

ABSTRACT

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After the First World War, Britain's economy and security depended on imperial cooperation for reconstruction. Yet, the war and the culture based on the League of Nations and its principles of self-determination and internationalism challenged efforts to strengthen imperial unity. Imperialists had to re-envision a more inclusive idea of empire in the midst of nationalist uprisings abroad and labor unrest at home. By analyzing circulated propaganda and speeches about the League, this thesis traces the efforts of British political thinkers who used the League's principles to manage the domestic discontent that threatened unity. It demonstrates how they tried to relate the League's principles to the ordinary Britisher's historical commitment to internationalism and imperial humanitarianism. Invoking social psychology, imperialists tapped into a universal interest in the League to re-legitimize the British Empire and establish a more enduring psychological imperial unity between the metropole and the empire after the war.

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REMAKING OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM, 1918-1926

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Chapter 1: Introduction: A British League of Nations

The First World War was a watershed moment in British imperial history. The human cost of war made many people in Britain and the empire disinclined to managing imperial defense across the globe, let alone be a party to supporting further efforts to unite the empire. Widespread strikes among workers and ex-servicemen illustrated a general desire for the government to invest its resources in domestic reconstruction instead of the imperial projects.¹ The idea of a league of nations conflicted with the violent and unequal realities of late nineteenth-century imperial culture even as the partitioning of mandated territories by the League of Nations increased the empire's size.² Furthermore, for a war fought in the name of "self-determination" and for a League of Nations developed to protect this idea, the British Empire also had to manage the growing dissonance between its own history of liberal humanitarianism and its failure to live up to it.

Britain was faced with establishing new ideological relationships with its empire well before June 28, 1919, when the Covenant of the League of Nations ratified new theories for international diplomacy. Addressing the Royal Colonial Institute in April 1919 on the state of the empire after the war, Viscount Milner reassured his audience that "the Empire will be, in fact already is, a League of Nations, whether or not it is embraced in a greater but less closely compacted

¹ Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 12.

² From here on after, the League of Nations will periodically be referred to the League.

league.”³ Milner sought to redefine a relationship between Britain and its colonies that had lost its ideological luster over the course of the war by comparing the British Empire with Woodrow Wilson’s vision for a “new world order.”

Discussions between Sir Edward Grey’s British foreign office and Woodrow Wilson were underway in attempts to devise a peace proposal that could end the diplomatic policies that many had thought caused the First World War, even as it was starting. The war reignited a long held liberal-radical debate in Britain about having a foreign policy based on a federation of nations that, while alluding to William Gladstone, had its intellectual origins going as far back as Kant.⁴ This thesis attempts to uncover how British statesmen and ideologues tried to craft a functional and sustainable idea of the British Empire that could be compatible with the untested broader principles agreed upon by the Signatories of the League of Nation’s Covenant. What role did democracy as a League ideal and a contested reality at home play in postwar discussions about the empire? Unable to justify an empire based solely on national self-interest, overt racial, economic, and political control, how did these British intellectuals and politicians wed imperial nationalism with the League’s liberal internationalism? This thesis builds upon recent scholarship that has begun to investigate the role that the League of Nations played in the debate over imperial sovereignty and the legitimacy of a liberal imperialism that developed within the empire between 1918 and 1926.

³ Alfred Milner, “The British League of Nations,” *United Empire The Royal Colonial Institute Journal* X, no. 5 (May 1919): 223.

⁴ George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914-1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 6.

After the war, no politician or intellectual could ignore the effect that the League had on imperial affairs. Throughout the League of Nations negotiations, British elites clashed with the Wilsonian idea of “self-determination.” Some imperialists thought that it threatened Britain’s eminent place in international affairs and threatened to eliminate the lingering bargaining chip used to pacify the growing nationalist movements throughout the empire.⁵ This was especially so in regards to Wilson’s “Point 5” that argued for “impartial adjustment of colonial claims.”⁶ While “Atlanticists” such as Robert Cecil saw Anglo-American cooperation important to the reconstruction of British and world order, some Dominion leaders disagreed. Dominion leaders such as Robert L. Borden of Canada and General Jan Christiaan Smuts of South Africa disliked Wilson’s liberal internationalism and the League’s interventionist policies in Europe. They thought the League would weaken Britain’s preeminence in world affairs.⁷

The League of Nations embodied a set of principles, “self-determination” foremost among them, which threatened the legitimacy of empire by exposing the hypocrisy of turn of the century imperial policy. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George was the first person to articulate publically the liberal aims of a postwar

⁵ I am using the term “imperialist” here, and within this thesis, in the broadest sense of the term. It will denote individuals in politics who were persistently interested in empire even though these people were interested in it for a variety of reasons. These reasons and commitments to empire were not uniform and these often went beyond political reasons. As Andrew Thompson notes, “imperialists can only be said to be of a like mind in the way in which they conceived empire as a grand alliance of British settler states.” Andrew S. Thompson *Imperial Britain The Empire in British Politics c.1880-1932*, (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 188. With that in mind, I use imperialists as a general term for intellectuals (political or not) who find some inherent value in the empire or imperial unity.

⁶“President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” in *The Avalon Project at the Yale Law School*, codirectors William C. Fray and Lisa A. Spar (New Haven, CT: Yale Law School, 2008) http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp ; Zara S. Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, New York; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005), 43-44.

⁷ Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations*, 76.

diplomacy even though President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" speech is best known for introducing "self-determination" to the world. Lloyd George proposed a postwar diplomacy based on "self-determination or the consent of the governed" in a speech delivered to a Trade Unionist audience on January 5, 1918,⁸ Despite this, he was not necessarily reflecting Britain's own imperial policy. Only days before Lloyd George's speech on January 2, 1918, Annie Besant, the President of India's National Congress criticized Britain's imperial policies that would not grant India home rule. She argued that "the greatest injury done to Indians by British rule was to deprive them of the natural instinct of all free peoples, the feeling of inherent right to self-determination, to be themselves...this is the freedom for which the Allies were fighting; this is democracy, the spirit of the age."⁹ This nationalist sentiment, while more pronounced in the non-white dependencies such as India, was of equal concern for the white dominions hoping to obtain their due compensation for their alignment with the empire during the war.

If the clamor for self-determination had not compromised the idea of imperial sovereignty then the popular enthusiasm for the League of Nations and what it envisioned for the British people during the postwar reconstruction certainly did. The British people were yearning for peace and were exhausted from four years of government-backed misinformation, rising casualties, and radical changes in all areas

⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.* 61. This speech was written in collaboration with Jan Smuts and Robert Cecil as the War Cabinet's response to the Labour Party's "Memorandum on War Aims" delivered to the Trade Unionist's Congress on December 28, 1918. It aimed to maintain the support of a public opinion increasingly uninspired by the war-aims of the War Cabinet and who were swept up by Wilson's liberal internationalism during the last year of the war.

⁹ "The Case for India.' Mrs. Besant's Address to the National Congress," *New York Times*, January 2, 1918, 5.

of their social life.¹⁰ The League of Nations idea became part of a larger popular culture in Britain that disliked the idea of war and wished the government would change its foreign policies. Thus, for the first decade after the First World War, the idea of the League of Nations became one of the central themes through which the public discussion of the empire was organized in Britain.

Inside the classroom, the League of Nations idea was a theme that transcended the boundaries of class, age, and gender. Recalling, for instance, her summer spent a Workers' Educational Association (WEA) summer school, an adult working class woman warmly remembered the excitement when her class "argued over Wilson's Fourteen Points..."¹¹ This idea was also part of sponsored lectures in private universities and the new education curriculum developed by elementary and secondary school teachers.

A whole public debate and culture emerged around the League of Nations idea even outside the classroom. It was the subject in newspapers of all persuasions, working class magazines such as *The Labour Magazine*, more highbrow publications such as *The Statesman* and *The Contemporary Review*, to the widely popular satirical weeklies such as *Punch*. In fact, League of Nations activists and supporters encouraged the creation of a whole popular culture based on the League of Nations

¹⁰ J. M Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30.

¹¹ Quoted in, Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 54.

idea. They circulated League themed children's books, and sponsored League themed films, plays, and pageants at popular music halls and theaters.¹²

The widespread appeal of the idea of a league of nations, and in particular the efforts of the League of Nation Union (an organization that circulated a vast amount of leaflets and pamphlets, and sponsored many popular events, films, and reading groups), mobilized a now more widely enfranchised public opinion around the ideas of internationalism and pacifism. The membership of the League of Nations Union between October 1918 and December 1926 demonstrates this new *Zeitgeist* or "spirit of the age." From the League of Nations Union's formation in October 1918, it grew from 3,217 members to over half a million (587,224) during this period with 2,400 branches across the United Kingdom.¹³

The Covenant was central to the League of Nation's plan for preventing war. The Covenant intended to replace the imperial "balance of power" with a new system of international security based on set "obligations of members, the rules for the

¹² There is no known scholarly work that delves into this creation of a whole popular culture based on the League of Nations idea. League themed films were widely shown and attended (as reported in newspapers such as *The Times*) and League themed Anglican and Non-conformist sermons were republished in the League's pamphlets. In fact, children in particular were prime targets of this mass League of Nations propaganda campaign. The League of Nation's International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation, the International Federation of League of Nations Societies, and The League of Nations Union circulated pamphlets such *The Teaching of World Citizenship* (n.d) for educators. Along with the new educational scheme, League of Nations propaganda targeted children with titles such as *Peggy and the League of Nations* (1923), *Wonderful League. A few pages for young readers about the League of Nation* (n.d.), *The Story of the League of Nations, Told for Young People.*(1925), and plays such as *The Family of Nations* (1925) and *Fighting Death, and Other Plays* (1923) and children's League themed play-writing competitions such "Love Conquers All" (n.d.). These publications and many others can be viewed in the extensive League of Nations Union archival holding located at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, London, UK, and the Swarthmore Peace Collection, in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

¹³ League of Nations Union, *Annual Report of the Executive Committee to the General Council of the League of Nations Union for the year ending 31st December 1926* (London: League of Nations Union, May 1927), 11.; Donald S Birn, *The League of Nations Union, 1918-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 25. In fact, the sheer strength of this organization's campaign for the League was demonstrated in 1935 when over 11.5 million adults completed the "Peace Ballot" which was organized to gauge and demonstrate the popular support for the League.

settlement of disputes, and the sanctions to be applied to transgressors.”¹⁴ It intended to protect the rights of minorities and dependent territories which, it was argued, the prewar imperial states violated. The signatories of the Covenant looked to Article 22 when classifying the level of dependency within the system. The article stated:

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late War have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.¹⁵

Unlike the unwritten conventions of prewar colonialism, this article formalized an obligation or trust to protect and assist former colonies and territories that were once under the control of the now defunct empires. Even with its established assumptions about the world order and the Great Power’s obligation to it, the article and the Mandate Commission modified existing colonial arrangements by serving as a moral check to imperial claims.¹⁶

The non-political humanitarian dimensions of the League of Nations reinforced the principles of this Covenant. Bodies such as the International Labor Organization existed to help the member states “gain confidence” in the League’s machinery and to “make the League itself meaningful to the states by involving them

¹⁴ Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 350.

¹⁵ “Article 22.” The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments adopted to December, 1924), in *The Avalon Project at the Yale Law School*, codirectors William C. Fray and Lisa A. Spar (New Haven,: Yale Law School, 2008), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22. From here on, this will be referred to as “Article 22.”

¹⁶ Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, 360.

continuously in its efforts.”¹⁷ Modeling itself on well established nineteenth century humanitarian organizations, the humanitarian segment of the League intended to foster international cooperation without undermining or conflicting with state sovereignty.

This attention to the relationship between the League of Nations and the postwar imperial order is not entirely new. Historians have recently paid close attention to the role that the British Empire’s economic, colonial, and legal motives influencing the League’s humanitarian efforts. One approach looks specifically at the high diplomatic politics of the League of Nations to trace the influence of imperial interests on the articulation of its policies and the execution of them. Historians such as Michael Callahan and Susan Pedersen have argued that the mandate system was itself conditioned by prior systems of colonial power.¹⁸

Other historians have moved away from high diplomatic politics altogether to interrogate the various transnational humanitarian and voluntary associations that were limited by imperialist agendas and assumptions. Kevin Grant and Daniel Gorman have studied popular organizations Anti-Slavery Society and the Ladies' National Association (known by 1915 as the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene). Their work demonstrates how popular prewar voluntary organizations often got absorbed by or served as models organizations for the League of Nations humanitarian organizations. The consensus of these scholars was that even though

¹⁷ Ibid., 368.

¹⁸ Michael D. Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914-1931* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999); Susan Pedersen, “The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32, no. 4 (Oct-Dec. 2006): 560-82.

these organizations shifted away from typical strategies of imperial reform, they were still quite limited by imperial ideologies and conventions.¹⁹

For those historians interested in the impact of the League of Nations on the imperial order itself, the mandate system and the revitalization of liberal internationalism are central to imperial discourses after the war. The collection of essays edited by Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann in *Beyond Sovereignty* discusses the impact of the idea of internationalism and a variety of transnational humanitarian organizations—many of which were associated with the League—on the debates about sovereignty in the metropole and its colonial and Dominion states.²⁰ Yet the focus for these writers is on the overriding theme of the transnational character of empire itself and not on the historical circumstances that caused the shift in the imperial order after the war.

Lastly, writers like Daniel Gorman and Erez Manela demonstrate how the League's ideas of liberal internationalism and self-determination failed to redefine the imperial relationship between rulers and subjects in terms that were more equitable. Gorman focuses on the League of Nations Union and how the group helped foster a popular movement based on liberal internationalism in Britain. Yet in this analysis, he ignores the League's influence on imperial relations altogether. Manela on the other hand, focuses on the nationalist leaders of Egypt, India, China, and Korea and how Wilson's idea of self-determination gave colonial and Mandatory peoples a language

¹⁹ Daniel Gorman, "Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children in the 1920s," *Twentieth Century British History*; Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884-1926* (London, Routledge, 2005).

²⁰ Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, Frank Trentmann, ed., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1860-1950* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

to help assert political autonomy against the League's failure.²¹ Yet while Gorman can be criticized for neglecting the empire in the League's influence in creating a popular liberal internationalism, then Manela can be criticized for emphasizing the empire too much.

In all these historical approaches, the relationship between interwar British imperialism and the League of Nations is usually regarded as the exclusive domain of high diplomatic and imperial politics. Yet, for both the League of Nations and imperial politics, public opinion was vital. After the war, the domestic and foreign policy decisions made by British officials were much more at the whim of class as well as imperial interests. This new anxiety over molding more socially and politically meaningful subjects of the British Empire is of particular interest because it is here that we can begin to reconstruct the broader cultural significance of the League of Nations on the imperial order at "home."

A particularly useful approach to studying interwar imperial culture in Britain is that which focuses on the political, social, and moral theories that shaped the discussion of the imperial project. Rather than focus on the diplomatic or military significance of the League of Nations on the British Empire, this thesis is concerned with the larger social and cultural significance of the League of Nations on the re-envisioning of the imperial order after the First World War. One of the most

²¹ Daniel Gorman, "Liberal Internationalism, The League of Nations Union, and the Mandate System," *Canadian Journal of History* 40, no. 3 (December 2005): 449-477; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a similar approach to both of these texts, see also: R. M. Douglas, Michael Dennis Callahan, and Elizabeth Bishop, *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective* (Landham: Lexington Books, 2006). This collection of essay explores the variety of ways in which the imperial order was challenged by the mandate and trustee system in the forms of the Permanent Mandate Commission created at the close of the war, and its successor and the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

provocative attempts in this vein, and one which influences this work, is that which seeks to understand the domestic sources of imperial ideology in Britain. John Mackenzie and Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose have provided a useful tableau of essays that describe the various popular practices, programs, and social associations that brought the empire into the everyday consciousness of the British people during the late nineteenth century.²² Others like Bernard Semmel, R.J. Scally, and G.R. Searle have delved into the elitist ideology and socioeconomic programs that were created to implicitly maintain and defend imperial interests abroad in the immediate prewar period.²³ These scholars touch on a conscious effort to forge a unified imperial nationalism that would later be tested by the end of the war even though they mainly focus on the reform and propaganda that allied themselves with the aggressive imperial expansionism before the war.

Imperial reconstruction after the war was not only dependent on the acquiescence of the working class, but on the wider empire accepting British rule. Britain's dependence on the formal empire for economic reconstruction and international security contrasted with an equally growing opposition to the idea of Empire and its basis for rule. The League of Nations idea of civilization challenged established colonial rule by providing the basic language and qualifications used by

²² John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University, 1984); John M. MacKenzie., ed. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1986); Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²³ Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform; English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968); G. R Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); G. R. Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900-1914* (Leyden: Noordhoff International Publishing, 1976); R. J. Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition: The Politics of Social-Imperialism, 1900-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

dependents to demand certain rights based on those models.

The ideology of the League of Nations in Britain developed into a profound and corrosive critique of an imperial order that while liberal in name, had become illiberal in practice. From the war, there was a questioning of the reality and the validity of some of the empire's most basic social and political categories. The problem created by the League's broader themes of civilization and "self determination" created a crisis in meaning regarding the importance of the empire to the British people. Ultimately, the burgeoning public support, if not demand, for a League of Nations is central to explaining the urgent imperial debate surrounding how to define the status of the Dominions and colonies in the empire leading up to the 1926 Imperial Conference.

This thesis will demonstrate how British officials latched onto these attempts to popularize the idea of the League of Nation and use them for their own imperial interests. These imperialists reinterpreted the idea of the League of Nations in a way that could justify the British Empire's existence in the postwar world while simultaneously fortifying a deteriorating idea of imperial unity at home. This will be shown by exploring the speeches, political pamphlets, leaflets, newspapers, and books that shaped and informed the public's opinion about the necessity for the League of Nations. Throughout Britain, there were debates and public discussions that focused on the meaning behind the principles of the League of Nations Covenant and how they should manifest themselves in policy after the war. These discussions were part of a much bigger debate taking place throughout the empire about the failures and limitations of prewar liberal imperialism. It is argued here that there was an

emergence of a new variation of social imperialism that was based on the League of Nations and all the new social theories that had emerged from the war.

Chapter Two briefly outlines the British people's encounters with the wider empire and how it shaped what was to be known as the liberal empire. It describes the various transformations of the British public's obligation to the empire and to imperial unity. By the mid-nineteenth century, British intellectuals from a particularly empiricist and liberal intellectual tradition helped justify the conquest of non-European people in the name of religion and civilization. By the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the empire's "civilizing" mission essentially turned inward. Even though in practice, the wider civilizing mission had failed, the idea of the empire's humanitarian mission still had an ideological function. Embracing an ideology of "social imperialism," imperialists used the idea of empire as an ideological focal point for aggressive social reforms and national efficiency policies at home. Lastly, this chapter will sketch out the problems that British officials encountered when challenged by the ideas presented in the League's Covenant.

Chapter Three deals with the problem of postwar democracy in British politics and its relationship to imperial culture. It shows how the League's internationalist nature was transformed to bridge the gap between class interest and imperial interests. The central theme of the chapter is about the crisis in political meaning faced by British officials because of the decision to make the idea of "self-determination" a major part of the League's mission. This brought about a questioning of the reality of one of the most fundamental social and imperial categories that had defined the

average Britisher's place in the empire before the war. It is argued that the political Left used the League's idea of internationalism to mobilize public opinion around an idea of empire that could address class interests while also reigniting the broader mid-nineteenth century humanitarianism mission. These particular imperialists set out to challenge the existing Liberal-Conservative establishment and its failure to fulfill its former humanitarian obligations. By relating working class internationalism to this more universal ideal, these intellectuals and politicians used this common interest to integrate a formerly disenfranchised class into a British society. By linking the League's internationalism with the British people's history of humanitarianism and internationalist labor activism, these imperialists sought to re-envision the imperial mission on more fortified and civilized terms.

Chapter Four discusses the legitimacy of Britain's liberal imperialism. It shows how the ideas of civilization and humanitarianism presented in the League of Nation's Covenant were reinterpreted by Right-wing and Liberal imperialists to refortify the dissolving imperial unity. At the same time that the need for imperial unity was most urgent, British officials were faced with mounting labor unrest due to widespread unemployment and nationalist uprisings throughout the empire. The League's emphasis on cultivating local patriotisms helped establish new domestic and imperial education campaigns that re-envisioned British imperial history as one of mutual dependence and cooperation. Imperialists took the Covenant's idea of limited, but graduated governance to revitalize the British people's sense of responsibility to the wider empire, but now on more equitable terms. Ultimately, it helped imperialists correct an inherent contradiction in prewar liberal imperialist thought. The common

interest in the League provided the missing psychosocial component needed to further the gradual political evolution towards colonial “self-determination” implied in the British constitution. At the same time, this more equitable vision of the empire helped strengthen new imperial bonds between the British people and the empire based on subjecthood and economic cooperation.

Lastly, Chapter Five proposes a reevaluation of the League’s role in the contested space of British imperial culture between the wars. Historians of the League’s place in imperial politics have neglected the many intellectual and cultural elements of nineteenth century liberal imperialism that re-emerged after the First World War. From the idea of “trusteeship” and civilization to liberal internationalism, all these themes were embodied by the League of Nations. In fact, the idea of the League of Nations and the whole culture that it energized, gave imperialists the ability to align more closely the empire’s new international obligations with enduring imperial continuities.

At the same time, this whole culture based around the principles of the League of Nations provided solutions to changes within the empire itself. 1926 serves as the end of this thesis because it was essentially the highpoint for the invention of imperial unity. Throughout the early 1920s, the imperial market increasingly became a vital source of revenue and products for the struggling British people. For British officials, it was necessary to cultivate a more equitable and enduring “spiritual unity” between the people and the empire because it was only a matter of time before an Imperial Conference would grant the Dominions the rights for full political and legal autonomy. The Balfour Declaration (1926) delivered at the 1926 Imperial

Conference, formally articulated the status of the Dominions to Britain that would, by 1931, become a constitutional reality.

Chapter 2: From National Imperialism to International Empire

In a far-flung empire like that of Britain there must often be clashes of interests...In the little league of nations called the Empire, there will be many disturbances and many antagonisms. But there is going to be no break-unless British statecraft has lost its prescience.

—Sir John Foster Fraser (1921)²⁴

In order to understand how the British Empire was re-envisioned after the First World War, it is necessary to briefly sketch out the character of Britain's imperial relations before the war.²⁵ Ever since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, humanitarians regarded social reform as part of a moral duty. This duty was based on a cultural standard intractably linked to an innate belief in British superiority. Yet events from the 1860's through the outbreak of the First World War demonstrated how this earlier mission failed. At home, science, social theories, and competing interests further entrenched this conception of British racial superiority just as colonial rebellions and uprisings began to show how the humanitarian mission was doomed to fail by its very design. Yet the First World War and the principles enshrined by the League of Nations idea challenged all the basic social, intellectual, and cultural assumptions inherent in the prewar imperial mission.

²⁴ John Foster Fraser, "Is British Empire Going to Break Up?" *New York Times*. March 27, 1921: XX1.

²⁵ This chapter by no means intends to be an exhaustive overview of the genealogy of humanitarian movements or of the British Empire. For more comprehensive overviews, see for example: Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slavery in Africa, 1884-1926* (London: Routledge, 2005) and Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience, from 1765 to the Present* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997).

Early trusteeship and the moral right of the British

Throughout the late eighteenth century, British officials described the empire's political and economic rule over its territories such as India as a "sacred trust."²⁶ Drawing from the enlightenment traditions of John Locke and Edmund Burke, these officials saw all forms of political and economic dominion as providential.²⁷ This idea of trusteeship was used to rationalize imperial expansion and Britain's moral claim to it.

The idea of trusteeship reflected the gradual and evolutionary nature of sovereignty that had been the basis for the British constitution because it relegated the degree of authority that was bestowed on its colonies. The British constitution, loosely defined, is the organic and unwritten set of "institutions, procedures, rules, and conventions" that define the authority of the government.²⁸ As early as the late eighteenth century officials progressively allowed more metropolitan oversight, but the relationship between Britain and its colonies still generally remained unequal. It was not until 1839, under the suggestion of Lord Durham, that Canada was given a measure of "responsible government" to appease growing dissatisfaction in the colonies of British North America.²⁹ Even so, it was this idea of the gradual evolution of the settlement colonies that forms the basis for this idea of the British Empire

²⁶ Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

²⁸ Michael Foley, *The Politics of the British Constitution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 3.

²⁹ Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience, from 1765 to the Present* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), 52-23.

being a liberal (in a political sense) empire, or an empire that based its rule on a social contract.³⁰

Unlike many British officials, however, evangelical missionary societies in Britain during the latter half of the eighteenth century took this idea of imperial trusteeship and extended it to include social reform. As Kevin Grant notes, “after the late eighteenth century, evangelicals created a global religious movement through abolitionist organizations and overseas missionary societies that regarded the social reform of foreign peoples as a moral imperative.”³¹ When Britishers encountered colonial peoples during travels or in stories, they often attempted to categorize the people they encountered based on race (skin color) and perceived level of social progress.³² From the late 1780s to the 1860s, the anti-slavery and missionary movements were motivated by a dominant discourse of assimilation. This discourse rested on a dominant thought that the most advanced practices and most civilized values were to be found in and perfected by the people of the British nation.³³

By the mid-nineteenth century, these humanitarian and missionary societies were well established throughout the empire and they had become accepted as part of

³⁰ For a comprehensive history of the intellectual origins see: David Armatage. *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³¹ Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 18.

³² Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 20; Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37-38.

³³ Douglas Lorimer, “From Victorian Values to White Virtues: Assimilation and Exclusion in British Racial Discourse, c.1870-1914.,” in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and Francis R. Douglas (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 2005), 118.

respectable society in Britain.³⁴ In fact, this commitment to humanitarianism and missionary work had a place in domestic reforms and popular culture. Even as this discourse of trusteeship fell into disuse in political circles, the idea of a trust still resonated with the philanthropic circles and reformers at home. Reformers such as Samuel Smiles, author of the highly popular book *Self-Help* (1859), quoted with approval the words of the early nineteenth century clergyman and economist Thomas Chalmers who observed an “implicit trust” in commercial relations.³⁵ Moreover, by the 1860s, in missionary circles lecturing in Britain, this moral right and duty also became much more overtly linked to inherent characteristics observed in the Anglo-Saxon race.³⁶

Imperial expansion and humanitarianism

By the late-nineteenth century, imperialists revived the term “trusteeship” to legitimize the empire’s expanded administrative control over territories as part of what was to be described as the “New Imperialism.” Kevin Grant observes that, “British officials wanted to represent the expansion of industrial capitalism as a means to promote the moral and material improvement of savages who labored for the capitalist’s profits.”³⁷ Even the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) which on the surface regulated European colonization and trade in Africa, furthered Britain’s

³⁴ Timothy J. Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 45.

³⁵ Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 20.

³⁶ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 397.

³⁷ Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 20.

dominance in the market by promoting free trade and the empire's moral claim to its "civilizing mission."³⁸

With this growing empire, came increasing concerns about international security. Although the general practice originated well before the nineteenth century, it was during the latter half of the nineteenth century that Britain's diplomatic policies focused on maintaining a balance of power in Europe. Instead of establishing formal alliances, this political concept allowed Britain to maintain equilibrium between European states powers and thus averting war and leveraging its aspirations for imperial, economic, and naval expansion.³⁹ Reinforced by the Council of Vienna (1815), this system helped establish a relatively long period of peace in Europe and imperial expansion that lasted until the late nineteenth century. This isolation lasted until the late nineteenth century, when colonial disputes with France in the last quarter of the century compromised Britain's isolation from continental affairs.

While humanitarian interests did not cease, imperialists and missionaries were becoming increasingly challenged by rebellions and instability in the formal and informal empire.⁴⁰ There were uprisings in India (1857-1858), rebellions in Jamaica (1865), and an increase in agitation for Home Rule in Ireland (1880s). Moreover, there was also increasing unrest in its African territories such as South Africa (1880s) and the Sudan (1896). Even in the most settled territories of Canada and Australia,

³⁸ Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 28-29.; Frederick Cooper, "Networks, Moral Discourse, and History," in *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*, ed. Ronald Kassimir, Robert Latham, and Thomas M Callaghy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37-38.

³⁹ Paul W. Doerr, *British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), 5.

⁴⁰ E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics, and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge, 1995), 60.

which by the mid-nineteenth century had been granted more state autonomy, there were more assertions for greater independence. In the end, late-nineteenth century imperial strategies became what Karuna Mantena describes as “practical responses to and accommodations to the nature of ‘native society.’”⁴¹ Indeed, the criteria for self-government had increasingly become focused on the idea of nationality and the capacity for colonial peoples to unite as opposed to devolve into anarchy or local divisions.⁴²

Social Imperialism and the creation of a national imperialism

Part of the larger logic of this “New Imperialism” was the influence of the social theories that were becoming commonly used to understand relations between states and the social progress of the people within them. It became common among social theorists to apply racially charged social Darwinian theories to understand the functioning and formation of nation-states. Social theorists such as Benjamin Kidd and Karl Pearson feverishly worked to understand how societies evolved and what kind of social and political structures were needed for people to progress.⁴³ Yet, just as the doctrine of “survival of the fittest” informed rationales for imperial expansion, it also raised questions about the state of the British Empire and the racial and physical well-being of the people at home.

⁴¹ Karuna Mantena, “The Crisis of Liberal Imperialism,” in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 114.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 127-128.

⁴³ Andrew S. Thompson. *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, C. 1880-1932* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2000), 24.

The Boer War (1889-1902), served as the final straw for many liberal imperialists trying to manage the tenuous relationships that the British Empire had with its territories and the increasing social decline at home. Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, social investigators and reformers had begun to take note of the squalid conditions of the urban poor. These fears escalated to national panic as this war exposed what these humanitarians saw as the poor physical and moral health of the British people and the general inefficient management of the empire and its military.

The strength of the empire was determined by improving Britain's economic conditions and by improving the material and social conditions of the people within the empire. Social imperialism became the term to describe what scholars describe as Britain's aggressive social programs and imperial policy-making that were simultaneously implemented at the turn of the twentieth century to remedy these deficiencies. In the language of imperial defense and nationalism, this multifaceted ideology incorporated reforms and policies focused on eugenics, nutrition and educational programs aimed at reversing physical deterioration, and promoting compulsory military service.⁴⁴

The idea of trying to draw all classes of the nation together in defense of an empire was, for some intellectuals, the solution to an empire that had lost efficiency and was threatened by increasing economic and imperial competition. As John MacKenzie notes that the, "empire had not only become bound up with social reform, but had developed some of the vision of economic idealism which was to come front

⁴⁴ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 67.

of propaganda stage after the First World War.”⁴⁵ Imperial unity and the cultivation of an imperial race served as the ideological force behind government sponsored social policies and various scouting, service, and humanitarian leagues. These popular organizations and social services were formed in part to improve the physical health of the British people so they could meet their imperial obligations and serve as sources of education about their duty to the empire in their everyday work.

For social theorists such as Benjamin Kidd and Karl Pearson, the *laissez faire* attitude of the British Liberal state was inefficient because it stifled the innate evolution of social progress of the working class.⁴⁶ For these social theorists, the nation was less politically competitive and strong because there was an internal struggle between the unrestrained interests of the working class and those above them. “National Efficiency” became a term to describe the policy-making intending to make the business of war more efficient in industrial as well as human terms. It was a policy devised to streamline government programs and provide social reforms to strengthen the population needed for imperial defense. In fact, according to R. J. Scally, the wartime and postwar nationalization projects that Lloyd George’s Coalition government (1916-1922) attempted to implement brought together social imperialism’s diverse threads of tariff reform, popular liberal imperialism, and Fabian corporatist thought.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 9.

⁴⁶ Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform; English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914*, 20-22.

⁴⁷ R. J. Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition: The Politics of Social-Imperialism, 1900-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

Imperialists enshrined social reforms in an imperial rhetoric so that the working class could be led to believe that their interests and that of the state were one and the same. Yet, reflecting back to his experiences in a dining club devoted to solving the inefficient state of the empire, H. G. Wells described what his contemporaries neglected. He noted in his autobiography that, “they were all for training and armaments and defensive alliances, and they were all careless or contemptuous of that breadth and vigour of education in which the true greatness of a people lies.”⁴⁸

The First World War and the intellectual challenge to empire

The First World War disrupted many of the rationales for the continued imperial presence in the affairs of its Dominions and colonies. Rather than highlight the rigid hierarchies of civilization that not only informed prewar diplomatic relations, but imperial relations, wartime propaganda in Britain attempted to unite all the people in the empire under a common imperial culture and subjecthood. This subjecthood referred to a set of practices and ways of behaving that could be conditioned and learned, rather than viewing people solely in terms of inherited racial traits. As Keith McClelland and Sonya O. Rose illustrate, “the official term for British national was British Subject, and British subjecthood was based on the principle of

⁴⁸H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain* (London: V. Gollancz, 1934), 164.

jus soli (born in a territory under the British Crown). British subjecthood, then, was an imperial form of belonging as well as a form of ‘nationality.’”⁴⁹

By emphasizing the conception of subjecthood rather than brute military strength, British imperialists tried to transcend ethnic, racial, and national lines so that all could identify with fighting for a common cause.⁵⁰ This less divisive and more inclusive conception of civilization sought to obtain and maintain the support of the people of its dependents who were not only needed for military support, but could have just as easily seen the war as a moment for revolt.⁵¹ Wartime imperialism became conflated with nationalism as the practices and principles of sovereignty became ever the more associated with “civilization.” As Peter Mandler notes, “The ideals summoned up by wartime propaganda were those now familiar ideals of ‘civilization’ with which not specifically England but more generally Britain, the British Empire and ideally the whole of humanity were associated.”⁵²

One of the more visceral wartime rallying points in British propaganda that helped shaped postwar policy-making was for the wider imperial fight in defense of civilization. During the war, as well as in the years immediately after, imperialists

⁴⁹ Keith McClelland and Sonya O. Rose, "Citizenship and Empire, 1867-1928" in *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 278.

⁵⁰ Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 18.

⁵¹ Ireland is a good case in point. To begin with, the prewar agitation over Home Rule put into question the Irish people’s support for the war. However, the Leader of the Home Rule movement, John Redmond, agreed to put aside the issue of Home rule until the end of the war. Many Irish Volunteers followed suit and rallied for the cause of fighting in the name and defense of the empire. Yet not everyone in Ireland was willing to put aside political differences in time of war. The 1916 Easter Rebellion instigated by the Irish Republican Brotherhood instilled a much more nationalist ideal that would set into motion the chain of events that would lead to Irish Independence (1922) after the war.

⁵² Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 144.

worked through all popular and political channels to distinguish the British Empire from German imperial culture. Entente and American propaganda efforts exploited Germany's rationale for its defense of its own universal national ideal based on *Kultur*, as socially and culturally arrogant, militaristic and oppressively imperialistic.⁵³ Conversely, the British and Entente propaganda translated the wartime objectives as protecting democracy and peace.⁵⁴

The war also voided the biological assumptions and empirical observations about race, social progress, and national superiority in respect to groups outside the empire as well as within. It was widely observed that the war had proved that associating race with skin color and values of superiority or inferiority was invalid. Intellectuals such as Alfred Zimmern reminded his listeners in 1925 of Turkey's tenacity during the Gallipoli Campaign (1915-1916) and even Japan's respected technical sophistication in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War, which shattered widespread assumptions about national superiority based on biological and racial categories.⁵⁵ In fact, these observations proved to imperialists that other "races" were just as efficient and as capable of political and psychosocial progress as the once esteemed Anglo – Saxon race.

The wartime experience validated the increasingly popular investigation of psychosocial and cultural instincts social psychologists thought individuals shared

⁵³ Alan Cassels, *Ideology and International Relations in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1996), 129-130.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵⁵ See for example: Alfred Zimmern, "The Empire and Non-White Peoples," in *The Third British Empire being a course of lectures delivered at Columbia University, NY* (London: Oxford University Press H. Milford, 1927), 76-102.

with a community before the war.⁵⁶ Social psychology became a popular way to understand the underlying causes of the war and how to prevent it. For example, Wilfred Trotter, a British surgeon and social psychologist theorized about the origins of a “herd instinct” in humans that often caused war but could also be a key to peace. He argued that a gregarious instinct in human beings was influenced by the stimuli of war and nationalism. “When war breaks upon a society thus constituted the intense stimulation of herd instinct that results tend to break down the moral restrictions set up by segregation, to throw back the individual citizen on to the nation at large for the satisfaction of his moral needs, and to replace class feeling by national feeling.”⁵⁷ Social psychologists tried to isolate the intrinsic human commonalities that naturally formed strong bond. These psychologists focused on containing these social “instincts” and shaping them. Social psychology divorced race from its earlier

⁵⁶ See also: W. H. R. Rivers, “Psychiatry and the War,” *Science* 49, no. 1268, New Series (April 18, 1919). Early British social psychology texts such as William McDougall’s *Social Psychology* (1908) and A.G. Tansley’s *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life* (1920) already popular before the war generated even more appeal after. Breaking from the unfettered optimism of mid-nineteenth century notion of “Self-Help,” these authors linked the strong influence of the social on the construction of the individual mind. McDougall’s book in particular was written for a popular audience and had a strong reception among readers. Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-century Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 56-57. While highly influenced by and conversant with contemporary Freudian psychology, they did not enshrine the Freudian tendency to draw generalized conclusions from psychoanalysis patients. Instead, they merged the study of mass psychology with turn of the century notions of Darwinian and Spencerian psychobiological inheritance Robert A. Boakes. *From Darwin to Behaviourism: Psychology and the Minds of Animals* (Cambridge: CUP Archive, 1984), 207-218. This is not to say that social psychology before the war was only of popular interest. See: R.N. Soffer, “New Elitism: Social Psychology in Prewar England,” *The Journal of British Studies*, 8, no. 2 (May, 1969). Nor was the surge in popularity of social psychological discussions of political organization confined to Britain. See for example: *The Psychology of Nationality and Internationalism* (New York; London: D. Appleton and Company, 1919) by W.B. Pillsbury. Its novelty after the war for many social scientists was its useful application to contemporary social problems. It is invoked if not by name then by application in numerous League of Nations propaganda texts and served as the framework for the plethora of the League’s internationalist educational and social reform schemes. The League of Nations is discussed in length in texts such as *The Group Mind: A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology with Some Attempts to Apply Them to the Interpretation of National Life and Character*, (New York; London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1920) by William McDougall.

⁵⁷ William Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, 2nd ed. (London: T. F. Unwin Ltd, 1919), 215-216.

biological determinism as it became part of a host of variables that interacted with a mind and that was driven by universal social impulses.

According to social psychologists like Trotter, individuals did not have a comprehensive view of their world beyond their own self-interest when these instincts were unchecked by the intellect or environmental restraint. He argued that “This limitation has effectually prevented man from defining his situation in the world, and he remains a captive in the house of circumstance, restrained as effectually by the mere painted canvas of habit, convention and fear as by the solid masonry of essential instinctive needs.”⁵⁸ He linked the militaristic nationalism and imperialism with the underlying motivations for social reform before the war. He thought that the “herd instinct” gravitated individuals to groups that satiated diverse instinctual needs at the expense of allowing individuals to “defining his situation in the world” and thus failing to have the qualities possible to participate fully in it in a civilized manner.

On a fundamental level, the wartime experience also compromised all the elitist and rigidly empirical categories of superiority and civilized behavior that had once fortified the place of the British people over its colonies. By 1916, colonial leaders were incorporated into the management of the War Cabinet when it became clear that Dominion and colonial support was vital to the war effort. This posed a problem for British officials who realized that there was a greater need for the imperial cooperation for postwar reconstruction at home, but who also had to manage the growing nationalist sentiment erupting in every sector of the empire. At the end of the war, the colonies and Dominions strongly argued for their due compensation for their contribution to the war. This compensation came in a variety of forms such as

⁵⁸ Ibid., 256.

Home Rule, more independence in foreign policy-making, and the acquisition of states from the redistribution of the defeated empires' territories.

The League of Nations and the problem of empire

The cultural and intellectual approach to understanding imperial culture in Britain is particularly useful because the postwar debates about the importance of the empire were elaborated in a similar discursive space—that is, within the terms of a civic vision of the empire. Before the war, the ultimate purpose of imperial propaganda and the idea of imperial unity was to downplay the material and social inequalities that many elites thought threatened not only the British nation's fortitude but that of the empire itself. Yet after the war, notions of the legitimacy of the empire differed radically from that explored by the aforementioned social and cultural historians of prewar imperialism. Imperialists had to envision the empire in a way that was compatible with a new culture of internationalism embodied by the League of Nations and all the new social theories that it drew from. Imperialists were now forced to envision a new partnership between Britain and the rest of the empire that could be compatible with the now validated social psychology and the proscriptions laid out in the League of Nation's Article 22.

The attempts made by representatives of the League of Nation's member states to reclassify the borders of mandated states furthered a crisis in the legitimacy of the empire at home and abroad. From the beginning, the League of Nations idea intended to offset the hierarchical power dynamics that many politicians thought caused war. Basing its strength on the will of public opinion rather than the might of a military, the League of Nations supporters invoked a social psychological

understanding of human nature to organize the graduated mandated system.⁵⁹ Instead of organizing the new world order by “race” in its biological sense, it focused on the capacity for a territory’s people to organize into a coherent nation and express a unified and coherent nationalism that could withstand the pressures of dominating forces.

Not only was the Versailles Peace Conference where diplomats sketched out the peace terms and the League’s machinery formed, but it was where politicians debated on the idea of “self-determination” and what it was to actually mean in practice after the war. It was essentially the point of intersection between the changing perceptions of not only what it actually meant to *be* civilized enough for self-determination in the world, but in the empire itself.

It is not being suggested that a hierarchy did not still exist in the League or within the empire, but this hierarchy was now based on a certain body of behaviors and attitudes about the social that could be learned and reasonably obtained. In the principles that framed the logic for the mandates, the writers of the Covenant juxtapose the “peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world” with the modern (implied) nation-state’s responsibility to form a “sacred trust of civilisation.”⁶⁰ While this language is reminiscent of the tradition of trusteeship of nineteenth century imperial humanitarianism, the covenant limited and required “securities for the performance of

⁵⁹ There was widespread appeal to social psychology by League of Nations supporters from all sides of the political spectrum. See Glenda Sluga. "What is National Self-Determination? Nationality and Psychology During the Apogee of Nationalism." *Nations & Nationalism* 11, (1) (2005): 1-20.

⁶⁰ “"Article 22."The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments adopted to December, 1924).”

this trust.”⁶¹ In contrast to what contemporaries had observed as the dysfunctional and inefficient colonial system, the Covenant of the League established legal precepts intending to foster economic and sociocultural modernization of mandated territories.⁶²

Many League supporters like R. J. Muir had taken hold of the idea that the conflation of race with the nation had been the cause of the war. The war had been based on an artificial “superiority” complex that had developed not only on the basis of the color of one’s skin, but one’s place of origin. He argued that “it is indeed highly important that the two ideas of the race and the nation should be kept distinct; for undue emphasis upon the racial element in nationality has produced many unhappy results. “Racialism” (that is, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over another, and in the fundamental antipathy between races) much more than “nationalism” has been the enemy of peace, and those who speak of the national spirit as the source of war are generally thinking of the racial rather than the national idea.”⁶³

The League of Nations’ new principles sought to contain the uncivilized impulses that the war had exposed in all people and not just one particular group or race. In a published transcript of an address delivered to the International Federation

⁶¹ The term “trust” and its variants “trustee” and “trusteeship” were far from new in the discourse of international relations at the turn of the century. This principle was the basis for the international laws developed at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to prevent colonial slavery while also promoting an unfettered flow of free trade and international commerce. See: William Bain, *Between Anarchy and Society: Trusteeship and the Obligations of Power*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 53-74.

⁶²“Article 22.” The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments adopted to December, 1924).”

⁶³ Ramsay. Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism, The Culmination of Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London: Constable & Company, 1918), 40.

of League of Nations Societies, Norman Angell explained to his audience the collective responsibility that all people had to have in order to secure international peace. In this, he invoked the “herd instinct” when speaking about humanity’s irrationality and instinct for war. “We have all been condemned to win our salvation, if at all, by the sweat of our brow, which I take to mean the sweat of the brain behind it, and by subduing, directing and civilising the passions of our human nature.”⁶⁴ Rather than depend on a Victorian idealism that put faith in a coherent hierarchy and bureaucracy to contain disorder, there was a conscious attempt to rationally plan for and mitigate the “passions” and unknowns of human nature.⁶⁵

All the basic assumptions about imperial rule were challenged by the League’s existence. While the responsibility for “protecting” weaker nations had historically been occupied by Britain’s liberal imperial mission, the existence of the League made it more difficult to sustain. In an editorial to *The Times*, Robert Cecil criticized the Prime Minister Lloyd George who, at a debate at the House of Parliament, argued that the Supreme Council and not the League of Nations should be entrusted with choosing the mandated powers for the various territories.⁶⁶ Cecil thought that the mandate system should not operate in a manner that privileged the interests of the British Empire. He thought that “unless the mandates effectively

⁶⁴ Norman Angell, *Public Opinion*, League of Nations Union Pamphlet Series no. 196 (London: League of Nations Union, 1926), 6.

⁶⁵ Gal Gerson, *Margins of Disorder: New Liberalism and the Crisis of European Consciousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 90.

⁶⁶ Specifically, Cecil expressed this public plea in hopes that the Nauru Bill would be amended. The 1920 Nauru Bill annexed the Nauru Islands to Australia and New Zealand. He thought it should only be confirmed after being subject to the provisions of Article 22 and the League approving it. He did not want it set a precedent for the League’s obedient approval to Britain’s claims for the Mesopotamian mandates.

entitle the natives to protection and forbid improper employment of the resources of the mandated territory, the supervisory powers of the league will be a farce, and we shall be back in the bad old days of conquest and exploitation which it was the chief object of the mandatory system to destroy.”⁶⁷ The mandate system served to protect weaker states from the power of belligerents. Rather than ascribing imperial claim to the mandated countries, Cecil legitimized authority over other nations against the “conquest and exploitation” of imperialism itself. While obviously not referring to Britain’s own imperial history, but Germany’s, Cecil’s rhetoric still suggested a linguistic turn away from former notions of empire. Trusteeship was no longer about cultural assimilation. Instead, it required a transnational body like the League to oversee, manage, and protect the territories from the socioeconomic concerns that were common to all people.

The public debate about the League of Nations required Britain to reevaluate the very qualities and prejudices that British officials used to determine a territory’s capacity to self-govern. In regards to the “Eastern Question,” writers such as A.J. Toynbee voiced a contrary perception of the intractable link between race and civilization as a way to destabilize public perceptions of what it meant to be civilized after the war. Writing about the political and cultural clash that had been long posited between Western and Eastern civilizations, Toynbee challenged his readers to “get rid of the notion that the East is unchanging” which while “prevalent in the West, is

⁶⁷ Robert Cecil, “Mandates.; A Duty Of The League Of Nations., Definition Of Powers.,” *The Times*, May 25, 1920: 12.

based on insufficient data and is very misleading.”⁶⁸ Toynbee’s insistence that the underlying assumptions that served as the basis of the strident divisions of Western and Eastern civilizations and were the cause of previous and past conflicts neglected the fact that “civilization is in itself a bond between all peoples that possess it, however different the types of their civilization may be.”⁶⁹ In fact, it was the clash with or the negation of the other civilization that caused conflict.

While writing about the Pan-Islamic movement, Toynbee argued that the movement was actually a natural defense against Western expansionism and its attempt to assimilate the “Eastern people” and not an aggressive and intolerant movement. He noted that “Pan-Islamism, in fact, is a case of the herd instinct which makes animals and human beings crowd together for mutual protection in face of a common danger and which also makes individual members of the herd sacrifice themselves that the herd may survive[*sic*].”⁷⁰ The idea of civilization was no longer based on a hierarchy of intrinsic racial categories. Instead, it was based on a set of practices and organizing features of a society that while different in type, were based on an ingrained “herd instinct” that had been developed over time.

The outcry for more equal footing and cooperation would not be lost to members of the Dominions either. As the Bishop from North Queensland observed, “in days like these, when crowns and laws are in the melting pot, it is dangerous to overlook the fact that, loyal as the Dominions are to the Crown, their allegiance

⁶⁸ A.J. Toynbee, “The League in the East” (League of Nations Union, 1920), 4, LNU Minute Books and other Records of the League of Nations Union, reel 20, vol 7/1, British Library of Economic and Political Science, London School of Economics, London: UK Hereafter, this collection will be referred to as LNUMB.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁰ Toynbee, “The League in the East,” 4.

cannot be forced by a legal process. It is based upon good will.”⁷¹ First, the Dominion’s support during the war reflected the possibility for these nations to obtain the qualities necessary for the right of self-rule. Second, their participation demonstrated to imperialists the “success” of the empire’s years of unyielding imperial rule. Before the war, the imperial type of citizenship was largely and unforgivingly unequal, but after the war that changed; Dominions asserted greater independence from imperial affairs in the running of their states. The British people and the British government in particular, had to change their attitude about their relationship with the rest of the empire. Rather than the colonies ultimately having to acquiesce to the will of Whitehall, imperial cooperation increasingly had to be based on the “good will” and “allegiances” from the colonies.

This unraveling of racial stereotypes posed an additional problem for British officials who based prewar imperial culture on a chauvinistic categorizing and racial “othering” of not only its imperial rivals but of its colonial dependents.⁷² In a League of Nations Union pamphlet titled “The Word and the League,” Gilbert Murray pointed out the paradox of commonly held notions of civilization. He wrote that, “if you want peaceful races, I cannot recommend you any better place to go than my own native country, to study the Australian aborigines. They never make war at all. The strange fact seems to be that on the whole the races that have come to the top in civilisation, that have made the greatest contributions to the nobler life of mankind,

⁷¹ Bishop of North Queensland, “A British-Colonial view of the League of Nations,” *The Living Age* 14, no. 3907 (May 24, 1919): 458.

⁷² This is not to say that each dependent was treated equally. At the turn of the twentieth century, the white dominions enjoyed greater independence from Britain in terms of sovereignty. On the other hand, India and the non-white dependencies were allowed greater self-government on the basis of an inconsistent standard regarding their ability to assimilate into British culture.

are the pugnacious races.”⁷³ The wartime contribution of men and women from around the empire demonstrated that the most civilized behaviors such as loyalty and duty could be found similarly in the actions of dependents who were often presented as unfit for self-rule. Conversely, the most uncivilized behaviors could be found in the most civilized of peoples.

How the League of Nations was handling the partitioning of the Middle East brought to light the very same questions that critics had about the management of the British Empire after the war. A correspondent from *The Times* recalled the increasing resistance in India over its administration by the British and how it should cast doubt on the proposed European control and “modernization” of Mesopotamia. He observed that “we are asking the Arab to exchange his pride and independence for a little Western civilization and a certain amount of commercial development, the profits of which must be largely absorbed by the expenses of administration. From his point of view it is a poor bargain; we have still to consider what sort of venture it is from ours.”⁷⁴ All the hallmarks of Western progress such as commercial development and a strong, more apparent, and “efficient” administration were not, in this writer’s opinion, priorities for the Arab. His article suggested that the Ottoman Empire’s traditional political system may have actually allowed for better imperial management because it was run in a manner that was better capable of settling disputes and differences among groups of different faiths and backgrounds.⁷⁵

⁷³ Gilbert Murray, *The Word and the League: An Address Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the League of Nations General Council*, League of Nations Union, 151; (London, 1924).

⁷⁴ “Britain in Mesopotamia.,” *The Times*, November 8, 1919, 11.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

In fact, the writer was not only questioning the viability of established political and economic assumptions in Britain, but the very imperial culture that those political and economic paradigms created. Implicitly, he questioned the legitimacy of a whole culture in Britain that had been created around a cult of political and economic efficiency that used material progress as a mark of civilized progress at home and abroad. The British public's widespread unwillingness to repeat the prewar arms race further fueled popular opposition to the "National Efficiency" policies that focused on building up Britain's military forces.⁷⁶ Yet, to political leaders, the imperial unity was even more important to the domestic population for security and postwar reconstruction even though many of the facets of the prewar imperial was far from palatable to a war-weary public. Already at an imbalance before the war, domestic British industries after the war shifted away from consumer goods towards raw materials to support the war effort. In terms of the economy, the disruption of prewar industry and trade routes increased the dependency on the empire. By the end of the First World War, Britain stopped producing for its main foreign markets as well.⁷⁷ Overseas trade slumped by late 1920, so the empire market—even with new tariffs being erected within the system—was seen as the best opportunity for commerce.⁷⁸

Moreover, social psychology had demonstrated to postwar imperialists that psychological traits left over from prior social relations could not be ignored. In a

⁷⁶ Martin Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain, 1870-1997*, 2nd ed. (London: Arnold, 1999), 239-247.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁷⁸ Stephen Constantine, "Britain and the Empire," in *The First World War in British History*, ed. Steven Constantine, M. W. Kirby, and Mary B. Rose (London: E. Arnold, 1995), 254.

League of Nations Union pamphlet paper, a prominent educationist J.C. Maxwell Garnett described how the League of Nations rested on an active internationalist sensibility of an informed public opinion. Drawing from the works of social psychologists such as the Englishman William McDougall and the American, W.B. Pillsbury, Garnett described how patriotism was a “self-regarding sentiment” of being part of a larger group to which one made a sacrifice.⁷⁹ Writing about the “patriotic” statesman’s responsibility to think about the effect of his decisions at the League Assembly on the world, Garnett wrote that “[t]he statesmen can only do it if the public opinions of their countries understand and approve. Men’s minds, we repeat, must be changed...Patriotism must cease to be the differentiator and become the integrator of nations.”⁸⁰ Patriotism required an active and knowledgeable public opinion committed to international concerns for the purpose of national well-being instead of being a sentiment that divided people.

It is here, at the end of the war, where the main themes of British imperial culture and the culture of the League of Nations come together to present British officials with an imperial crisis. British intellectuals and politicians universally understood that the empire was vital to postwar international security and reconstruction efforts in Britain. Yet, the war and all the social theories and ideas related to the League of Nations invalidate the basic premises of a prewar imperial culture based on a bold imperial militarism and isolationism. Culturally and socially,

⁷⁹ Maxwell Garnett, *Patriotism*, League of Nations Union Pamphlet Series 197 (London: League of Nations Union, 1926), 14. See also: “The Psychology of Patriotism. Changed World Conditions.” *The Times*. August 6, 1926; 6. Maxwell Garnett “The Psychology of Patriotism,” delivered at Section J (Psychology) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science on August 6, 1926.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

the idea of imperialism had become unpopular even though politically, critics thought that Wilson's bold principle of self-determination was still limited by an imperial collusion at the Versailles conference. After the war, British officials were not only faced with the difficult task of establishing the terms for a completely new vision of imperial relations with its colonies and Dominions, but within the hearts and minds of the British public.

Chapter 3: The Empire and the Cultivation of an “International Mind”

Until the old herd instinct of nationalism can be, if not merged in, at least made perfectly compatible with, the wider form of herd instinct which embraces all mankind, it will be impossible to form a league of nations which has the living reality of the people's will behind it.

—Arthur Tansley, (1920)⁸¹

Any imperial fervor that swept British culture before the war certainly did not continue to hold the same appeal after it.⁸² Culturally, the prewar chauvinistic militarism of the imperial voluntary associations and propaganda lost respectability among its consumers. With this demise of a robust cultural rationalization for imperial rule, there also came a much more democratic and politically agitated polity. The war also ushered in an economic malaise that fueled a more vocal and stronger militancy among the greatly increased members of trade unionist movement.⁸³ In light of facing new social and economic challenges after the war, imperialists had to devise new strategies to make the empire not only relevant to the material wellbeing of the British nation, but its psychological wellbeing. The British people had to develop a new psychology based on its long history of internationalism and the care of common human interests. The League of Nation's internationalism was linked to

⁸¹ Arthur George Tansley, *The New Psychology and Its Relation to Life* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920), 216.

⁸² This is not to say that the idea of empire and the imperial spirit were uniformly felt or prime motivators before the war. See: Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working-class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (Routledge & K. Paul, 1972).

⁸³ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 268.

the British people's deeply engrained cultural history of internationalism and human cooperation. These distinctive qualities demonstrated the British people's innate ability and mandate to pursue international peace and social reform as active patriotic representatives of the British Empire.

In the eyes of many imperialists, the key to solving the political and economic dangers of the postwar empire lay in the management of the British people's deep-seated internationalism. It was common for social imperialists at the turn of the century to try to undermine the Cobdenite or Liberal-socialist's tradition of working class' internationalism which stood in opposition to the strategies for national unity.⁸⁴ Traditionally, the term *internationalism* was used in the decades before the war to describe a variety of proposed alternatives to the tenuous "balance of power" upheld by the competing nationalist rivalries in Europe.⁸⁵ The most organized and ubiquitous critique of this system referred to groups affiliated with the International Working Men's Association (also known as the First International).⁸⁶ The early British Labour movement—as an associational member of the First International—embraced internationalism as a unifying idea to usurp the rampant nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism that typified Europe's deteriorating balance of power.

Yet when the opportunity came for the First International's body to show its

⁸⁴ Many of these so-called prewar "social imperialists" whether in favor of Tariff Reforms or Free Trade were informed by a social thought that emphasized a Darwinian struggle between different nations. The imperial culture that they cultivated intended to suppress any internationalist class instincts that could divide and ultimately weaken the unity of the nation. By ameliorating the British people's material and social problems, it was thought that their materialist class interests would be sidestepped. See: Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1968).

⁸⁵ Akira Iriye, "Internationalism," in *The Global History Reader*, ed. Akira Iriye and Bruce Mazlish (New York: Routledge, 2005), 202-208.

⁸⁶ Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "Internationalism;" See also "Internationalist," <http://dictionary.oed.com/> (accessed December, 29, 2008).

solidarity during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), and again for the Second International—a reformed regrouping of its predecessor—in the wake of the First World War, their internationalism could not compete with the fervor of nationalism.⁸⁷ By the end of the war, international cooperation—a central tenet of the League of Nations—became not only a given in British politics, but a means to unite the nation in a time where blind nationalist patriotism was under intense scrutiny by many international leaders. In fact, the internationalism that had once been stifled was now seen as an established collective spirit that could be exploited and merged with the internationalist political commitments British foreign policy had to now develop.

After the First World War, the term *internationalism* and the whole conceptual vocabulary that it embodied changed. If internationalism traditionally meant the spirit of working class solidarity commonly shared by the British Labour party and other trade unions through the First and Second International, even the Labour party now began to use the term to refer to a more universal imperial solidarity embodied by the League of Nations. Working through organizations such as the League of Nations Union, imperialists from all ends of the political spectrum in Britain used the new conception of internationalism to cultivate a more enduring imperial patriotism and unity that was fueled by each and every individual's "international mind."

⁸⁷ Before the war, the early British labor movement was not really concerned with international affairs even though it was associated with international bodies, The labor movement in Britain had undergone an important political transformation by 1901 when it became the Labour party. While still a loose organization of trade unions, it maintained an association with labour bodies in other countries through the First International (1864-1876), an international socialist organization dedicated to the emancipation of the working class through revolutionary collective action. By the time of the Labour party's new constitution in 1918, it was still largely associated with other international labor movements through the more reformist Second International (1889-1916; 1920-1923).

The critique of British imperial policy after WWI

The empire was necessary to domestic reconstruction even though the elitist and exploitative culture of patriotism could no longer form the basis of the cultural and economic relationships that the British people had with it. Internationalism, as understood by League supporters, became part of the political language used to redefine domestic politics regarding the empire in Britain. As Conservatives and Liberal Coalitionist leaders such as Lloyd George struggled to negotiate the extent that Britain could embrace the League's internationalism without compromising imperial sovereignty, left-wing radicals and Labour leaders challenged the very *meaning* that internationalism held in Britain after the war.

Nearly a year before the world powers convened in Versailles in June 1919 to define a new international order, the British Labour party had ratified on January 23, 1918, their own plans for a new social order. The party's new constitution outlined the party's organization and broad political program in the postwar world. It noted the party's commitment to "co-operate with the Labour organizations in other countries, and to assist in organising a Federation of Nations for the maintenance of Freedom and Peace, for the establishment of suitable machinery for the adjustment and settlement of International Disputes by Conciliation or Judicial Arbitration, and for such International Legislation as may be practicable."⁸⁸ The League of Nations formed the basis for a new political language in Britain that could redefine international and imperial relations.

⁸⁸ Labour Party, "Constitution of the Labour Party, 1917," in *Great Britain: The Lion at Home; a Documentary History of Domestic Policy, 1689-1973*, ed. Joel H. Wiener (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), vol. IV, 3089.

The political Left's fears that Britain's traditional imperialist foreign policy interests would continue to dominate the outcome of the Peace Treaty proceedings were confirmed the day the official summary was released. After the League released the summary of the peace terms in May 1919, the Labour Party Executive Committee quickly responded with a manifesto criticizing the reparation clauses that were ratified during the Peace conference. The manifesto noted that the League in its current form "bears evidence of compromise influenced by capitalist imperialism that still dominates the European States."⁸⁹ The Labour party contended that the conference was corrupted by the same imperialist interests that were thought to have caused the war.

The Left was not anti-empire as much as it was anti-imperialist. For the Left, the traditional imperial policies prevented the humanitarian and reform initiatives from bringing dependent territories out from their history of economic and social exploitation by the British Empire. In a Labour Party Pamphlet titled "The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy," the writer outlined how the British Empire's system of rule had to change.

We have seen that Labour principles require that the British system of administration shall be altered and shall aim at conditions in which the native will take his place as a free man in the economic system, reaping for himself and his community the riches of his own country, and will also take his place as a free citizen controlling his own government. Both these results depend ultimately on education....⁹⁰

The Left wanted the British Empire's administrative system to change, not be

⁸⁹ The National Executive of the Labour Party, "Labour Disowns The Treaty," *The Daily Herald*, May 9, 1919, 1.

⁹⁰ The Labour Party, *The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy. Memorandum prepared by the Advisory Committee on International Affairs*. (London: The Labour Party, 1918), 10.

eliminated all together. They wanted to “alter” the established liberal imperial administration because it failed to provide the African people with the education and economic base necessary for self-sufficiency in the modern world.⁹¹

Through the League of Nations, the Left wanted to reestablish the British Empire’s responsibilities to the African people with a policy based on the “civilizing mission” that the late-nineteenth century Empire failed to pursue.

Under Article 22 the mandate system is, of course, only applied to the late German colonies. But it is applied because the Peace Conference adopted a principle which has already been put forward by Labour, namely, that the “well-being and development of” the peoples of African territories is “a sacred trust of civilisation,” and that the European State administering the territories must be considered only a trustee or mandatory answerable for its trusts to the rest of the civilized world.”⁹²

The failure of the League of Nations was not that it reflected imperialism, but that it did not extend itself far enough to provide the rest of the British Empire the economic and social safeguards promised by the “sacred trust.” The Labour Party saw itself as the original advocate for the League’s new sacred trust and thus the proper party to orchestrate its full potential as the majority government.

Unlike many right-wing Liberals and Conservatives who conceived of existing imperial machineries of government as models for the League of Nations and its policies, Labour leaders found these existing systems of government limiting and contradictory to the ideals of a league of nations. For Labour, the League’s failure to

⁹¹ The tract invokes the responsibility that the more developed nations had for improving the conditions of the African. “Little or nothing is done in any portion of British protected Africa to educate the native to take his place as a free man in the economic or political system which the European has imposed upon Africa...In Africa the policy of Labour ...must aim at substituting a system based on the exploitation of common economic interests of the inhabitants for the existing system based on the economic exploitation of the native by the white man.” *The Empire in Africa; Labour's policy* (London: Labour Party, 1926), 10.

⁹²Ibid. 10.

provide the widespread and effective diplomatic reforms necessary to ensure peace and just arbitration was caused by the collusion of ineffective empires deploying foreign policies. Britain's foreign policies were limited by the imperialist and capitalist ideologies that dominated the discourse and procedures at the Home Office. In a distributed pamphlet, the Labour party drew out that argument over the limitations of conservative foreign policy. It argued that, "[f]oreign affairs, or the relations of this country and people with other countries and peoples, are still jealously guarded as the province or monopoly of a small class, clique, or caste... The actions of those who are actually responsible for the control of policy or of the agents are not subject to control either by the electorate or by Parliament."⁹³ The Labour party argued that contemporary foreign affairs were controlled by small but powerful interest groups and classes rather than the people or legislatures. For critics, the structure of government and conduct of foreign relations were based on a system that prevented democratic control over foreign policy.

In fact, the problem that many after the war thought plagued the British people was a social psychology fueled by individual, class, or national interests rather than common human interests. In a book that would serve as influential to the creation of the League of Nations titled *International Government*, Leonard Woolf foreshadowed the problems faced by an international organization such as the League of Nations without it being supported by a proper internationalist psychology:

Man in national or international masses is not yet an orderly or reasonable animal. He is an animal of passion and prejudice. Any system, or organization, or machinery for governing his affairs must, if it is to be

⁹³ The Labour Party, "Control of Foreign Policy, Labour's Programme." (The Labour Party, n.d), 1., Microfilm Collection. reel 15, item 737, British Labour History Ephemera 1900-1926. From here on, this collection will be referred to as BLHEMC.

accepted by him, allow play to these passions and prejudices. It is no good building him a brand new, beautiful, international institution [...] There would be no grounds for deploring the uselessness of human effort if, by a judicious process of intellectual and emotional tickling, human beings could be induced to divert some of the energies which they devote to the construction of armies and armaments to the construction of this feeble and faulty system of pacific machinery.⁹⁴

Britain's foreign policies and machinery of government allied themselves driven by a cultural psychology that maintained national and imperial interests. Leonard Woolf asserted that most people still lacked the capacity to think as world citizens, but there was a possibility that it could be learned. By a "judicious process of intellectual and emotional tickling" people may be compelled to divert the energies they had devoted to war and alliances to international arbitration and peace.

Labour leaders tried to cultivate a new spirit of internationalism in a world whose people, many on the Left thought were conditioned for militant nationalism and imperialism. Philip Snowden argued that widespread ignorance perpetuated the imperialist policies that manifested themselves in belligerent nationalisms and imperial exploitation. He stated in 1921 that "popular support to a policy of Imperialism has been given not only because such a policy gratified national pride, but through ignorance of the fact that the interests of a nation are not identical with the interests of selfish individuals and classes within that nation."⁹⁵ Over time, habit and intellectual complacency formed a psychology of the nation that tied the political with vested imperial policies and capitalist practices.

While discussing past "misinterpretations" of patriotism, Harold Laski, an

⁹⁴ Leonard Woolf and Fabian Research Department, *International Government* (New York: Brentano, 1916), 124-125.

⁹⁵ Philip Snowden, *Labour and the New World*, Cassell's social economics series (London; New York, Cassell and Co., 1921), 270-271.

active Labour Party member and supporter of the League of Nations, also argued in 1925 that the meaning of modern patriotism and nationalism had been usurped by a vested few. For Laski, “the emphatically territorial character of the sovereign-nation State enables a small section of members to utilize its power for their own ends, even against the interests of their fellow citizens. Against such a danger international government represents the most solid protection we have.”⁹⁶ An international government intended to broaden the protections of its people, rather than impose power on a nation’s citizens.

Education and the creation of a knowledgeable imperial society

That did not mean that the Left gave up on the League of Nations or the government entirely. Labour leaders in particular had to answer to critics in the labour movement who questioned whether a league of governments could address the needs of the people. In a Labour party tract titled *The Demand of Labour for a League of Nations*, published by the League of Nations Society, the writer engaged criticisms from within the labour movement which argued that the League of Nations was only a pact between nations:

Governments will continue to exist after the war, and international relations will be regulated by the Governments of different countries. Thus at Brest [*sic*] M. Trotsky speaks on behalf of Russia no less than Herr Kühlmann on behalf of a German Government. If Democrats and Democracies stand aside because of their mistrust of Governments, and neglect to establish and exercise control over their Governments in foreign affairs, they will be repeating the mistake which they made before the war. The International had a place in the past and will no doubt again have a great place in the future, but it cannot take the place of a League of Nations.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Harold Joseph Laski, *A Grammar of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), 234.

⁹⁷ League of Nations Society, “The Demand of Labour for A League of Nations.” (League of Nations Society Publications, February 1918), 1; BLHEMC, reel 18, item 920.

Written in February of 1918, the tract argued that the will of the people was not ill-represented by any one type of government. Rather, a government became corrupt when there was not a civic engagement with it. Critics within the labour movement “misunderstood” the relationship that the individual has with the nation-state. The internationalism familiar to many in the labour movement in the form of the First International and Second International was one based on an abstract class solidarity that could not be easily translated into political terms.⁹⁸ Rather than the idea of internationalism be understood in a way that was opposed to traditional forms of government, it actually could supplement and improve established governmental services and missions.

Public opinion on a local level was essential to the operations of not only a truly democratic and representative League of Nations, but for the historical heart of the empire itself, Britain. The Labour party’s handbook for speakers illustrated their steadfast position arguing that a true league of nations was based not on the will of governments but on the will of the people. Its function “should not be so much coercive as legislative, operating through popular organs representing the European peoples and parties of all opinions, and not merely the Foreign Offices, Cabinets, or

⁹⁸ This criticism over whether representative governments could address the need of the working class continued well past 1924. Through these years, debates over joining the Third International (also known as the Communist International) were often motioned by members of the Independent Labour party (ILP) as a means to express opposition to the Allied—and specifically Britain’s—foreign policies even if it meant having to reconcile their pacifism with the Third International’s radicalism. The Third International (1919-1943) was an international communist association based in Moscow. While revolutionary in purpose, it was considered the organ for Soviet control over other communist organizations. For documentation on the debates within the ILP regarding joining the Third International, see especially the years 1922-1924 of *The Reports of the Conferences for the Independent Labour Party*.

Governments.⁹⁹ The Labour party envisioned the League of Nations as “a popular organ,” to reflect the opinions of people within a civilized nation rather than reflect the mechanisms of a coercive state.

Social reform and labour advocacy, both well established priorities in Labour politics prior to the war, took upon new and important roles in their promotion of more cooperative and democratic participation. They were at the heart of representing the will and needs of the British people. As Philip Snowden later observed, “The Socialist International from its inception has been trying to do the work which the International Labour Department of the League of Nations, and the League of Nations itself, were ostensibly created to do.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, the Party’s ideological origins were formed by the largely European associations of labour organizations formed before the war.¹⁰¹ While not officially socialist before the war, the Labour party advocated on behalf of the working class and a general opposition to militarism, capitalism, and imperialism. By the end of the war, many members of the British labour movement continued to promote the League of Nations and its non-political organization, the International Labour Organization. These intended to provide a formal means to conduct reconstruction and social reform efforts on an international scale. The organizations were needed to help foster environments that could, in the words of a Fabian, “secure the well-being, physical, moral, and intellectual of the industrial

⁹⁹ Labour Party, *Labour and the Peace Treaty: An Examination of Labour Declarations and the Treaty Terms*. (London: The Labour Party, 1919), 13.

¹⁰⁰ Philip Snowden, *If Labour Rules* (London, Labour Pub. Co., 1923), 50-51.

¹⁰¹This is not to say that transnational social reform associations before the war were all focused on labour issues or that the League augmented and found organizational inspiration only from established international labour organizations. In fact, transnational voluntary associations before the war covered all areas of advocacy such as education, suffrage, feminism, social reform, and peace also provided some level of League equivalent.

wage-earner.”¹⁰²

After the war, the language of the political Left had taken a more universally moral, and internationalist character. From the ratification of the new Labour Constitution in 1918 onward, Labour party leaders de-emphasized the language of class and promoted a universal world citizen. In a pamphlet co-authored by Ramsay MacDonald, MacDonald reiterated the ideal relationship between nations. He advocated for “Open diplomacy, a League not of Nations nor of Governments, but of Peoples—full of knowledge on the part of the nations where they are, what they are standing for, what burdens they bear and what responsibilities are theirs.”¹⁰³ Open diplomacy was not based on relationships between states, but from an association between peoples. The Labour party stressed a type of international unity that invoked a universal and non-politicized solidarity based on the cultivation of an educated, civilized, and moral community of people.

The Labour party’s emphasis on a community of people “full of knowledge” cannot be too strongly emphasized. Even with the widespread change in public politics with the granting of nearly universal suffrage with the Representation of the People Act (1918), there were concerns over the sophistication of public opinion.¹⁰⁴

Expressing a general sensibility widely felt after the war, Philip Snowden felt that

¹⁰² William Stephen Sanders, *The International Labour Organisation of the League of Nations*, Fabian tract : 197 (London: The Fabian Society, 1921), 5.

¹⁰³ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *What Labour Stands For. A Re-Statement of Policy. A report of speeches delivered at the Annual Conference Demonstration of the Labour Party* (Dome, Brighton, June 21, 1921), Labour Party, n.d. 13; BLHEMC, reel 12, item 599.

¹⁰⁴ See John Lawrence, “The Transformation of British Public Politics After the First World War.” *Past and Present*, 190 (Feb 2006), 185-216. and Charles Townshend, *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1993) for a more extensive discussion on the growing discomfort with the widespread displays of public opinion—especially from the working class—after the First World War.

public opinion had not been instilled with a sensibility amicable to a peaceful society. He stated that “it is not believed to be possible to establish and maintain a high degree of industrial and social progress with a population intellectually and morally undeveloped to use its resources and opportunities in a rational way.”¹⁰⁵ Without social reform and the cultivation of rational self-restraint and education for a more informed public opinion, peace in domestic or international relations was not guaranteed. This education would foster this internationalism and prevent the British people from being manipulated and conditioned by former political relations.

Left-wing supporters of the League argued that the domestic problems were not as much about the working class’ tendency toward collective organization, but the sensibilities that informed and fueled it. For Norman Angell, it was the sensibility and ideas of the vested and powerful few that caused the national and international troubles: “Of late, we seem greatly to have feared the “mob” and its revolutions, with its confiscations, economic disturbances, social disintegration. But in the last fifteen years, the most destructive exhibitions of the mob mind—and the most economically disturbing, incidentally—have been on the part of the aristocracies, autocracies, oligarchies.”¹⁰⁶ While many of Angell’s contemporaries were concerned about the “mob mentality” of the masses, Angell equally questioned the state of the groups in power who had a part in forming and “educating” the masses many feared. In fact, the aristocracies, autocracies, and oligarchies were more to blame for the economic, social, and diplomatic disintegration than the ill-informed masses.

¹⁰⁵ Snowden, *Labour and the New World*, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Norman Angell, *The Public Mind: Its Disorders: Its Exploitation* (London: Noel Douglas, 1926), 178.

Those attempting to understand the British people's place in the postwar world had to contend with the reality that the shadow of old conceptual forms such as imperialism and capitalism and their corresponding codes of relations still remained. They were the forces that had conditioned the very minds of everyone involved, even though the credibility of both imperialism and capitalism had been compromised by the war. Drawing from the popular interest in social psychology, British intellectuals and politicians placed a new and important role of the social on political ideologies. They thought that people had become conditioned by ideologies that operated on emotion and habit and the purpose of perpetuating itself through mass delusion and control. Even though before the war politicians and intellectuals were wary of the "mass mind," postwar suffrage only added to it. "The present ignorance of the proletariat on every question of international politics makes it only too easy for those in control of the country's foreign policy to deceive and delude the people...."¹⁰⁷ They thought that the malleable nature of the ignorant and complacent mind lent itself to be easily controlled by popular movements and ideologies.

Humanitarian and anti-war organizations—many of which had their roots from before the war—gained new prominence and political influence because of their proven record of mobilizing people through networks based on common social interests. Popular League of Nations movements vied for the support of the battle weary population. The most influential and "troubling" to bureaucrats and elites was the League of Nations Union. The League of Nations Union started as an educational association consisting of study groups and pamphleteering about the League and its accomplishments. While most of the pacifist organizations that sprang up between the

¹⁰⁷ The Labour Party, "Control of Foreign Policy, Labour's Programme.," 8.

wars were ignored by the foreign office, the League of Nations Union was an exception to this because of its mass popular appeal and its strong leadership ties to the “establishment.”¹⁰⁸ Founded in 1918 by Lord Robert Cecil and Gilbert Murray, The League of Nations Union was a popular non-partisan pressure group and voluntary association. The group’s aims were not only to make known the works of the League of Nations, but also to mold public opinion through education and propaganda. They aspired to reinforce and encourage British policymaking based on the League’s principles.¹⁰⁹ In an early leaflet describing the main objectives of this voluntary association, it aspired to “1. To secure the whole-hearted acceptance by the British people of the League of Nations as the guardian of international right ... 2. To foster mutual understanding, goodwill and habits of co-operation and fair dealings between the peoples of different countries” and to advocate for the full development of the League.¹¹⁰

The emphasis on capturing the “whole-hearted acceptance” and fostering “habits of co-operation” with peoples from other countries suggests that they strove to alter the very psychology and habits of the British people.¹¹¹ Rather than force the League of Nations on a population, the League of Nations embodied an international psychology and ethic that had to be learned and cultivated. The League of Nation

¹⁰⁸ Michael Hughes, *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World, 1919-1939* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), 206.

¹⁰⁹The mass appeal of this organization was widespread. According to Helen McCarthy, by the early 1930’s individual memberships reached 400, 000 and affiliate memberships reached more 3,000 from a wide variety of corporate bodies. Helen McCarthy, “Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain.” *The Historical Journal*, 50, no 4 (2007): 897.

¹¹⁰ League of Nations Union, “The League of Nations Union. Objects of Union. (Leaflet No. 1.)” (League of Nations Union, n.d), LNUMB, reel 20, vol 7/1, leaflet 1.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Union's mission was to promote the League of Nations and idea of world citizenship through education, propaganda campaigns, and social reform. Left-wing and radical-liberal contributors such as the Trades Union Congress, Ramsay MacDonald, George N. Barnes, and Leonard Woolf actively participated in this organization.

Well aware of the importance of the support of a knowledgeable public opinion, the League of Nations Union fashioned its education programs around a particular type of grassroots study group program that had gained popularity for its effectiveness in cultivating minority leadership in the United States. Unlike many of the self-help programs in Britain, these juntos focused on members leading and teaching each other rather than formal instruction.¹¹² By the early 1920s, the League of Nations Union also became an activist policy-making group that focused on informing and providing recommendations to the stalled governmental foreign policymakers and actively wed British foreign policymaking with the aims of the League.¹¹³

It was through popular civic and voluntary associations that the ideals of the League of Nations could be learned and the voices of the people heard. Just as the social psychology of the people had been seen to be conditioned for war and militant nationalism, Labour leaders promoted a new social psychology of internationalism that would better reflect a culture of more interdependent global relations. For League supporters, a truly democratic and transparent League of Nations could only come

¹¹² A 1923 guide provided by the League of Nations Union described the origins and function of study circle: "It is about fifteen years since study circles were first introduced into this country from America...Broadly speaking, a study circle may be defined as a small group of friends...for a specific number of occasions...for the systematic discussion of a definite subject with the help of a specially prepared text-book, and under the guidance of one of their number whom they have appointed their leader." *Hints for Study Circle Leaders*. No. 14 2nd. ed. (October, 1923) 2-3.

¹¹³ Birn, *The League of Nations Union, 1918-1945*, 40.

into being if the British people—and in particular, those within the labour movement—cultivated a new international frame of mind that was not based on an old paradigm of imperialist internationalism. A pamphlet written by Ramsay MacDonald illustrated the general tenor of the Labour party’s propaganda throughout the interwar period that intended to prepare British citizens for the new role they were to have in diplomacy. “The time has come for treating foreign affairs as ordinary parts of our national life, for pursuing a policy of open frankness regarding them, and for compelling the people to assume responsibility for their relations with their neighbours.”¹¹⁴ MacDonald spoke about the need to integrate foreign affairs into ordinary life and to change the very attitude of the British people and making them “assume responsibility” for relations once taken care of by the governments.

Knowing that the power of tradition and habit can be unyielding to the social psychology of the masses, new habits of mind had to be developed upon familiar traditions, collective interests, and cultures. The Labour party tried to bridge the gap between the old and the new order by relating familiar conceptual models of international working class associations with the new international order of the League. Drawing upon familiar modes of international solidarity and social reform, the Labour party members tried to make this conception of world citizenship more meaningful to the public sphere. Labour supporter and League of Nations advocate C. Delisle Burns drew upon what he saw as a familiar internationalist “frame of mind” already inherent in the psychology of ordinary people: “The international mind has developed in the Labour Movement not because of any abstract theory, but because of practical experience. It has in practice been found in international gatherings that men

¹¹⁴ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *A Policy for the Labour Party* (London: Leonard Parsons, 1920), 120.

of different nations can and do reach similar conclusions in regard to problems which are common to all.”¹¹⁵ Not only did his mention of the well established international spirit of the labour movements serve as a familiar analogy, but it served as a working example of how to promote a new way of thinking beyond class, party, and national lines.

Labour leaders thought that the working class had inherited traits that gave them not only a distinct advantage over understanding the true international virtues of the League, but an obligation to the wider British community to uphold and guide League proceedings based on these principles. In an undated circular put out by an international labour body called the Conference upon Reparations, whose representatives included the likes of Arthur Henderson, Ramsay MacDonald, Thomas Shaw, and J.H. Thomas, the writers call upon the working class’s traditional position as a political outsider to guide international proceedings normally laden with vested interests of political leaders. They argued that, “The Working Class, being more disinterested, less Jingo, and more international in its ideas, ought to guide the negotiations into more fruitful channels, including arbitration on questions of law or fact if agreement is found not to be possible, and press its decisions upon the Governments with all its available influence.”¹¹⁶ Not only was the working class seen as “disinterested,” “less jingo” and “more international,” but they were encouraged to press decisions when the political leaders were all muddled by their own competing

¹¹⁵ C. Delisle Burns, “The International Mind,” in *The Book of the Labour Party, Its History, Growth, Policy, and Leaders*, ed. Herbert Tracey, vol. 3 (London: Caxton Publishing Company, limited, 1925), 54-55.

¹¹⁶ The Conference upon Reparations, “Reparations,” 1919, PRO 30/69/111, Public Records Office, National Archives Kew: UK.

interests to the point of indecision. The League of Nations became a means for the Labour party to integrate the working class into society and broaden the meaning of British citizenship. By making the League's concept of internationalism relevant to the organized working class, the Labour party not only attempted to unite the interests of the masses in international bodies but also the British nation.

Labour and radical liberals were involved with the League of Nations Union, which was a grassroots propaganda campaign targeting the working class. A manifesto printed in a leaflet published by the League of Nations Union entitled *The Co-Operation of Labour with the League of Nations Union* argued that the League of Nations drew upon familiar working class international associations to promote new ones. The unauthored manifesto read: "The League of Nations will not supplant the "Internationale," but will supplement it. It will help to do amongst the Governments what the "Internationale" is seeking to do in the industrial world."¹¹⁷ The League of Nations was propagandized as something that built upon and extended the same type of commitment and solidarity already established by the "Internationale."

Labour members involved in the propaganda effort may have sometimes used the language of class to translate the idea of internationalism to certain populations, but class did not serve as a political end in itself. One of the League of Nations Union's principles listed in the same manifesto read that the League of Nations "can only succeed if it be a real League of Peoples, not merely a League of Governments. To this end it is necessary that every individual shall take an instructed and active interest, till he can say "This is my League through which I bring my influence to

¹¹⁷ League of Nations Union, "The Co-operation of Labour with the League of Nations Union. (Leaflet No 6)" (League of Nations Union, 1920), LNUMB. reel 20, vol 7/1, item 25.

bear on international politics to ensure peace and to prevent war.”¹¹⁸ Working alongside organizations such as the League of Nations Union, the Labour party hoped to create informed, democratic, and international minds.

These internationally educated minds would provide the voices for a British public opinion that was amicable to a peaceful international society. Other pamphlets the distributed by League of Nations Union which provided support for this effort had such titles as “An Appeal to ‘The Nobodies’” (1920), “The League of Nations and Industrial Peace” (1920), and “Men and Women! This is YOUR Question” (1923). For League supporters, it would only succeed if it became a “real League of Peoples” and not an international organ representing the vested interests of a class or government official.¹¹⁹ The latent internationalist spirit may have gained its inspiration and foundation from a specific class movement, but for Labour especially, it ultimately intended to go beyond class in ambitions and audience.

Internationalism and a new British imperial patriotism

The Left not only invoked familiar models of social relations to capture the attention of ordinary Britishers, it integrated the idea of a world citizen to temper domestic fears about degeneration at home. After the war, Bolshevism challenged diplomatic relations and domestic stability within the country as well. Even though Conservatives exploited this “red scare” to raise suspicions about the Labour party’s relationship with the Third International, Labour members were quick to try to deny any accusations that members of the labour movement were associated with the Third

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ See the League of Nations Union archival holdings Volume 7/3 at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, London, UK.

International.¹²⁰ John Clynes, a prominent labour MP, tried to dispel claims that the labour movement was overrun with communists at a 1925 League of Nations Union meeting. He thought that the cause of the labour unrest and the mass attraction to the idea of joining the Third International was less politically motivated as much as it was motivated by practical strategy. For a activist vying for changes in domestic policy, it was advantageous for the more radical working class to be associated with a controversial international body that opposed the *status quo* at home. Clynes argued that their attraction to “Bolshevism” was caused by a lack of knowledge about the benefits available to them by the League of Nations to address socioeconomic problems. The attraction to Bolshevism was not political or ideological, but social:

The working classes of this country were quite unaware of the great sum of human good that had resulted in Geneva...A peril that had nothing more than a mere colour in it need not frighten the people. If there was any peril at all it arose from poverty, discontent, and the actual hardships which, unhappily, abounded in the life of millions of people in this country. The discussions at the Liverpool conference has showed how little the work of the League of Nations was really understood in certain quarters, and how deep and foolish was the suspicion with which it was regarded.¹²¹

The socioeconomic misery compounded the ideological misdirection caused by a lack of education about the League of Nations. The working class’s internationalist ties to Bolshevism were related to their interests in solving domestic problems and not as a

¹²⁰ This was not terribly difficult for the Conservatives to exploit. The long debates in the Independent Labour party’s conferences during the early 1920’ over whether they should join the Third International only made matters worse for the Labour party attempting to establish itself as a serious alternative to the conservative dominate parliament. Considering the “red scare” felt by western democracies toward communism, it from the outside made the Labour party seem suspicious if only by association throughout the interwar period. While not wanting to completely alienate the ILP, MacDonald held steadfast against all claims of membership or alliance with the Comintern, which he thought, was no less oppressive and belligerent than imperialists. While the degree to which the media fueled “red scare” contributed to the Labour Party’s electoral loss is debatable, it did illustrate the overwhelming cloud of anxiety in British society over how to define its internationalism without losing national sovereignty and domestic stability.

¹²¹ “Work of the League of Nations. Mr. Clynes on Labour Suspicions ,” *The Times*, October 8, 1925, 16.

result of a political ideal. In fact, for Clynes, the domestic unrest and the appeal of Bolshevism by some sectors of the working class did not stem from differences in ideas or ideologies. The working class' interest in Bolshevism was merely a strategy so that it could maintain its place as the minority opposition in domestic politics. The power of the League of Nations to promote domestic unity lay in its ability to instill the idea of international civic responsibility through its humanitarian works.

The League of Nations and its branches may have been designed to buffer competing interests internationally, but it also served as an impartial intermediary intending to promote a deeper citizenship. When he was faced with strike activity in 1925, Arthur Henderson described how the enforcement of labour rights should rest with the International Labour Organisation instead of with the people themselves. He argued that they "should need to subordinate private and sectional interests to public and national well-being, and to create a united people inspired by a single-minded devotion to the service of the commonweal."¹²² Even though Henderson was speaking about domestic problems, his solution reflected similar aims for the resolution of international unrest. The cultivation of "national well-being" could only be established by relinquishing the fight for the protection of individual interests to spirited labour rights organizations such as the International Labour Office.¹²³

¹²² Arthur Henderson, "A Parliament of Industry. Mr. Henderson on Causes of Unrest.," *The Times*, May 15, 1925, 11.

¹²³ In fact, for the Labour party, foreign affairs were inseparable from domestic policy. In a *Times* report of a demonstration greeting the newly elected members of the minority government, Ramsay MacDonald attempted to link the problems of unemployment with the mismanagement of foreign trade. Criticizing the majority government, MacDonald noted that "there is the great question that afflicts us at home, mixed up inextricably with foreign affairs—the question of the unemployed... They have neglected to develop normal trade, as was shown by Sir Allan Smith's letter of protest addressed a few months ago to the Tory Government. They have allowed human material to deteriorate; the child from school put on the streets, the man and woman of skill coarsened, hardened, and stiffened by lack

The highest form of patriotism was not about strategizing to maintain a balance of power or for economic national self-interest, but the cultivation of an internationalism based on service and world citizenship. As C. Delisle Burns, a League of Nations supporter and Labour party member stated, “One’s country is then an instrument of service, not a bundle of interests and claims; and patriotism then means something less barbaric than it has meant in the past. That is the patriotism of Labour, and that patriotism is genuinely international.”¹²⁴

Without diluting or dismissing the primacy and collective unity of the British Empire by illustrating all that was bad about imperialism, the Left was able to diffuse it by identifying its exploitive and limiting factors and deeming them outmoded. The Labour party drew from an equally familiar humanitarian and internationalist national narrative to supplement a new “internationalist” history of the British Empire promoted and supported by the League of Nations. This new global history of the British Empire intended to invigorate a defunct isolationist and exceptionalist mode of thinking and policymaking. Ultimately, it intended to provide a familiar cognitive framework (or narrative) to segue into a paradigm of world citizenship hinged by the framework of the League.

In fact, the British as a people regardless of class were seen by League supporters as particularly fit for this transition to world citizenship because of the British tradition of ‘peaceful’ international relations within its empire. C. Delisle Burns contended that “the British Commonwealth is thus a brilliant and immortal

of practice.” MacDonald, Ramsay. Reported in “Labour on The Threshold,” *The Times*, January 09, 1924. The Labour party criticized the series of protectionist and “Imperial Preference” economic policies that had begun in 1915 on social welfare grounds.

¹²⁴ Burns, “The International Mind,” 51.

example of the organisation of peace, so its experience and its goodwill may assist other nations outside the Commonwealth to achieve the difficult task of establishing the peace of the whole of humanity.”¹²⁵ For Burns, the discourse and organ of the League of Nations provided a means to express a nationalism that avoided sounding like the Tory imperialists Labour not only ideologically disagreed with, but was the major party that they competed with for votes. While still appealing to the conditioned psychological associations that the idea of the empire invoked, Burns was able to avoid promoting imperialism. By deemphasizing the politically isolationist and elitist forms of British nationalism, he tried to put the empire back on a track based on its “brilliant and immortal” internationalist, humanitarian, and specifically labor past.

¹²⁵ C. Delisle Burns, “The British Commonwealth of Nations,” in *The Book of the Labour Party, Its History, Growth, Policy, and Leaders*, ed. Tracey, Herbert, vol. 3 (London: Caxton Publishing Company, limited, 1925), 86.

Chapter 4: The League and a New Social Imperialism

You are the only league of nations that has ever existed; and if the line that I am sketching here is correct you are going to be a greater league of nations in the future; and if you are true to your old traditions of self-government and freedom, and to this vision of your future and your mission, who knows that you may not exercise far greater and more beneficent influence on the history of mankind.

–General Jan Christiaan Smuts (1917)¹²⁶

The civilizing mission continued to lie at the heart of prewar imperial propaganda. Yet by the turn of the twentieth century, the same liberal agenda of “civilizing the native” essentially turned inward to manage the health and unity of the British people themselves instead of the empire abroad. During the years leading up to the war, a jingoist imperialist culture was the motivating theme for the social and educational reforms that many thought were necessary to compete with the other European empires. From chauvinist education, to scouting groups, to imperially themed voluntary associations, these groups embodied the two-fold agenda of fortifying the imperial projects abroad and resolving the increasingly poor social conditions at home. The end of the war altered the political (and largely imperial) debate over these reforms. Even though national efficiency and social reform were even more necessary for reconstruction, they could no longer be linked to an elitist imperial program. The whole culture based on the League of Nations idea not only helped provide an alternative solution to the growing social problems at home, but it also helped bridge a widening gap between the needs of the British people and the rest of the empire.

¹²⁶ Jan Christiaan Smuts, *The British Commonwealth of Nations* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 10.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the quality of British education had undergone increased scrutiny. Along with demonstrating Britain's increasing failure to find peaceful imperial solutions between itself and its dependents, the Boer War highlighted the poor physical health and education of the British people. Military drilling and physical training became incorporated into the elementary code of 1871 and its supplementary code in 1902 respectively.¹²⁷ Between the years 1872-1914, the curriculum incorporated imperial history as a way for students to be taught "how the British nation grew up, and how the mother country in her turn has founded daughter countries beyond the seas."¹²⁸ Moreover, attendance in London's public schools had improved on average to 88% by 1904 from rates well below 80% only years before.¹²⁹

That is not to say that British officials ignored education in the empire. Education had always been part of the liberal empire's "civilizing" mission in the nineteenth century in the form of missionary work, anti-slavery leagues, and other humanitarian ventures.¹³⁰ By the early twentieth century, imperial education once again became a key aspect to strengthening imperial unity, but now it served an additional purpose of improving the poor and inconsistent educational standards at home. Organizations like the League of Empire and the Victoria League were formed at the height of the Boer War (1899-1902) where questions about the strength of imperial unity were at its highest. These organizations, like many others formed

¹²⁷ Quoted in Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, 1st ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2005), 114.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹³⁰ Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 7.

during this period, linked social reforms in education to imperial concerns and national efficiency at home.

The League of Empire was a penpal club formed in 1901 for children in Britain and in the colonies. This organization later became the clearinghouse for standards in imperial education. It was also one of the participants in the 1911 Imperial Education Conference, which sought to standardize educational measures and curricula across the empire.¹³¹ The Victoria League's mission, on the other hand was somewhat broader in scope, but similar in mission. The Victoria League, also formed in 1901, aspired to aid in imperial projects that would unite the diverse peoples of the empire and promote the civilizing virtues of Britishness. They sought to "create a better understanding" between themselves and the Dominion peoples. By dedicating itself to "practical" imperial work such as education and reform, it could help unite Britain and the Dominions peoples under a stronger bond of imperial subjecthood.¹³²

Yet educational reforms during the years just prior to the war's outbreak, especially in the sciences, were complicated by questions vocalized by many conservatives over the moral consequences of supporting such initiatives. British educationists increasingly admired Germany's technical thoroughness and ability to maximize the educational and material potential of its workforce to become a significant military and industrial competitor. The war also sparked debate among people in the British education and scientific community who on one hand admired

¹³¹ Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, 113.

¹³² Victoria League Executive Committee Minutes 1901-1903. "Minutes of a "preliminary meeting" on 2 April 1901," quoted in Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 49.

Germany's militaristic efficiency but loathed how this characteristic manifested itself politically. As one commentator observed in 1916 in the *Times Educational Supplement*, "[i]n the organization of material resources Germany has won well-merited admiration, but in regard to moral conduct, and in regard to all that art of dealing with other men and other nations which is closely allied to moral conduct, she has won for herself the horror of the civilized world."¹³³ While embodying the efficiency of a modern civilized state, it had unleashed what was widely observed as the most uncivilized behaviors in foreign policy.

After the war, the idea of civilization would again serve as a defining marker in postwar imperial propaganda and reforms. Yet now, the national efficiency and social reform that such a standard had shaped prewar imperial culture could no longer be married to a chauvinistic imperial ideology. From the growing political influence of Left-wing politicians to the war itself, every aspect of imperial culture that had been built up to relate the benefits of the empire to the British people had been either discredited or destroyed. Politically, the idea that "western civilization" was the reigning standard was compromised. Also being questioned were the policies of national efficiency and social reform. While improving the standards of living of the British people, they had been based on a racialized hierarchy of efficiency and nationalism. Intellectually and culturally, the stereotypes about race and its relationship to civilized behavior and the ability to self-govern had changed. The League of Nations provided an alternative way to conceptualize postwar imperial relationships in political terms as well as in popular terms. Coalition and Right-wing

¹³³ *Times Educational Supplement*, 7 September 1916, 113, cited in Anna-Katherina Mayer, "Moralizing Science: The Uses of Science's Past in National Education in the 1920s," *British Journal for the History of Science* 30 (1997): 51.

officials now linked national efficiency and social reform to the League of Nations and the liberal empire's long history of humanitarian social reform and education at home *and* abroad.

A new commitment to social reform and national efficiency

The Left may have taken up the idea of an internationalist vision of the empire as its own, but this vision was also important to the conservative imperialist's attempt to energize a less hostile notion of the empire and the people's relationship to it. In a 1923 lecture, titled "The Moral Basis of the League of Nations," Lord Robert Cecil proclaimed to an audience gathered for Empire Day that the British Empire served as the ideal model for the League of Nations. "It is peculiarly appropriate" he said, "that this lecture should be delivered on Empire Day. The British Empire is not only a political entity, it is a great example of how nations can be held together without force, merely by the desire to co-operate for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the empire and for the advancement at large."¹³⁴ Like many of his contemporary League supporters, Cecil thought the empire's humanitarian tradition exemplified not only the right human relations, but also international relations.

By juxtaposing Britain's history of moral (and often religious) humanitarian groups with the League, Cecil also tried to emphasize a continuity of a particular vein of imperial ideology that survived the war when many aspects of popular imperialism had not. In fact, that was not too far from the truth. Only the imperialist leagues and associations that embraced a gentler and less militaristic tone such as the Victoria

¹³⁴ Edgar Algernon Robert Cecil, *The Moral Basis of the League of Nations; the Essex Hall Lecture, 1923* (London, The Lindsey Press, 1923), 7.

League survived the First World War. Unlike the more militaristic leagues and clubs that served as the focal points for Edwardian social imperialist patriotism and efficiency, the patriotic leagues lasting beyond the war were the ones that espoused virtues of imperial inclusion instead of militant British patriotism.¹³⁵ They stressed widespread participation in the imperial project, rather than passive discussion. These organizations depoliticized notions of nationality based on chauvinism and race and bolstered similar views of the British Empire “based on spiritual ties and mutual social service, a “community of citizens.”¹³⁶

In fact, these groups demonstrated a kind of solid efficiency that could withstand war and provided solutions to preventing future ones. These voluntary humanitarian societies, associations, and organizations working before and during the war were not only cited as consultants to the League for questions on organization, but active members of the League. In a publication meant to educate the public about the League of Nations, Beatrice Bradfield credited these agencies with providing the framework for its humanitarian organizations. She noted that “the representative of the voluntary associations give full reports of their work to and take a large share in the liberations of the Committee; the magnificent work done by these Societies is well known, and a great impetus is to be given to it by this close relationship....”¹³⁷

Organizers could have easily modeled the League on the efficient and “rational”

¹³⁵ See: Matthew Craig Hendley, “Patriotic Leagues and the Evolution of Popular Patriotism and Imperialism in Great Britain, 1914 -1932” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1998).

¹³⁶ Frank Trentmann, “After the Nation-State: Citizenship, Empire and Global Coordination in the New Internationalism, 1914-1930,” in *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880-1950*, ed. Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 36.

¹³⁷ Beatrice Bradfield, *A Little Book of the League of Nations, 1920-1927*. (London: P.S. King & Son, 1927), 29-30.

philosophy that also ran the manufacturing plant in Germany as a model, but instead organizers relied on the reputation and efficiency of those who worked in humanitarian organizations.

While strong plans to achieve efficiency and social reform may have been able to solve the shortsighted aims of the state, they did not address the psychosocial factor of human interests that could easily deride them.¹³⁸ While writing about political democracy in Britain, L.T. Hobhouse reinforced this point. He thought that political democracy could only be obtained through an international government whose every function draws from the interests of individuals within those larger groups. In “every function [there is] something that appeals intimately to those particularly interested in it, and thereby calls out their public spirit and intelligence to better effect than the mixed and confused appeal of ordinary State politics.”¹³⁹ Addressing common international human interests could diffuse the often defensive and viciously nationalistic passions and help return patriotism to its place among the healthy communal identifications that preserved democracy within individual states.¹⁴⁰

Britain’s use of social reform as a tool to reduce the friction within the empire caused by competing group interests was not itself replaced by the League of Nations; it was refined by and assisted by it. The League of Nations provided impartial

¹³⁸ Also see again Robert Cecil when he spoke about those influenced by “the school of Treitschke and Bernhardt”: “Their conception was that German policy must be guided by the direct and immediate self-interest of the German State. Such a policy is not only immoral, it is foolish and futile to the last degree. It ultimately produced the ruin of Germany.” Edgar Algernon Robert Cecil, *The Moral Basis of the League of Nations; the Essex Hall Lecture, 1923* (London, The Lindsey Press, 1923), 14-15.

¹³⁹ L.T. Hobhouse, *The Elements of Social Justice* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 239.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

institutions that could address transnational human welfare concerns. J.F. Unstead argued that it set into place institutions for “removing causes of friction and arranging for common action in a number of spheres.”¹⁴¹ The League’s International Labour Office, the Health Organization the International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation, Permanent Central Opium Board, the Commission for Refugees, and the Slavery Commission all focused on remedying and preventing the psychological, biological, and intellectual problems that were common to all people.

The “causes of friction” that Unstead was specifically writing about here were not only the problems erupting between states, but within the empire itself. Writing specifically about Britain’s experience with managing the rise in nationalist consciousness in India and the African dependencies, Unstead thought that the empire had to cease its “past dominance” and to ally itself with the growing and inevitable development of its dependents. The League’s organizations decentralized the welfare responsibilities formally held by state powers like Britain.¹⁴² As an impartial political institution, the League helped resolve the problems of possible ignorance and corruptibility of public opinion that had often interfered with the formation of a responsible empire.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ J.F. Unstead, “Geography and the League of Nations,” in *The Study and Teaching of International Relations*, League of Nations Union Pamphlet Series no. 107 (London: League of Nations Union, 1923), 19. Box: CDGB Great Britain League of Nations Union Pamphlet Series #82-276 (1922-1929); folder: Pamphlet Series [1]: #82-113. Swarthmore Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA. From here on out, this collection will be referred to as SPC.

¹⁴² See for example: Pyrs Gruffudd, “‘A Crusade Against Consumption’: Environment, Health and Social Reform in Wales, 1900-1939,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 21, no. 1 (January 1995): 39-54 and for a discussion relevant to but beyond the time period covered in this study see chapter five “Hungry England and Planning for a World of Plenty,” in James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁴³ See the following for a similar criticism of the British government’s unproductive approach to imperial affairs and the turning to the League for remedy: Roth Williams, *The Technique of the League*

Education and creating an international empire

League supporters noted that the people of the British Empire were primed for leading the world even though its place in the world could no longer be measured by economic or military dominance. Yet, the British people first needed to understand this new value that qualified the empire for its top place in world affairs. In an article documenting a meeting between Robert Cecil and Woodrow Wilson, Cecil noted that “if the British people show they are in earnest in pressing forward this reform, they will carry it through, as they have carried it through many another scheme for the freedom and improvement of mankind.”¹⁴⁴ For Cecil, the actions of the British people could serve as an example to the world for what to strive for in international social reform, but they first had to show that they were “in earnest in pressing forward this reform.” The British people had to demonstrate an active interest and support for these new foreign policies being developed by the League of Nations officials.

The reform and regulatory institutions of the League encouraged the creation of a type of civic society that had gotten stifled by the prewar and wartime imperial policies and culture. In a tract called *The League of Nations To-Day: Its Growth, Record and Relation to British Policy*, Roth Williams, also known as K. Zilliacus, wrote about the League of Nations and how it could be used to change a stymied and corrupted British foreign policy. Zilliacus argued that the decentralized nature of the League’s Independent Assemblies maintained an efficient body of institutions largely

of Nations, League of Nations Union Pamphlet Series no. 144 (London: League of Nations Union, 1923), 19-20. SPC, Box: CDGB Great Britain League of Nations Union Pamphlet Series #82-276 (1922-1929); folder: Pamphlet Series [1]: #114-150.

¹⁴⁴“President Wilson in London,” *The Times*, December 27, 1918, 7.

working independently but all agreeing on the League's basic principles.¹⁴⁵ It would also have an instructive quality for the public voting on the representatives for the Assembly itself:

What is needed here, as elsewhere, is an intelligent and active public opinion, among all parties, both in Parliament and outside, a public opinion well informed on facts, knowing what it wants and determined to get it. In such an atmosphere there would be no difficulty in composing a perfectly satisfactory delegation to the Assembly, adequately supported by expert and clerical assistance, and armed with a full programme and bold instructions.¹⁴⁶

For Zilliacus and others, an educated and active public opinion was vital to the proper governance of world and imperial affairs. It reintroduced a type of liberal citizenship as the basis for creating an efficient state. This citizenship was based on the association and mutual dependency of the state and the organized, yet informed interests of the people within it.

Focusing on reforms in education was key to promoting a more efficiently run nation which at the same time did not sacrifice the moral integrity of the British people. Covering the new reforms in education in Britain, *The Times* reported on a paper delivered by T.P. Nunn at the Educational Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The paper argued that Germany, the United States, and Italy's Fascist regime used public education to "primarily establish the interests of the community as a whole" while in England such an education to foster a "national spirit" was of very little need.¹⁴⁷ Now after the war, Nunn observed that the "great

¹⁴⁵ The League of Nation's Independent Assemblies Zilliacus is referring to here are the different offices of the League of Nations that focus on a particular special interest such as labor or drug trafficking.

¹⁴⁶ K. Zilliacus, *The League of Nations to-Day, Its Growth, Record and Relation to British Foreign Policy* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1923), 164.

¹⁴⁷ "The Advance of Education. Psychological Aspects," *The Times*, August 10, 1926, 8.

problem in the present and the immediate future was to harmonize this newer with the older educational motives, to reconcile free individual development with the organization needed for national strength, and the development of the national life with international cooperation.”¹⁴⁸

Discussing the genealogy of the English people’s “partnerships” with other nations starting from its union with the Scots and the Welsh to the postwar British Commonwealth of Nations, Maxwell Garnett noted how all of these were also achieving nationalities of their own. The League of Nations was not something that had to be freshly introduced to the British people because it embodied in form something that was already part of a progression of an ever-outward and increasingly decentralized creation of “patriotisms” existing in the empire. They have had a long history of a “union of other nations with their own.”¹⁴⁹ He observed that, “for the Englishman, for the Britisher, for the citizens of the British Commonwealth of nations, there can be no valid reason why the union of nations and the building of loyalties out of present patriotisms should not keep pace with the widening of individual human interests.”¹⁵⁰

Rather than assume that to cultivate national efficiency one had to improve the material conditions, educationists after the war emphasized the importance of personality and the creation of an active imperial citizenship. This citizenship was shaped by the values and the contributions of the broader empire. Among other goals, this educational scheme aimed to shape a kind of citizenship that fostered an

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁹ Garnett, *Patriotism*, 20.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 20-21.

awareness of the international, economic, and political climates that were a condition of national efficiency at home. It aspired to create an awareness of the citizen's "relationship to the other constituent parts of the Commonwealth of British nations called the empire and the degree to which it can in the future enter into closer relations with other civilized nations for the just treatment of less developed races, for the furtherance of international co-operation."¹⁵¹

Education became the means for the British people at home and abroad to foster a common imperial citizenship that at the same time did not compromise the process of strengthening national culture. Like many of his contemporaries, H. A. L. Fisher turned to education to cultivate an imperial culture based on a common focus on improving and standardizing education throughout the empire. He argued that "if the unity of the state was founded in education, so must also be the unity of the empire. I should like to see equality of educational opportunities all through the empire."¹⁵² Only a year before, Fisher had sponsored the 1918 Education Act, which made secondary education compulsory for children up to the age of 14. He recognized that such measures could not stop at the British state level, but must be extended to throughout the empire.¹⁵³

In fact, this new focus on creating educated, more historically minded, and engaged imperial citizens was also clearly reflected in the rise in the citizenship education throughout Britain and the empire. With a reasonable level of success, the

¹⁵¹ "The Final Report of the Adult Education Committee," cited in Basil A. Yeaxlee, *The World of Today. An Educated Nation*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1921). 21.

¹⁵² Herbert A.L. Fisher, Opening Address, in *Imperial Education Conference* (The Library, Australia House, Strand W.C. 1, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, June 11, 1919), 4.

¹⁵³ Pugh, *State and Society*, 177.

League of Nations Union helped revise textbooks that taught a transnational and less jingoist, but still patriotic historical narrative in efforts to promote world citizenship.¹⁵⁴ The imperial textbooks also projected more tempered attitudes about race and the British Empire. Moreover, space was often granted in the textbooks for individual national narratives when discussing Dominion contributions to the war.¹⁵⁵

Changes were also taking place on a wider imperial level. The 1919 curriculum for the Imperial Education Conference focused on equitable exchanges in education in the schools in the empire. This Conference emphasized more acceptance of colonial diversity instead of being very insular and based on colonial assimilation. Before the war, an imperial educationist focused on providing a domestic education that would “not mainly to foster the imperial sentiment, but to give practical effect to that imperial sentiment by bringing together the knowledge and experience of different parts of the British Empire.”¹⁵⁶ The proposed program was based on a uniformity and appropriation of information and education about the empire for domestic needs. After the war, the emphasis in its educational schemes shifted to more cooperation with Dominion and colonial educational institutions. It was argued that they “do not seek uniformity in our educational thinking, there is a need of

¹⁵⁴ Michael Williams and Graham Humphrys, ed., *Citizenship Education and Lifelong Learning: Power and Place* (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 20-23.; Derek Benjamin Heater, *A History of Education for Citizenship* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

¹⁵⁵ This is especially true in the Australian and New Zealand case, where national consciousness was most acute. *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience* (London: Routledge, 1993), 86, 91.

¹⁵⁶ “Speech by the President of the Board of Education, opening the afternoon sessions of the conference,” in *Report of the Imperial Education Conference 1911*, (Hansard, May 2, 1911), 46.

greater co-operation and of greater unity in purpose.”¹⁵⁷ The subtle difference between these two well-received objectives was the shift from trying to create an empire-wide consensus on imperial education to one that supported the variety of educational schemes in each territory under the umbrella of imperial cooperation. Educational cooperation was used as an anchor for the development of a common imperial citizenship based on local reform initiatives throughout the empire.¹⁵⁸

Towards an imperial partnership

During the 1921 Imperial Conference, David Lloyd George announced to his audience, “that there was a time when Downing Street controlled the empire; to-day the empire is in charge of Downing Street.”¹⁵⁹ While surely this remark was made to calm the growing nationalist agitation emanating from all ends of the empire, its essential claim that Downing Street relied on the cooperation of its dependents had some truth to it. The short postwar market bubble burst in 1920 with too many goods produced and not enough foreign customers. By 1921, unemployment skyrocketed to

¹⁵⁷ Colonel H.M. Tory, "Functions of an Imperial Education Bureau," in *Report of the Imperial Education Conference 1919* (The Library, Australia House, Strand W.C. 1, London, June 11, 1919), 6.

¹⁵⁸ Of course this could be understood as a gloss at least in terms of the British Empire's management of its colonial (non-Dominion) states. By 1923, British educational policy in Africa adopted the principle of adaptation in its curriculum that intended to provide a more culturally sensitive education. Yet in the end, it was widely criticized by many critics to function to intentionally slow down socioeconomic development in places like Africa. This criticism, however, is not as clear-cut. As the scholar, Clive Whitehead notes that there “are sound reasons for claiming that British policy was motivated more by the Indian experience than by any premeditated desire to subjugate Africans.” Clive Whitehead “The historiography of British Imperial education policy, Part II: Africa and the Rest of the Colonial Empire.” *History of Education* (July, 2005), vol. 34, no. 4, 441–454, 442.

¹⁵⁹ Lloyd George, David, “The Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd George, June 20, 1921,” in *Speeches and Documents on the British Dominions 1918-1931*, ed. Arthur Berriedale Keith, (presented at the Imperial Conference 1921, London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 46.

2 million or 17% of the labor force.¹⁶⁰ Even the government-backed education proposals and housing projects succumbed to the financial retrenchment, if they had not already been abandoned because of labor shortages.¹⁶¹ Ultimately, the overseas slump and the staggering unemployment made the empire markets seem like better prospects for British commerce.

Between the wars, British officials were doing more than attempting to articulate the new legal and political status of the Dominions, India, and the Crown Colonies; they were also trying to shape a new meaning of the empire in the everyday lives of the British people. As Denis Jude observes,

By 1924 the balance of trade in British manufacturers showed a surplus of £262 million with the empire as a whole. Within this total there was a surplus of £75 million with India, of £120.6 million with the dominions, and of £76.5 million with the rest of the empire. Between 1925 and 1929, the empire was taking in 37.2 per cent of all British exports—chiefly manufactured goods (of which the dominions received 20.6 per cent), and Britain was receiving from the whole Empire imports—mainly food and raw materials—totaling 32.9 per cent, including 16.9 percent from the dominions.¹⁶²

The significance of these statistics should not be disregarded. Since 1916, the empire had become an important source for British trade and in times of economic crisis it would continue to be so. From the British Empire Producers Organisation (1916), the empire Resources Development Committee (1922), to the 1924 British Empire Wembley Exhibition, all of these bear witness to the to importance of the empire-Commonwealth trading connection.

¹⁶⁰ Pugh, *State and Society*, 189.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁶² Judd, *Empire*, 280.

For the purposes of security, imperial unity was just as important. Up until the latter half of 1921, widespread industrial unrest fueled fears throughout the country that a revolution was imminent, and these concerns would intermittently continue until after the General Strike in 1926.¹⁶³ The whole system of wartime “imperial unity” through the nationalization of heavy industry at home and further political concessions for soldiers with the empire, had virtually unraveled. The 1918-1922 coalition government was stymied by widespread concerns and criticisms over its use of expenditures for an army now responsible for an even greater expanse of territory. Rebellions flared in Mesopotamia and Egypt during the early years of 1920, and the government had to manage stronger nationalist appeals and assertions for Home Rule in India and Ireland.¹⁶⁴ The Dominions and colonies were as reluctant to acquiesce to a centralized imperial system just as much as the British people were distasteful of more war and were more interested in the government improving the faltering economy.

The liberal empire was, again, in crisis. Many critics thought that Liberalism as an institution by the end of the war (if not already before) had gotten corrupted. They thought that the empire was a long way off from the principles of liberal democracy that had been the bedrock of the spread of British civilization at home and abroad. Writing about his tempered liberalism as a result of the war, Gilbert Murray wanted British affairs to return to the qualities of British Liberalism that preserved civilization rather than destroyed it. He thought that the government “must get back to the standard of veracity, of consistency of honesty and economy, and of intellectual

¹⁶³ Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

competence, that we had from Peel or Lord Salisbury, or Gladstone...we need in foreign policy and home policy a higher standard than we had before, the standard implied by the League of Nations in international affairs and the ideal of Co-operation in domestic affairs.”¹⁶⁵

It was uncertain how the change to imperial politics was to be done, but it was clear that imperial relations had to change if Britain and the empire were going to weather the chaotic political and social storms of the postwar period. Reporting on a meeting at the House of Lords in 1920, *The Times* transcribed Milner’s argument about how crucial it was for the empire to seek out ways to be unified without sacrificing the rights of each Dominion or colony. Writing in the wake of increasing tensions with Ireland and India after the war, Milner hoped that the members of the upcoming Constitutional Conference in 1921 would consider a new type of imperial relations. He sought a relationship between Britain and its empire that could recognize a group’s instinct to band together based on like national interests without sacrificing the benefits of imperial unity. He hoped that the conference would provide “the British Empire with some organ of government based upon the recognition of the complete independence and equality of its different parts, but which, nevertheless, would enable them to act promptly and effectively when they were all agreed, and to exercise in peace...the beneficent and harmonious cooperation which was so brilliantly illustrated in the War.”¹⁶⁶ Rather than emphasize an imperial culture that

¹⁶⁵ Gilbert Murray, *The Problem of Foreign Policy: A Consideration of Present Dangers and the Best Methods for Meeting Them* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1921), 6-7.

¹⁶⁶ “League of Nations. Mr. Balfour's Statement. Lord Milner on Empire Relations,” *The Times*, June 18, 1920, 9.

created strict racial and national differences, this new postwar imperial culture now was based on the uncoerced “harmonious cooperation” of each state.

A critic of the government’s handling of the Indian nationalist agitations argued that if the British government recognized India’s traditional forms of political organization rather than stifle it, British officials will find that it will actually strengthen unity. Sir Frederick Lugard suggested an alternative to Britain’s armed force against the agitation over the implementation of the Government of India Act (1919) that occurred during the later months of 1921 through January of 1922. For Lugard, the British government should consider, “restoring that form of self-government to which India had been accustomed to for centuries, but on better and more efficient lines, safeguarding where need be by ever-decreasing British guidance, so that our responsibility for the illiterate millions may be discharged—while not denying to the politically-minded progressives those forms of Western democratic government in areas where they may offer prospects for success.”¹⁶⁷ These concessions validated the nationalist consciousness already simmering before the war and showed that race did not limit a group’s desire to form a nation if given the opportunity to freely develop a nationalist sentiment. Lugard suggested that officials tap into and reinforce Indian’s indigenous culture instead of trying to assimilate the Indians. The government should only be responsible for the social and economic

¹⁶⁷ Sir Frederick Lugard. “Peace in India. Self-Government By Native States,” *The Times*. January 21, 1922, 8. In the midst of growing unrest due to many Indian elites citing unfair compensation for its wartime contributions and greater self-government, the government of India Act of 1919 seemed to only worsen them. Rather than loosen its reign on the colony which it supposedly did by introducing the Dynarchy, the act seemed to strengthen it by centralizing foreign policy and security legislation on the part of the empire while giving the Government of India more jurisdiction over provincial affairs. Kevin Grant and Lisa Trivedi “A Question of Trust: The Government of India, the League of Nations, and Mohandas Gandhi,” in R.M. Douglas, Michael D. Callahan, Elizabeth Bishop. ed. *Imperialism on Trial International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective*, (Landham: Lexington Books, 2006), 26-27.

reforms necessary to support the needs of a population attempting to move towards self-government.

The whole cultures based on the principles of League of Nations ideas helped reclaim and reform a less contradictory notion of the liberal empire. It provided imperialists with the conceptual framework necessary to resituate the idea of empire based on the familiar constitutional principles of liberal internationalist law and popular association. A. F. Pollard, observed that the League of Nations would help “re-create the conditions of a century ago, restore the individual independence of a number of fairly equal Powers, and guarantee the commonwealth of nations against privy conspiracy and sedition in the form of separate groups and alliances.”¹⁶⁸ In fact, it was generally thought that the League of Nations could help divorce the links between imperialism, nationalism, and liberalism in Britain by returning the British Empire back to its political roots of classical liberalism. For widespread supporters of the League, there was a return to a liberal understanding of imperial differences between subject and citizen that “was to be protected and celebrated as a source of human strength and (largely metaphysical) unity.”¹⁶⁹

In fact, the League of Nations not only became a conceptual framework for imperialists to explain the vitality and legitimacy of the empire in a postwar world, but for explaining the more sustaining relations within the changing empire itself:

Just as the League is an organized whole composed of parts, so the British Commonwealth is an organism within it. The defensive power of the British Commonwealth is a real, but even so the lesser, part of the intrinsic value. Its

¹⁶⁸ A.F. Pollard, “The Balance of Power,” in *Essays in Liberalism Being the Lectures and Papers which were delivered at the Liberal Summer School at Oxford, 1922*. (London: W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1922), 32.

¹⁶⁹ Mandler, *The English National Character*, 145.

ultimate value lies in the contribution to progress which can result from the intimate association of peoples widely differing in their life, and yet possessing the sympathy that comes from a common mentality, race, language, and tradition.¹⁷⁰

Rather than build up its armaments, force onto its territories a single civilized ideal type as a “defensive measure,” the editorial’s author, Arthur Steel-Maitland, a former Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, pointed to the strength found in a common imperial mind and culture.” This more intangible and psychological understanding of the British constitution bridged the gaps existing between the variety of people living in the empire. It provided a more organic and sustaining “intimate association” based on a common imperial tradition.

Imperialists saw the League of Nations as a vehicle to help the dominions, and the colonies develop their own sound local nationalisms necessary for self-rule, without compromising imperial loyalty. In a 1925 League of Nations Union pamphlet, the author A. Berriedale Keith argued that the provisions of the League did not compromise the integrity of the empire; in fact, the provisions reinforced the gradual reforms in management and social work in its possessions. The “provisions regarding the empire tend to secure for the Dominions and India an opportunity of developing individuality and national sentiment and acquiring international recognition of these qualities, without derogating vitality from the essential unity of the empire.”¹⁷¹ The League’s provisions reinforced the empire’s long held imperial

¹⁷⁰ Arthur Steel-Maitland, “Lord Robert Cecil’s Challenge. British Empire Policy,” *The Times*, April 25, 1922; 8.

¹⁷¹ Berriedale Keith, *The Place of the Empire in the League of Nations*, no. 178 (London: League of Nations Union, 1925).

story intending to help the Dominions and India develop “individuality and national sentiment” without deteriorating their ties to the empire.

By reinforcing royalty and imperialism, the class, gender, national, and ethnic divisions were superseded by particular codes of conduct and duties that defined a civilized British subject. Stripped of its biological determinism, citizenship and subjecthood related to “a set of formal rights and obligations—bearing relationship between individuals and the nation state, but also as a language by means of which people can make claims on the political community concerning rights and duties, political and moral or ethical practices and criteria of membership.”¹⁷²

Writing about the development of the colonial administration, Leopold Amery described how the new international responsibilities were dependent on the same “civilizing mission” that had been once embraced by the empire.

The whole thing is a trusteeship or mandate, though the mandate is, in the main, not to an international commission sitting at Geneva, but to what I believe is an even more effective body—the Parliaments and public opinions of this country and of the empire. Now, in that work, I feel the rest of the empire should be so interested—and not only as spectators, but also I hope, in increasing measure, active partakers.¹⁷³

Amery invoked the heavily laden terms “trusteeship” and “mandate” that had once described the imperial mission a century before and would now set the course for the future one under new conditions. Just as Britain had guided the Dominion and colonial dependents into an active and informed citizenship, now the colonies had the tools to uphold a similar duty to the mandates they acquired as part of the League.

¹⁷² Keith McClelland and Sonya O. Rose, “Citizenship and Empire, 1867-1928,” in *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 277.

¹⁷³ L. S. Amery, “The Imperial Conference. Mr. Amery on The Colonies. Dominion Mandates,” *The Times*, October 23, 1926, 8.

The place of the British Empire in the League was, in essence, a template for conceptualizing the dependent's position within the empire itself. In fact, the League of Nations was the prime mover for this transition from "spectators" to "active partakers."

The League's focus on the psychosocial and humanitarian roots of the empire helped articulate a broader notion of imperial citizenship that was based on a common cultural heritage. Unlike the League's other members and mandated territories, all of Britain's subjects were primed to deal with the "evolution" of the League of Nations idea. It was argued by the League's supporters that all British subjects had been exposed to this vast, organic, relationship between the individual and the community, and it was called the British constitution. Writing about the League of Nations' evolution into an internationalist body upheld by public opinion, Austen Chamberlain conceived of the empire less in terms of hierarchy but of a shared mentality and culture:

To us who live under the British Constitution this idea of organic growth and of the gradual emergence of an unwritten law, supplementing and not seldom superseding the written word, is a familiar conception. Our whole Constitution, national and Imperial, depends upon it, and our Imperial union derives from its strength, and indeed the possibility of its existence. To foreign nations with a different history, with different institutions and traditions, and with other habits of thought, it is not so readily acceptable or even easily comprehensible.¹⁷⁴

Ideas, or the gradual emergence of a common psychology, was what defined the laws of the British constitution and not the other way around. This heritage implied by the British constitution suggested that this deeper cultural patriotism and duty did not emerge from laws being imposed on a person. Rather, it was through an organic

¹⁷⁴ Austen Chamberlain, *The League* (Glasgow: Pelican Press, 1926), 28.

cultivation of particular moral characteristics and behaviors of a whole group of people that only emerged *into* the “written word” afterwards.

The League’s postwar idea of civilization focused on remedying the psychosocial factors that prevented imperial integration and solidarity.¹⁷⁵ Missionaries, voluntary groups, and British officials failed to inoculate a single English ideal type in the people encountered during the “civilizing” interventions undertaken before the war. Instead, the idea of civilization increasingly became associated with culture and manners of behavior suitable for nationhood. In a transcript of a speech delivered at the 1926 Imperial Conference, Leo Amery described to the conference’s Dominion attendees how vital trusteeship had been to their development. He argued that, “we are bringing things forward, lifting people from the more elementary to the higher stages of civilization, preparing them for a better kind of life as ordinary citizens, preparing them also, by slow degrees, even for the opportunities of a greater measure of self-government.”¹⁷⁶ The dynamic and evolutionary nature of the empire lent itself to cultivating citizenship rather than preventing it. The League’s focus on this more inclusive idea of civilization corrected a version of imperial thought that emphasized an increasingly unjustifiable level of control and authority. It provided an alternative way to rationalize imperial rule over colonies seen as incapable of establishing an effective self-government. The League

¹⁷⁵ I am not arguing that race was not an issue, for it is true that it was still a source of great anxiety for even middle class liberals, but in regards to race as a political category it was increasingly becoming unfashionable if not a problematic watchword for fascism and National Socialism. As eugenicists became increasingly aware of the dangerous implications of German psychobiology and the cult of the “New Man” and the Aryan myth the more overt and politically charged association of biology, race, and nation were increasingly downplayed. See: Dan Stone. *Breeding Superman*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 111; Barbara Bush. *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance, 1919-1945* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 28.

¹⁷⁶ Amery, “The Imperial Conference. Mr. Amery on The Colonies. Dominion Mandates,” 8.

of Nation's focus on trusteeship and humanitarian intervention legitimized the effectiveness of the British Empire's own history of "successful" trusteeship.¹⁷⁷

Yet the League of Nation's institutions were not continuations of the Britain's "civilizing mission," but instead important factors contributing to the British Empire's need to re-envision itself after the war. The League of Nations idea and of its foundational principles served as a universal language that could be used by British officials to reassert the importance of empire in a larger and more complex international community. The growth of dominion nationalisms and in nationalist self-confidence in economic and political terms led to a transition from "Empire" to "Empire and Commonwealth" in 1926. At the 1926 Imperial conference, A.J. Balfour drafted, in what was to be called the 1926 Balfour Declaration, the statutes that established the status of the Dominions as self-governing nations within the empire. They were "equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."¹⁷⁸ Even here, at the moment where the British Empire took its first steps toward relinquishing political claim to what was to be one of many nations, the status of the commonwealth was still "united by a common allegiance to the Crown." By

¹⁷⁷ Even the Indian nationalist Gandhi who quickly grew critical of the League's efficacy invoked (even though inverted) the meaning of trusteeship in the mid-1920s. He invoked the League's principle's to demonstrate Britain's failure to bring about the economic and social development necessary to have a stable enough nation to self-govern. Kevin Grant and Lisa Trivedi "A Question of Trust: The Government of India, the League of Nations, and Mohandas Gandhi" in R. M. Douglass, Michael D. Callahan, Elizabeth Bishop. ed. *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective* (Landham: Lexington Books, 2006), 22-23.

¹⁷⁸ "Report of Inter-Imperial Relations Committee of the Imperial Conference, 1926," *The American Journal of International Law* 21, no. 2, Supplement: Official Documents (April 1927), 21, in JSTOR, <http://links.jstor.org/>.

1931, the Statute of Westminster would put into legal and constitutional practice the definitions and rights put forth by the Balfour Declaration (1926) at the 1926 Imperial Conference. In sum, the Declaration and the Statute of Westminster embodied the intrinsic liberal democratic values, and triumph, of the liberal empire.

While the degree to which the British person knew of the origins the tea in their cup or bread on their table can be debated, it cannot be argued that the idea of imperial unity and the empire in particular, had become *seen* as vital to postwar reconstruction. It was no longer possible to isolate the British public from domestic, international, or imperial affairs because the First World War had exposed all the relationships between Britain and the rest of the British Empire. The League of Nations and the whole popular culture that its supporter's aimed to create helped reinforce those links so that the British people would become better citizens of the British Empire in hopes of becoming better citizens of the world.

Chapter 5: Reflections on the End of Empire

The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.

—T.S. Eliot (1920)¹⁷⁹

Over the last ten years, historians have revisited the significance of the League of Nation's institutions in imperial affairs and the process of decolonization. I say *revisited* because the thinkers and politicians between the wars were very conscious of, if not anxious about, the effect that the League of Nation's institutions, mandates, and ideas would have on the already changing imperial order. John Darwin's survey of the complex debates surrounding the process of decolonization in the British Empire only points to the fact that the liberal empire's purported constitutional trajectory towards colonial "self-determination" was far from clear-cut.¹⁸⁰ In fact, Darwin asserts that there is no way to easily account for the informal empire in the grand liberal imperial narrative of a legal-constitutional transfer of sovereignty. He argues that such gaps makes any analysis based on the evolution of the traditional direction of imperial trusteeship solely based on the formal empire vacuous.¹⁸¹ However, recent attempts by the authors of the essays in the volume *Imperialism on Trial* do indirectly fill this gap. Here, they plot the challenges that the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission, and its successor, the United Nations

¹⁷⁹T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920), 42-53; 44.

¹⁸⁰ John Darwin, "Decolonization and the End of Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Robin W. Winks and Alaine Low (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. V; 541-557.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 542.

Trustee Council had on the process of decolonization.¹⁸² Yet in the prevailing scholarly literature, the view that the cultural transformations of the League's idea of trusteeship at home figures centrally along the process of constitutional decolonization, is not so much rejected as overlooked.

It is not intended here to make a judgment about the nature of the very fragmented process of decolonization that continued to happen well past the Second World War. Yet this thesis does propose to rethink the relationship between the cultural relevance of the British constitution in the process of decolonization as it relates to the 1931 Statute of Westminster. This statute drew from the terms outlined in the Balfour Declaration (1926) at the 1926 Imperial Conference. These words formally acknowledged the status of the white dominions as constitutionally equal with Britain. These terms finally put into text the results of years of debate regarding the status and relationship of the empire with Britain.

The widespread appeal of the League of Nations in Britain should not be taken for granted when trying to understand the contentious debates about the legitimacy of the empire during these immediate postwar years. Looking at the attempts to make the empire meaningful to the ordinary Britisher by drawing from the culture and dialogue surrounding the League of Nations idea, fills a significant gap in the historiography of imperialism after the First World War. For those outside the metropole, the idea of the League of Nations served as a rallying point for self-government. For those "at home," it provided a language used to interrogate the

¹⁸² Elizabeth Bishop, Michael D. Callahan, R. M. Douglass, ed. *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective* (Landham: Lexington Books, 2006).

failures and successes of the conduct of domestic political leaders in serving domestic socioeconomic interests during and after the First World War.

Just because the British Empire survived the war, imperial relations were no longer the same. Even though imperial economic and political cooperation were vital after the war, imperialists were wrestling with the vast number of changes that were caused by wartime concessions and the emergence of the League of Nations. The whole idea of the League and the ideas of internationalism and trusteeship that it embodied, fueled nationalist sentiments in the empire already simmering before the war. For all its political shortcomings, the League of Nation's basic principles challenged existing imperial relationships and public perceptions regarding imperial rule at home. On one level, the British Empire could no longer be an empire based on a vague notion of trusteeship that lent itself to be carried out by force, coercion, and a discourse of assimilation and paternalism. On another, for many of its supporters, the ideas of international cooperation and of "self-determination" provided the British public a completely new way of figuring the average Britisher's place in not only international affairs, but imperial ones.

Despite the fact that the British Empire's stake in and influence on the League of Nations was pronounced, very little has been written about its formative place in the interrogation and renegotiation of the imperial order at "home." By the end of the war, political elites were more dependent on the influence of popular opinion due to the wider suffrage and because of a now widespread acceptance of the idea of an unavoidable social component to the human psyche. British officials and intellectuals latched onto the idea of the League of Nations and its underlying principles aiming to

uphold civilization, internationalism, and liberalism through the power of public opinion.

Politicians and intellectuals engaged with the League's formative principles when "party politics" in Britain were chaotic and the whole idea of empire was in dispute. Many of the League of Nations' institutions were established to address humanitarian problems as a way to solve international conflict. For many popular organizations such as the League of Nations Union, it was also necessary to promote education focused on world citizenship and responsible democracy. It was thought that the spirit of the League's organizations could address these "human interests" and spiritual interests necessary for international cooperation.

The contents of the British party propaganda, the League of Nations Union pamphlets, public speeches, and tracts reveal how the social psychology of public opinion was vital to the sustainability of Britain in international affairs, and the empire itself. The grassroots popularity of the League of Nations Union as a voluntary association and pressure group in particular reflects a widespread sentiment of pacifism that took hold throughout the empire after the First World War. Intellectuals and psychologists turned to it to provide future remedies to prevent future ones. The dialogue and culture surrounding the League of Nations idea promoted the values of international peace and humanitarianism that was shared between intellectuals and the people alike.

The turmoil and confusion in domestic politics in Britain after the war and the formation of new foreign and imperial politics as a result of Britain's involvement in the League of Nations debate are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the end of the war

also signaled an end to foreign and political policies dominated by elitist debates. It was not only the beginning of the importance of public opinion in Britain's international affairs but imperial affairs. Supported by an increasing awareness of a social instinct within each person, the familiar principles of civilization, internationalism, and liberalism in Britain were used to introduce a more sustainable vision of the British Empire. This vision not only could be compatible with a more interdependent global society, but it could more solidly connect the people of Britain with the empire.

Imperialists argued that the League's principles framed around internationalism and trusteeship struck a deeply embedded and familiar continuity in Britain's humanitarian past. British policy focused less on only wedding social reform with imperialism to address mere reform of the physical health of the British people. Instead, they focused on the material and psychological wellbeing of everyone in the empire through education. By doing so, British officials could mold and guide the social psychology and interests of the people in the British Empire to strive for imperial unity in spirit in light of increasing political and constitutional disunity.

With all these changes after the First World War, there were strong pulls from many directions to recognize the importance of Britain's own imperial continuity. The whole culture created around the League of Nations idea strongly advocated for the development of a deep historical sense of one's national history for the ultimate success of the League of Nations. As one League of Nations supporter would exclaim, "we have got to build internationalism upon nationalism."¹⁸³ For the British

¹⁸³ George N. Barnes, "Labour Tasks Confronting the League of Nations" (League of Nations Union, 1920), 3; LNUMB, reel 20, vol 7/1, item 7.

people, this continuity could be found in the British constitution and in the international humanitarian reforms intending to improve the social and economic wellbeing of everyone in the British Empire and at home.

League of Nations supporters in Britain tried—albeit not very successfully—to reconcile imperial unity with a recognition that people instinctively had strong attachments to local interests and national interests. Yet there were disparities between the intentions of the League’s principles that tied up in its idea of “civilization” with the average Britisher’s assumptions about their place in the empire. Often, postwar imperial policies were still influenced by residual prejudices, fears, and group interests that stymied any whole-hearted commitment to “self-government” to its non-white territories within the empire.

In conclusion, the widespread influence of the League of Nations idea on the politics and culture of Empire in Britain after the First World War is a scarcely explored area of historical research. While many scholars have touched on the particularly “imperial” nature of the League of Nations, none have explored how the League of Nations, an actualization of liberal internationalism, helped redefine a liberal empire that had virtually lost all its “liberal” and constitutional moorings. Without exploring the League’s popular and ideological influences on not only British high politics, but also domestic politics, our knowledge of the changing tactics and attitudes about imperial culture “at home,” remains incomplete.

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