive appraisal of the need for an independent international civil service modelled in many respects on the League's international civil service, quoted explicitly the findings of the *London Report*. And although this guidebook was never an official legal document, it remained a popular text for employees in the United Nations System for almost 50 years. Almost every international civil servant received a copy of this text on their first day of employment.<sup>164</sup> When it was updated in 2001, the reference to the League and the *London Report* was erased, but the substance of the report remained unchanged.

## Conclusions

This article has investigated the activities of a group of former international civil servants during the Second World War who published a report on the experience of the League's secretariat. Known as the *London Report* group and understood here as part of the League's reform cosmos, the first part of this article placed the group in the historiographical discourses about the League of Nations in times of war, and the debates about international planning around transatlantic

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**160** Mathiason, *Invisible Governance*, 48. This list could easily be extended beyond the authors of the *London Report*, though a thorough evaluation of the personnel continuities between the League and the UN is still a much needed desideratum.

**161** Thanassis Aghnides, "Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Servant," *Revue Internationale des Sciences Administratives* 1 (1953): 179–187, 181.

**162** Mathiason, *Invisible Governance*, 49.

**163** International Civil Service Advisory Board, *Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service* (New York: United Nations, 1954).

**164** Jacques Lemoine, *The International Civil Servant: An Endangered Species* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 43; Mathiason, *Invisible Governance*, 49.



think tanks in the 1940s. The following sections focused on the historical actors, especially the report's main organizer, Joseph Vivian Wilson. By following the activities of a study group composed of former League of Nations servants and associates of Chatham House, the article has shown how the international civil servants were keen to re-define their role after they left the League. The example of the *London Report* investigated how in wartime London a group of former League of Nations servants emerged and started to stand up for their cause. The analysis has shown how the group claimed to represent the experiences of the international secretariat of the League of Nations on a comprehensive scale. The examination of the actual report in the third part investigated how the group used the genre of the report to defend the League of Nations and with that, their own participation in the League. By stressing the importance of the League experience for the future international organization, they emphasized the utility of their own work as well. All authors of the *London Report* were able to exert their influence on the administrative machinery of the United Nations after the Second World War and thus played a major role in shaping the international civil service of today's United Nations Organization.

This article has shed light on the activities of the former League of Nations servants during the Second World War and has shown that their association with the field of international organizations by no means came to an end after they left the League. The specific case of the *London Report* and their contacts with the USA indicates that the League's former employees were eagerly involved in the process of shaping the post-war world order by suggesting continuity with the League experience for a future international order. By investigating the tense, highly political and exacting discussions that surrounded the group report, this article sees the 1940s as a phase of open-ended re-negotiation of the international order.

It is the contention of this article that future historians of the League of Nations should take the activities of its former employees and their contributions to the nascent post-war international order more seriously. Investigating their strategies to cope with the decline of the League's importance provides insights into how a bureaucratic elite tried to redefine their role in an international system on the move, and how they evaluated the League organization as the core institution of interwar internationalism. Reading the *London Report* alongside other reform reports in the League's history showed how the authors of the *London Report* drew on established genres to redefine their own role in international relations.

Furthermore, on a historiographical level this article has contributed to a long overdue historicization of early studies and textbooks about the League of Nations, which were in many cases written by former international civil

servants.<sup>165</sup> Although they were written by erstwhile employees of the League and often have a rather emotional tone, these works are still cited in most of the works on the League of Nations without the necessary source criticism. Investigating the origins of these studies provides insight into the historical and political contexts in which they must be understood.<sup>166</sup>

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**165** Dykmann, “How International,” 722; Madeleine Herren, “Between Territoriality, Performativity and Transcultural Entanglement (1920–1939): A Typology of Transboundary Lives,” *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 23:6 (2014): 99–134, 106.

**166** A recent contribution is James Cotton’s study on the textbook *The Origin, Structure and Working of the League* published in 1928. Cf. James Cotton, “‘The standard work in English on the League’ and its Authorship: Charles Howard Ellis, an Unlikely Australian Internationalist,” *History of European Ideas* 42:8 (2016): 1089–1104.