The Ben Pimlott Memorial Lecture 2019

Britain and the Making of Global Order after 1919

Patricia Clavin, University of Oxford[1]

Abstract

On the centenary of the Paris Peace Conference, the lecture explores Britain's pivotal role in the development of a rules-based global order. It reveals how Britons fashioned the practices and norms of new international institutions, including the League of Nations, to manage relations between states, markets and civil society. The lecture uncovers why economic, social and environmental issues took on as much importance as the more familiar concerns of border protection and weapons' control. It draws on the correspondence of key internationalists, including women and student activists, who wanted to institutionalize global order in a way that advanced the needs of women, children and the family as the concern of global security, and shows how preference was given to business groups and central bankers. The lecture exposes the connected history of the First World War with the global order forged to build peace, underlining the important role of the blockade, and the multilateral relationships it engendered. It reveals how British dominance after 1919 encouraged it to use the League of Nations a multilateral hub to manage Britain's relations with Europe and with its empire, and the legacy of this history for international relations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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Lecture

'There are difficult days ahead for this country, and this nation will be tested as never before in the searching times that are coming.''[2] This was the assessment of General Jan Christiaan Smuts of July 1919, expressed in his farewell address to the British people. Having given it, Smuts boarded ship for South Africa where he became the Union's second Prime Minister. That summer, Smuts' words commanded global attention. While leading the South African delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, he was also a member of the British War Cabinet. If this double position was a constitutional anomaly of the war, there was less ambiguity in his views and actions in 1919. He helped both to draft the controversial covenant of the new League of Nations, and protested about the Versailles treaty that underpinned it.[3]

Smuts is recognized as one of the inspirations of Britain's approach to the League of Nations, the world's first intergovernmental organization, which he thought would advance his imperial agenda.[4] I suggest Smuts was equally interested in the material conditions of peace in 1919, and their relationship with global order. The substance of his criticism of the Versailles Treaty lay in the 'Economic Consequences of the Peace', to borrow the title of John Maynard Keynes' famous book that was being drafted at the same time. The two men had come to know one another well in Paris. Smuts, a lawyer by training and profession,

[2] 'Problems for the League [of Nations]. A Farewell Message from General Smuts on leaving England', London, July 1919, in Howard Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Paris Peace Conference*, vol.3 (London, 1920), 80.
[3] 'Two Statements Issued by General Smuts after the Signature of the Peace: The Peace Treaty', Paris, 29 June 1919, in Temperley, *The Paris Peace*, vol.3, 75-77.
[4] William E. Rappard, *International Relations as Viewed from Geneva* (New Haven CT, 1925); Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton NJ, 2009). Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015) underlines the limits of his influence, notably with regard to the mandates regime.

drafted the legal advice on reparations, and he is often credited as the inspiration for Keynes's book. The two men shared the view that, in Smuts' words, 'the war has resulted not only in the utter defeat of the enemy armies, but has gone immeasurably further. We witness the collapse of the whole political and economic fabric of Central and Eastern Europe. Unemployment, starvation, anarchy, war, disease, despair stalk the land'.[5]

This lecture shows how the material breakdown of 1919 was pivotal in determining Britain's approach to global order, a concept I take to mean relations between states, markets, and civil society.[6] I focus as much on the practice of British diplomacy as on the ideas behind it. It is important to draw this distinction because new writing on the history of international cooperation routinely plants it in the realm of ideas. This is the case whether writing the history of 'collective security', rights, capitalism, or the development of regional or international institutions.[7] The approach is something at odds with the field of international relations, which has become preoccupied with studying the 'practices' of international relations. These are recognized as often inconsistent, habitual, and reflect a background disposition acquired through practical experience of international relations in general, and working in or through international institutions in particular.[8] It is a perspective that is well-suited to an historical approach on the making of global order after 1919.

[5] 'Two Statements Issued by General Smuts after the Signature of the Peace: The Peace Treaty', Paris, 29 June 1919, in Temperley, *The Paris Peace*, vol.3, 75-77.
[6] Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford, 2008).
[7] For example, Mark Mazower, *Governing the World. The History of an Idea* (London, 2012); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in an Age of Nationalism* (Penn Phila, 2013); Matthias Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth. The OECD and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge, 2016); Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists. The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge MA, 2018).
[8] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977); Vincent Pouliot, 'The Logical of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities', *International* Organization 62:2 (2008), 257-88; Inanna Hamati-Ataya, 'IR Theory as Practice/Agency: A Clinical-Cynical Bourdieusian Perspective', *Millennium*, 40 (2012), 625-45.

If the history-writing on the League and global order after 1919 were to be pitched as a sit-com to Netflix, the synopsis might read: British pacifism meets US moralism, and failure follows.[9] In contrast, I want to underline the importance of economic and social issues to the quickening of the League, and highlight British networks with close ties to it, despite apparently very different concerns. Women humanitarians and student activists, bankers and businessmen might sound unusual bedfellows. But all were caught up in forging the global order in 1919.

This phenomenon lays bare the increasingly capacious conceptualization of security in the period. It embraced a growing range of economic and social issues that connected national and international politics in ways that gave considerable agency to these non-state actors. I want to tease out some of the power-political consequences of this history that are still with us. Let me signal two of them: first, women who wanted to institutionalize global order in a way that advanced the needs of women, children and the family as the concern of global security. In 1919 they defined themselves as political actors. Yet they were predominately cast as 'humanitarian', notably by those wielding power in ways that subsequently side-lined women's agency and ideas from mainstream debates relating to global order. Indeed, the process of airbrushing began with Keynes' book. While historians usually attribute Smuts as inspiration for the text, Smuts himself credited his long-standing British confidant Margaret Gillett for the original insight regarding the primacy of material conditions for the peace. One of his most regular and intimate correspondents, she informed Smuts and Keynes' exchanges, underlining that 'political and territorial questions

[9] Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking after the First World War, 1919-1923*, 2nd edition (London, 2008).

won't be solved till the economic world is righted and some kind of human atmosphere is created.' [10]

The second group drawn into peace-making sought to present themselves as 'independent' and 'apolitical', yet their actions had deep implications for the fate of states and civil society. It comprised central bankers and businessmen promoting a specific vision of global capitalism. The *Economist* periodical was an important cheerleader, calling for the 'closest working co-operation … of the leading central bankers and authorities … Sound finance is not only the right, but the only possible policy for countries.'[11]

[SECTION BREAK]

When the peacemakers in Paris agreed the Covenant of the League of Nations, it signalled a momentous break with the nineteenth- century notion that a 'balance of power' would pacify the European continent and prevent its military domination by a single state or group of powers. After 1919, there was an attempt to establish procedural rules on which stable and legitimate cooperation would depend. Power politics remained inherent to the work of the League, although historians have largely ignored a step that contemporaries in 1919 found radical: in founding the League, the Paris peacemakers multi-lateralised the practice of international relations at a stroke. By the end of the twentieth century, the move from bilateral treaties to a multilateral world order seemed a given. The international relations scholar John Ruggie reflected, 'no one in any position of authority anywhere is advocating, or quietly preparing for, a return to a competitive system of bilateral

[10] Letter from MC Gillett to Smuts, 3 May 1919, in W.K. Hancock and Jean van der Poel, *Selections from the Smuts* Papers, vol. iv (Cambridge, 1966), 142-3. Over time, the Gillett has been erased. Compare Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes. Hopes Betrayed, 1883-1920* (1983), 373 to Michael Cox to John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London, 2019), 3.
[11] 'Brussels', *Economist*, vol.91 (6 Oct. 1920), 579.

alliances.'[12] The early history of the twenty-first century suggests that no longer can multilateralism, nor its institutional forms, be taken for granted.

Equally remarkably, although Wilson's Fourteen Points had been largely silent on the economic dimensions of the peace – only Point three's stress on the importance of free trade alluded to it – within months of its founding, the League became preoccupied with how conflict had economic aspects. The First World War had turned the global economy into a potential weapon. National frontiers were expressed in strongly militarized terms, and states developed ever-more sophisticated bureaucratic practices to control the movement of people and goods. Britain led this transformation by orchestrating the Allied blockade of the central powers. The blockade was a wholesale intervention into the practices of the global economy, with lasting effects. The British navy imposed the blockade at sea, but the true power of the British imperial state was laid bare in the scale of British political, bureaucratic and intelligence operations necessary to convince Allied and neutral countries to cease trading with the Central Powers worldwide.[13]

In November 1918, the Armistice signalled the formal end of hostilities on the Western front, though it did not bring an end to all of the fighting. Notably in Turkey, and central and eastern Europe, conflict related to the collapse of dynastic empires persisted well into the 1920s.[14] Nor did the Armistice mark the conclusion of coercive tactics by the Allies. Notably, the Allied blockade of territories of the former central powers continued

[12] John Gerard Ruggie, 'Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution', in John Gerard Ruggie (ed.), *Multilateralism Matters. The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York, 1993), 4.
[13] Archibald C. Bell, *The Blockade of Germany and of the countries associated with her in the Great War, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, 1914-1918* (London, 1937); Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*: *The Royal Navy in the Fisher era, 1904-1919,* 3 vols. (Oxford, 1961); Greg Kennedy, "Intelligence and the Blockade, 1914-1917: A Study in Administration, Friction and Command," *Intelligence and National Security* 5: 22 (2007): 699-721.
[14] Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (eds), *Empires at War, 1911-1923* (Oxford, 2014).

deep into 1919, and trade embargoes remained in place to prevent British businesses from trading with territories that would become the Soviet Union. The peacemakers wielded economic and financial policies as tools to enforce the armistice and determine the peace settlement on states. The effects on civil society were indiscriminate.

The blockade was integral to British diplomacy towards Germany before 1914, and central to its wartime strategy. The intention was to exert pressure on the German economy in its entirety, to bring it to sue for peace. [15] The blockade and the practices necessitated by the emergence of a war economy had lasting effects on Britain's approach to world order after 1918 too. Firstly, the legal and institutional innovations of the blockade brought British business into line with state policy in the name of national defence, extending the operations of the British government nationally and internationally. The introduction of the Trading with the Enemy Act in 1914 marked the effective abandonment of laissez-faire policies that were the touchstone of Liberal party economics, and of business and commerce orientated towards the British Empire, Europe, and the wider world.[16]

Second, the wide-ranging social and political consequences of the drive to mobilize national and imperial economic resources to prosecute 'total war', also encouraged contemporaries to evaluate peace-making in more creative ways. It led to a flowering of progressive ideas about how to build peace, many advanced by women, and other groups disadvantaged in the established practices of inter-state diplomacy. These bodies included

[15] Scholarly debate regarding the importance of economic warfare and the blockade to the course and outcome of war was re-energized by Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge MA, 2012). Isabel Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: breaking and making international law during the Great War* (Ithaca, 2014), 172-173. Anthropometric work emphasizes the degree of deprivation endured by the German people. See, Mary Cox, *Hunger in war and peace: women and children in Germany, 1914-1924* (Oxford, 2019).

[16] John McDermott, 'Trading with the Enemy: British Business and the Law During the First World War', *Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes* d'historie XXXII (Aug. 1997), 202-203.

the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom set up in 1915, which had national sections including in one Britain, the Save the Children organization founded in 1919, as well as more established alliances such as the World Student Christian Federation begun in 1895. These associations and the people who were often members of more than one organization - embraced the opportunities the new League of Nations appeared to afford. Youth activism was a common feature of these and associated bodies, illustrated, for instance in the life of the Scottish highlander, Donald Grant. Usually recognized as an important pacifist, Grant was also Director of the European Student Relief programme from 1920 to 1924, which paved his way to the role of General Secretary of the Student Christian movement, a post he held between 1925 and 1929.[17]

Third, the breadth and depth of British multilateralism necessitated by the prosecution of the First World War in general, and the operation of the blockade in particular, modified the practice of British diplomacy. In Britain's international relations, the operations of the Allied blockade marked a graduated departure from traditional state- to-state diplomacy to include administrative arrangements. Over time, it produced a series of increasingly advanced, and geographically-extended, inter-Allied committees. The step-change came in 1916 with the Anglo-French Paris Economic Pact. The USA was sufficiently alarmed by the scale of planned coordination it instituted that President Wilson appointed a bipartisan Tariff Commission to investigate its operations.[18] The Wheat Executive, also

[17] Tissington Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement* (London, 1933), 897. *The* division of Grant's archive reinforces the compartmentalization of his life. For his treatment as a conscientious objector and pacifism, see the Imperial War Museum, 'Donald Grant' Oral Testimony, Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80000707, accessed 10 Jan 2019. For his humanitarian work, Hoover Institution Archives, Papers of Donald Grant, Box 1, Manuscript Diary, 'From Breakfast of Vienna to World University Service, 1920-1971'.

[18] U.S. Code, Title 19, Chapter 4, Subtitle II, Part II, §1332., US Code, Cornell Law School Open Access, accessed 7 Jan 2020, url: https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/19/1332. On the pact, see Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'or et le sang: Les buts de guerre économiques de la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris, 1989).

established in 1916, incorporated the belligerent Italy, with Allied food security its predominant concern. In 1917, the need to coordinate procurement with supply, notably through shipping, was recognized in the landmark Allied Maritime and Transport Council (AMTC) whose members were Britain, France, Italy and the USA. Between 1917 and 1919, the operations of the Supreme War Council augmented these arrangements. It brought together the AMTC, the Inter-Allied Transport Council and the Inter-Allied Munitions Council under one roof.

Alfred Zimmern, the first Wilson Professor of International Relations at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth underscored the importance of the wartime practices to the new global order after 1919. The first holder of any such chair in the world observed, 'it was in fact *during the war,* not after the war, that the choice was made between the *inter-state* and the *super-state* principle as the basis of the post-war effort for a "new order".[19] [Italics in the original.] Zimmern's scholarly work is now discredited for its blurring of science and political advocacy in ways that were, in fact, characteristic of his field in the period. His major work, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law,* nevertheless identified the importance of international practice and the importance of resource issues to the genesis of the League. In his words, 'if the regular diplomatic machine proved unequal to the demands of the war… the strain was felt even more severely in the domain of economic organization'.[20]

The shift towards inter-state administration had important consequences for Britain and the making of global order in 1919. When it comes to understanding emergent practice, the operations of the Allied Maritime Transport Council (the AMTC) played a critical role. In

[19] Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918-1935*, (London, 1938), 149.
[20] Zimmern, *League of* Nations, 143; Jan Stöckmann, 'The formation of international relations: ideas, practices, institutions, 1914-1940', D.Phil. University of Oxford, 2017.

the war economy, the AMTC's power derived from the fact it held the authority to give or withhold shipping space. Shipping was the reason the First World War went global. The Allied effort to control the distribution of resources and global markets drew non-belligerents into the conflict world-wide. Zimmern claimed that in the closing months of the war, AMTC officials supervised almost 90 per cent of the world's entire sea-going tonnage. [21]

In theory, national ministers in charge of shipping managed the AMTC. Its governing council comprised eight members of ministerial level, two from each member state. In practice, an executive, based in London, ran it. There, a British civil servant Arthur Salter, worked closely with a young Frenchman, Jean Monnet, who would go on to become the founding father of the European Union.[22] The two men - thereafter life-long friends - commanded the AMTC secretariat, which organised twenty discrete inter-allied committees, whose officials were expected to divest themselves of any national point of view.[23] Whilst the AMTC remained a body for inter-governmental debate and negotiation, the direct connection of national to international administration meant it was easy to exchange information, and implement a decision once reached. In short, the AMTC melded the distinction between the national and international level of decision-making, as well as between advisory and executive bodies.

This wartime experience had profound implications for international thought and practice. Salter summarized them in his 1921 influential monograph *Allied Shipping Control*.[24] It set out an argument for inter-governmental cooperation that proved foundational for the new academic discipline of international relations. What was novel at

[21] Zimmern, *League of Nations*, 146-7.
[22] Crucially, Salter was both chairman of the executive and secretary of the council.
[23] Yann Decorzant, *La Société des Nations et la naissance d'une conception de la regulations économique internationale* (Brussels, 2011), 133-5.
[24] Arthur Salter, *Allied Shipping Control: an experiment in international administration* (Oxford, 1921).

the time was Salter's stress on what he saw as the self-evident need for international administration. He characterized the 'essential administrative achievement' thus: 'Above all, the Allied organization solved the problem of controlling the action without displacing the authority of National Governments.'[25]

Indeed, Salter's own authority lay in his practical experience of administration as much as in the articulation of his internationalist ideas. The League of Nations immediately appointed both Salter and Monnet to senior roles. Monnet became deputy secretary-general at the League, number two to Britain's Eric Drummond, a career diplomat who became the organization's first secretary-general. Salter was director of the economic and financial section of the League secretariat, the League's economic bureaucracy, and established a wide network of collaborators around a small corps of committed international civil servants.[26] In sum, Salter and Monnet's wartime experience was a blue print for the League's great innovation in international administration.

Revealingly, the League shared other key features with the wartime Allied institutions. There was the prominence of western powers who would go on to dominate the Council and Secretariat of the League of Nations in its early years: Britain, France, and Italy. Leading neutral European states, notably the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Norway, were also conspicuous in these networks, joining the administration of the First World War through the operations of the blockade. The reconstitution of these ties in the League offered these small and middling powers an enhanced international platform. Here they could be heard on terms of nominal equality with the so-called 'great' powers, which usually determined international politics, and access to contacts and intelligence without

[25] Salter, *Allied Shipping Control*, 246.
[26] Alexander Loveday, *Reflections on International Administration* (Oxford, 1958).

the expense of embassies and consulates. As a whole, European states dominated the new organization.[27]

The United States was a powerful, if inconsistent, force. As a neutral power, it had viewed the 1916 Paris Economic Pact between Britain and France with deep suspicion. As a peacemaker in 1919, it rejected the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, and with it the covenant of the League of Nations. Yet many influential Americans retained informal ties with the League.[28] Germany and Russia, subsequently the leading state of the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), stood apart from this wartime history of inter-Allied networks. Germany and the USSR became members of the League in 1926 and 1934 respectively, and they remained removed from the sources of power in the organization. At the same time, like the USA, these countries boasted both prominent supporters and detractors of League internationalism, and were the focus of extended study by the organization.[29]

Finally, notice the way in which the institutionalisation of the war wove together the economic and military operations of the British state in their relations with Allied and neutral powers. It reflected the central role of the national economy in securing the prospects of the state, in both peace and war. The First World War effectively asserted the primacy of inter-national economies – that is to say the notion of separate, yet linked national markets – over global, transnational currents.

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[27] Patricia Clavin, 'The League of Nations and Europe', in R. Gerwath (ed.), *Twisted Paths: Europe, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 2007), 521-570.

[28] Some of the individuals associated with these institutions would maintain informal ties throughout 1920s and 1930s, supporting European internationalism, which became vital in the Second World War. Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, 231-303.

[29] Joachim Wintzer, *Deutschland und der Völkerbund, 1918-1926* (Paderborn, 2006); Matthias Schulz, *Deutschland, der Völkerbund und die Frage der europäischen Wirtschaftsordnung, 1925-1933* (Hamburg, 1997). Kathryn W. Davis, *The soviets at Geneva: the USSR and the League of Nations, 1919-1933* (Geneva, 1934); Frank Lorimer, *The population of the Soviet Union: history and prospects* (Geneva, 1946).

The need to mobilize national, imperial and international resources for the war left its imprint on the British state too. In particular, the conflict produced a heightened awareness as to the importance of commodities, soft and hard (the supply of which today we would relate to the concepts of food and energy security). Raw materials were also vital for armaments' production. The Safe-Guarding of British Industries Act (1921) and the creation of a new office of state, the UK Department of Overseas Trade, underlined the point.[30] The new body took over and enhanced the state's capacity, developed during the war, for collating and disseminating commercial intelligence, and administering commercial services abroad.

If the relationship between states and markets had changed with important implications for security politics, so, too, had relations between states and society. Recent centenaries of the Russian Revolution and the expansion of voting rights, remind us of the new politics of the economy: workers, consumers and families who had all participated in the war effort, expected the state to be more responsive to their demands. The security of the capitalist order was put on notice.[31]

Back then, at first it was hard to grasp how far the war had changed relations between states, markets and peoples nationally; and to appreciate the consequences of those changes for international relations. Armistice in November 1918 had come as a surprise. The Supreme War Council was engaged in planning for continued war in 1919 when the Germans approached President Wilson for peace-talks.[32] It became the Supreme

[30]The National Archives: Public Record Office, Kew. (Hereafter TNA:PRO), Meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet, CAB 23/40/12, 'Minute of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, 25 April, 1917.
[31] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Petrograd, 1917), building on the work of John Hobson and Rudolf Hilferding.
[32] Meighen McCrae, *Coalition Strategy and the end of the First World War: the Supreme War Council and war planning, 1917-1918* (Oxford, 2019).

Economic Council in 1919, expressing the need for continued, institutionalized co-operation in peace. Aspects of its operations were folded into the League, but others were dissolved in short order when the USA rejected the Treaty of Versailles.[33]

The USA's failure to ratify the Versailles peace treaty, and with it a body of law that was subsequently incorporated into the covenant of the League of Nations, made Britain the predominant power in the League of Nations. British political leaders had intended the new organization to provide the political framework for 'Atlanticism'. It had intended to use the League to sustain and enhance Anglo-American diplomatic relations after the end of the war akin to the operation of the wartime committees.

With the USA's departure, Britain's dominance in the League of Nations emboldened it to regard the new inter-governmental organization as a multilateral hub to manage its relations with Europe and with its empire. Both were priorities when it came to Britain's national defence, which was associated with the security of the world. The League, which formally opened its doors in Geneva in 1920, offered the means.

France was key to British efforts to effect European stability. The Third Republic had the potential to act unilaterally in ways that threatened the continent, as its decision to invade the Ruhr to enforce reparations payments in 1922 was to show.[34] The League helped anchor France, with its authority and representation second only to Britain in the League. French nationals administered key departments, such as the Political Section, and, with the former Minister for Armaments and socialist Albert Thomas at the helm, led the League's

[33] *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington DC, 1942), vol.10, Paris 1919, 'Supreme Economic Council: Minutes of Meetings' 17 Feb. 1919 to 7 Feb. 1920, 3-786.
[34] Peter Yearwood, *The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914-1925* (Oxford, 2009), 221-250.

related body, the International Labour Organization.[35] France's approach towards Britain evolved too. Between 1919 and 1925, its expectations of Britain progressed from that of a traditional military ally to a joint-guarantor of a Europe-wide system of interlocking arbitration and assistance pacts.[36] France, and the League, were thus a means to manage German revanchism. Important initiatives and treaties followed, including the Draft Treaty for Mutual Assistance of 1923, and the Geneva Protocol of 1925 that outlawed chemical and biological weapons. Although Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan would go onto use poison gas, this League-developed norm has been more widely ratified and respected than any other directive in the practice of modern warfare.[37]

This was no heady idealism. If many plans were unsuccessful when judged from the perspective of the Second World War and its aftermath, they nevertheless succeeded in establishing standards that institutionalized practical measures to effect European security. At the same time, these initiatives placed key British protagonists in Geneva - Robert Cecil, Austen Chamberlain and later Antony Eden - at the heart of domestic British politics too.[38]

Other figures, such as Leo Amery, may have been more sceptical of the League, but even they recognized its potential to facilitate British imperialism. In 1919, the British Empire reached its greatest territorial extent. Britain, under the mandatory regime of the

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[35] Marie-René Mouton, *La Société des Nations et les* Intérêts de la France, 1920-1924 (Bern, 1995); Christine Manigand, *Les Français au service de la Société des Nations* (Bern, 2003); Sandrine Kott and Joelle Droux (eds) *Globalizing Social Rights. The ILO and Beyond* (London, 2013).

[36] Peter Jackson, 'French Security and a British "Continental Commitment" after the First World War. A Reassessment', *English Historical Review* CXXVI (2011), 345-385.

[37] Hull, *Scrap of Paper,* 274.

[38]Gaynor Johnson, *Lord Robert Cecil: Politician and Internationalist* (Burlington, 2013); A.G. Gardiner, *Certain people of importance* (London, 1926); Viktor Rothwell, *Antony Eden: A Political Biography, 1931-1957* Manchester, 1991), 8-28. Elite engagement was underlined by popular interest, and educational commitment. See, Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations* (Manchester, 2011) and Susanna Wright, 'Creating liberal-internationalist world citizens: League of Nations junior branches in English secondary schools, 1919-139, *Paedagogica Historica* (2018), 1-20.

League of Nations, took charge of territories such as Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq.[39] At the same time, British Dominions became sovereign members of the League with Australia and New Zealand also gaining mandatory authority in the Pacific.[40] Ireland, South Africa, and India, joined, too, although the latter's membership was more circumscribed.[41] British security was not formulated on a choice between Europe or Empire. The Empire was the priority, but as the world after 1919 would demonstrate, promoting and protecting the Empire was predicated on stability in Europe, where other key players also had imperial interests. The challenges of balancing these demands tested Britain's every sinew in the 1930s and 1940s. The question posed as Empire or Europe was a dilemma for the years after 1945.

Historians' focus on Britain's conventional security needs – the protection of sovereign borders and the control of weapons – has not addressed the ways in which security had developed important economic and social dimensions in the war, and shaped the early history of the peace. The point is underlined by the Allies' blockade of the central powers that remained in force while the Paris Peace Conference convened. Food was in desperately short supply. Disease - notably TB and influenza – was rampant; transportation networks were in chaos, and millions of people were displaced. The war-like character of the post-war years established and developed new capacities in the League of Nations on health, refugees, transportation and communication, and on economic and financial questions: the League of Nations Health Committee, the High Commissariat for Refugees,

[39] Pedersen, *The Guardians*; *American Historical Review*, 'AHR Reflections: One Hundred Years of Mandates' (Dec.2019), Vol 124, issue 5, 1673—1731.
[40] Gavan Duffy, 'The British Empire's southern dominions and the emergence of the League of Nations "C" Mandates, 1914 – 1926. Origins, Administration, and International Oversight', Ph.D., National University of Ireland, Galway, 2019.
[41] Dina Nath Verma, *India and the League of Nations* (Patma, 1968).

the Economic and Financial Committee, and the Communications and Transit Commissions. The latter two bodies, in particular, were essentially reconstitutions of Allied wartime committees managed by Salter and Monnet. States and left-leaning political actors excluded from these institutions recognized the danger this process posed to their own international ambitions. As Max Beer, the Austrian-born Marxist journalist, mused, 'hampered by vested interests but inspired by the desire to extend its own narrow foundations easily, if artificially, the League now stretches its covetous hands after these problems.' [42]

This initially unanticipated League intervention in material issues, which by the 1930s came to dominate its agenda, was shaped by wartime practices and what would become known as the 'Monnet method' in the history of the European Union: international institutions were not just built by positive choice but also through responding to negative processes. Monnet's notion that crisis built institutional capacity has its roots in the early history of the League of Nations.[43] Economic and financial questions that had been largely excluded when the League was planned, were back on the agenda. From inside the League, it was Salter, not Monnet, who took the lead. Outside, calls for the League to take action came from starkly contrasting quarters in Britain: women activists, student and religious groups; international bankers and businessmen.

In 1919 Vienna and Austria were at the eye of the storm. Blockaded by the Allies, and now also by some of the successor states born of its former empire, this unwilling post-colonial state struggled to feed over two million inhabitants of Vienna and residents of its poor, mountainous hinterland. With the flames of hyperinflation licking at the foundations

[42] Max Beer, *The League on trial: a journey to Geneva* (New York, 1933), 166.
[43] Patricia Clavin, 'The Austrian Hunger Crisis and the Genesis of International Organization after the First World War', *International Affairs*, 90:2 (2014), pp.265-278.

of the state, images of hungry children mobilized women activists to mount a campaign to shock the British public to demand the end of the blockade.

The Austrian hunger crisis inspired Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton to found the Save the Children Fund.[44] Through treating Viennese children for malnutrition, the brilliant biologist Harriet Chick proved the nutritional value of vitamin D in cod liver oil. All three women's roles in this emergency led them to the League. Jebb and Buxton campaigning for children's rights; Chick becoming secretary to the pioneering League of Nations investigation into global nutrition, and a founding member of the British Nutrition Society in 1942.[45] To these voices were added those of Florence Ada Keynes, and her children, John Maynard, and Margaret. The Keynes family – especially Margaret - knew Jebb and Buxton well.[46] In 1919, Florence wrote repeatedly to her son regarding what she described as 'famine conditions' in central Europe. Her views undoubtedly shaped her son's decision to resign from the peace delegation, and his take on the peace. Soon afterwards, he was appearing alongside her on public platforms dedicated to 'Fight the Famine'.[47]

Florence Keynes did not just want Britain to lift the blockade. She and activists like her, their voices bolstered by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom of which they were members, wanted intervention that was more active in the global political

[44] Records of the Save the Children Fund (hereafter SCF), Cadbury Research Archive, University of Birmingham. SCF, *Record of the Save the Children Fund*, reel 1, vol .1, October and Dec. 1920. See also papers replacing to Dorothy Buxton (hereafter SC/DB), SCR, DB/4/1-5, letters from E. Hobhouse (Vienna) to Buxton, 26 July 1920.
[45] Elsie J. Dalyell and Harriette Chick, 'Hunger-Osteomalacia in Vienna, 1920', *The Lancet*, (22 Oct.1921),, 842-849; Harriette Chick, 'Study of Rickets in Vienna, 1919-1922, *Medical History*, Vol.20 (1976) 41-51; *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, Vol.1 (1944), 1-6.
[46] Florence Ada Keynes, *Gathering the Threads. A Study in Family Biography* (Cambridge, 1950), 82-90.
[47] Private papers of John Maynard Keynes, Kings College Cambridge (hereafter, JMK), JMK PP/45/168/9/159, Florence Keynes to John Maynard Keynes, 6 March 1919. Only his response is published. See, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, vol. 16, *Activities, 1914-1919: the Treasury and Versailles* (Cambridge, 1977), 428. Historians classically place much more influence on Keynes' male interlocutors. See Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes. Hopes Betrayed, 1883 – 1920* (London, 1983); Donald Markwell, *John Maynard Keynes and International Relations. Economic paths to war and peace* (Oxford, 2006).

economy in the name of social security. As the Save the Children Fund noted in 1920, 'its work was constructive as well as palliative'. Austria 'did not need charity' but 'good economics'.[48] The demand confronted the British government's general view that market forces, and not state intervention, would heal war-battered economies. [49] In demanding the League act, together these groups indicated an important impulse of liberal internationalism that challenged a world order predicated on the principle of national sovereignty: the desire to limit and dispute state power.

This call for enhanced capacity in the League of Nations, at the same time as the British state relinquished its wartime control of markets, meant a shift from talk of government co-operation to a call for global governance.[50] In other work, I have shown how League officials badged issues as 'technical' to expand their authority to broach policy questions that over time extended the organization's remit. Here, I want to underline how a rules-based approach to global markets remained central to British conceptions of national security and global order in the wake of the war, and had major political ramifications. Capitalism ordered around the gold standard and free trade were Britain's tools of choice. These instruments conformed to the promise of a rules-based international order, even if they are not usually associated with it.[51]

When it came to financial markets, Britain promoted the international gold exchange standard, a fixed-rate monetary tool. Although Britain would not return to gold for another

[48] SCF, *Record of the Save the Children Fund,* vol.2, 5 Jan 1921, *Letters* exchanged between Sir E Maes Harvey (Inter-Allied Financial Advisor to the Austrian Section of the Reparations Commission in Vienna) and Eglantyne Jebb in *The Times* 7-8 in reproduced in *The Record of the Save the Children Fund* (5 Jan. 1921), 70-71.
[49] William H. Becker, *The Dynamics of Business-Government Relations: Industry and Exports, 1893-1921* (Chicago, 1982), 158; David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford, 1982), 334; Anne Orde, *British Policy and European Reconstruction After the First World War* (Cambridge, 1990), 22-23.
[50] Hurrell, *Global Order*, 105.
[51] Yearwood, *The League of Nations in British Policy*, for example.

five years, it championed the gold standard internationally much sooner. In 1920, the gold standard, based on a strong pound, was fashioned out of policy directions and legally-binding agreements championed by Montagu Norman, the wartime government advisor who assumed the role of Governor of the Bank of England that same year. Resolution number one passed by participants at the League's first international conference on financial and economic questions, determined 'the first step is to bring public opinion in every country to realise the need for re-establishing public finances on a sound basis as a preliminary to the execution of those social reforms which the world demands.'[52]

In 1919, the Austrian crisis that inspired the Keynes family to articulate the relationship between food and financial security, was the foundation stone of this approach. With British encouragement, the League took on a coordinating role, enabling spatially and functionally distinct networks to combine in steadying, first Austria, and from there Europe.[53] In 1922, Austria was the first European power to stabilize its currency and to return to the gold standard after the war. The League's machinery for public engagement, established to promote publically-accountable foreign policy, put its weight behind sound money. The organization was now empowered to gather intelligence and take 'practical steps' to facilitate communication and cooperation regarding world markets.[54] This had not been part of its original brief. The supervisory regime pioneered by the League set the mould for the practices of financial oversight subsequently adopted by the International

[52] League of Nations, *Brussels Financial Conference, 1920. The Recommendations and their Application. A Review after Two Years*, C.10.M.1923.II, vol.II (Geneva, 1922), 7.
[53] The financial history of the early 21st Century has meant the Austrian crisis has been subject to renewed international scrutiny. Clavin, *Securing the World Economy,* 23-33*;* Nathan Marcus, *Austrian Reconstruction and the Collapse of Global Finance, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, MA., 2018), 78-111; Juan H. Flores Zendejas and Yann Decorzant, 'Going Multilateral? Financial Markets' Access and the League of Nations Loans, 1923-28', *Economic History Review*, 69:2 (2016), 653-678.
[54] R.A.W. Rhodes, 'Waves of Governance', in D. Levi-Faur (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Governance* (Oxford, 2012), 34-35.

Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank. The stabilization initiative became the means to show the League could deliver 'tangible achievements' to sceptical member states. It also meant reputational risk for a scheme that was presented as apolitical, technocratic - even-magical - was transferred to the League.[55]

Austrians did not fall for this sleight of hand. The battle for a stable Austrian Schilling had obvious distributional effects as the state slashed spending. As Communists and Social Democrats bridled against these restrictions, nationalists bristled at the League deal's political provisions.[56] In 1922, Austria signed up to an even stricter prohibition against *Anschluss* with Germany than that imposed in 1919.[57] Union with Germany was no longer a possible way out of its economic and social challenges. Or so it seemed.

The League was a sorcerer's apprentice to the central bankers' project of ordering global financial markets in ways that served Britain's agenda. The stabilization of Austria was in some ways a forerunner to the resolution of Germany's hyperinflation two years later, and the model implemented in Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece. More broadly, it pointed the way to market solutions as the means to break the political deadlock that gripped British, French and US relations over war debts and reparations. When it comes to the legacy of Britain's role in global ordering after the war, let me highlight two significant and neglected outcomes. Firstly, the League was initially kept away from the mess European powers had made of paying for the war. The Allies opted to borrow from one another, and the USA,

[55] See J. van Walré de Bordes, *The Austrian crown: its depreciation and stabilization* (London, 1924), ix.
[56] Arnold Suppan, "Mitteleuropa Konzeptionen zwischen Restauration und Anschluss," in Richard G. Plaschka *et al* (eds), *Mitteleuropa Konzeptionen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 1995), 171-197.
[57] I am indebted to Madeleine Dungy for this clarification. Compare, 'Article 80', *The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany*, 45; Protocol No. I, League of Nations Doc. C.716.M.427.1922.X (1922), *The Restoration of Austria: Agreements arranged by the League of Nations and signed at Geneva on October 4th, 1922*, 39; "Article 88," HMG Stationery Office, *The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria* (London, 1919), 24.

producing war debts; and then imposed war costs on the defeated states, resulting in reparations. A separate inter-allied commission handled war reparations. By helping to stabilize the Austrian economy, the League was drawn into the toxic pool of sovereign debt and its lethal effects on the prospects of global order. (Salter himself embodied the connection: he was seconded from the League to serve as the General Secretary to the War Reparations Commission for two, increasingly frustrating years.) [58]

Second, it is often forgotten that when Austria signed up for the commercial loans scheme overseen by the League, allied demands for financial reparations were dropped. It may be that for all the subsequent focus on damage to the prospects of peace caused by German reparations, it was the Austrian crisis that prompted the British government to begin to backtrack on its 1919 decision to use sovereign debt as the means to control German power in Europe. The move was not enough to save the Weimar Republic, but it proved an invaluable help to the Nazis in their efforts to sow division in relations between Britain and the United States and to rearm.[59] The episode perhaps also illustrates a deeper characteristic of global Britain: a preference for 'mystical' financial diplomacy over publically accountable deals.[60] Secrecy was certainly a feature of the Bank of International Settlements, another international organization Britain helped to establish in 1930. Norman helped found this organisation to effect co-operation among central bankers when he fell out with the League in the latter 1920s because a League of Nations Gold Inquiry now

[58] Arthur Salter, *Memoirs of a Public Servant* (London, 1961), 159- 172.
[59]Bruce Kent, *Spoils of War: The Politics, Economics and Diplomacy of Reparations, 1918-1932* (Oxford, 1989); Steiner, *Lights that failed*, *687.*
[60]Patricia Clavin, *The Failure of Economic Diplomacy. Britain, Germany, France and the United States* (London, 1996); Neil Forbes, *Doing business with the Nazis: Britain's economic and financial relations with Germany, 1931-39* (London, 2000).

publically warned of the gold standard's damaging deflationary effects on the world economy.[61]

When it came to global governance in 1919, British self-interest and identity found its clearest expression in the realm of trade policy. It was branded as one of free trade, establishing a dichotomy between free-trading Britain and protectionist Europe that continues into the twenty-first century. Trade policy, like money, was another plank of Britain's efforts to bring order to Europe and empire via the League. The war's impact on trade regimes is one of the most understudied effects of the war. The principle of free trade was articulated in law through the Paris Peace treaties and the League covenant; codes drafted by staff at the Board of Trade led by Hubert Llewellyn Smith. Article 23(E) of the League of Nations Covenant pledged 'to secure and maintain equitable treatment of commerce'.[62] In terms of Britain's relations with Europe, and the wider world, moving trade questions to the League was hugely significant. It multilateralized the practice of international trade negotiation and regulation at a time when states conventionally negotiated trade treaties on a bilateral basis. Britain had stood as the leading proponent of 'free trade' since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. But by 1919, its reputation as the valiant defender of global free trade was neither untarnished nor unprejudiced, especially following the imposition of the blockade.[63] The great tangle of wartime protective legislation was not easily repealed.

[61] Records of the Bank of England (hereafter BoE), Governor's File, BoE G 1/30 Norman to Gates W. McGarrah, 16 Sept. 1930, and G 1/4, Discussion of BIS composition, 25 Feb. 1929, to 10 Nov. 1932.
[62] 'President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points', Avalon Project, accessed June 2, 2019, url: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.
[63] J.W. Scobell Armstrong, *War and Treaty Legislation Affecting British Property in Germany and Austria, and Enemy Property in the United Kingdom* (London, 1919).

The peace negotiations provided the opportunity for Britain to reassert its credentials as a global free trader abroad, and the guarantor of cheap food at home. But Britain's approach to free trade after 1919 was more lopsided than its global rhetoric of free and equitable commerce suggested. Since the 19th Century, Britain had led the way in generalizing the use of the unconditional most-favoured-nations clause. The misleadingly phrased concept was a guarantee of non-discrimination intended to ensure that no single trade partner was ever treated as the most-favoured-nation, privileged above the rest.

Article 23 (e) was a general and fairly vague commitment to free trade. It stood in stark contrast to the trade terms Britain and its Allies had imposed on the defeated powers of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. These comprised much more stringent unilateral Most Favoured Nations, comprising four lengthy articles that ran to many pages in the treaties, proscribing different forms of discrimination in the peace treaties. The former central powers regarded these conditions as deeply discriminatory and a violation of their national sovereignty. The Economic Associations of Austria appealed to the League of Nations: 'all the economic restrictions are in favour of the victors and against Austria so that, having nothing to offer she can make no agreements having reciprocity of intercourse as their object.'[64]

The tension between the trade terms of the Paris Peace Treaties, which formed a part of the League's legal foundation, and the commitment to free trade in the Covenant, laid bare how Britain used its 'foreign trade as an instrument of national power'. [65] Britain's shift from its position in the 1916 Paris Pact underlined the new, pointed character of this

[64] TNA: PRO, Correspondence of the Foreign Office, TNA: PRO FO371/4647, C 11874/785/3, Lindlay (Vienna) to London, summary of the appeal to the League of Nations 'Commercial Restraints against Austria', 18 Nov.1920.
[65] Albert Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkley, CA, 1945), 64.

discrimination. In the pact, Britain and France had resolved to withhold most-favoured-nations status from the central powers in any future peace. But in the 1919 peace treaties, the victorious powers opted to impose an obligation *on* the defeated states to grant unconditional most-favoured-nations treatment to the Allied and Associated powers.[66] This enabled Britain to shelter nascent British industries fostered during the war to replace German suppliers of key strategic goods from German competition. It notably did so through the machinery of the 1921 Safeguarding of Industries Act, which applied some duties selectively against German exporters.[67]

In comparison to the trade terms of the Treaty of St Germain, Article 23(e) of the League covenant was deliberately vague so that Britain could retain the legal freedom to introduce trade protection, including imperial preference, on the grounds of national defence, and imperial cohesion. Britain was conscious its Dominion allies had their own take on their sovereign rights when it came to trade policy.[68] Canada had led the way among the Dominions by unilaterally introducing imperial preference on trade with Britain in 1897.[69] Collectively the dominions saw the League commitment to 'equality of trade conditions' as a potential threat to these policies in the new world order.[70] William Morris Hughes, the fire-eating Australian Prime Minister, was characteristically outspoken. He saw the relationship between economic and military questions, and national sovereignty as central. Universal free trade threatened Dominions' rights to self-government. In his words, 'it affected their

[66] Patricia Clavin and Madeleine Dungy, 'Trade, Law and the Global Order of 1919', *Diplomatic History*, *forthcoming*.
[67] F.W. Hirst, *Safeguarding and Protection in Great Britain and the United States* (London, 1927),15-23.
[68] TNA: PRO, FO 608/72.27, Minute by Sir William Malkin, 4 April 1919.
[69] George T. Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity* (London and Toronto, 1909), 204, 220-236; Michael Hart, *A Trading Nation: Canadian Trade Policy from Colonialism to Globalization* (Vancouver, 2003), 73-79.
[70] TNA: PRO, FO 608/72/27, Memo by Robert Borden, 'Imperial Preference and Inter-Allied or League of Nations Economic Arrangements', 31 March 1919.

rights to make commercial treaties; and it shut the door on differential tariffs and, perhaps even on preferential trade with the empire'. [71]

If an open world economy was the principal goal of the League of Nations, the terms of the Paris Peace Treaties expressed Britain's efforts to secure Europe in relation to its own evolving imperial context. In the wake of the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the subsequent Great Depression, Britain's attempts to square the security of empire with the stability of Europe within the League were blown wide open. Thereafter, its attempts to resolve territorial, monetary and trade disputes increasingly took place out-with the organization. It appeared to be a reversion to great power diplomacy that typified the world before 1914.

What I want to stress here is that before 1931, the practices and norms of global order Britain institutionalized in the League, remained the basis on which the 1919 settlement was challenged. Questions were raised about the operations of the gold standard in the League's 1928 Gold Delegation Inquiry; Austria used the League trade law, and the special provisions it developed for historic regional trading arrangements, as the basis to bid for customs union with Germany – one of the most divisive issues in League diplomacy. As the German Liberal Party politician, Moritz Bonn, a keen student of the British empire (and the German translator of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*) argued, 'your historical connection with the Dominions is a thing of yesterday; our connection with Austria goes back to times of Magna Carta.[72]

[71] TNA: PRO, CAB 23/44A/14, Committee of the Prime Ministers of the Dominions, 'Imperial War Cabinet Meeting, 21 June 1918.

[72] Moritz Bonn, "The Austro-German Customs Union," *International Affairs*, vol.10 (Jul. 1931) 465. Bonn was a member of German delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and a much-favoured German expert of the League of Nations. See Patricia Clavin, ''A "Wandering Scholar" in Britain and the USA: The Life and Work of Moritz Bonn', *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 4 (2002), 27-42. He was also at the vanguard of a European conceptualization of decolonization that would characterize a new world order after 1945. See, Stuart Ward, 'The European Provenance of Decolonization', *Past and Present*,

[SECTION BREAK]

After 1931, Britain may have been less engaged with the League. Even then, it never broke faith with the organization or the prospects of institutional cooperation. It supported the League practically, financially, and politically until successor institutions were in place in 1945. After World War Two, new global institutions reasserted many British-made norms in a new world order. For example, the 1919 British legal formulation of the Most-Favoured-Nations clause became the means by which postwar trade was liberalized through the GATT. Somewhat ironically, the European Economic Community was grounded in legal norms relating to customs union that Britain, too, had a hand in codifying and disseminating via the League.[73]

In 1945, with the USA now onboard, the world's new institutions had a different geo-political orientation and policy preoccupations from the League. Crucially, for Britain and Europe, while the League had brought together hard security with its economic and social dimensions, the world order of 1945 separated them. Unlike the multipurpose League, thanks to the IMF and the GATT, the governance of markets was both more advanced, but also distant from institutions seeking to manage geo-political relations. NATO's front line may have been in Europe, but this military alliance divided notions of hard security from economic and social issues. At the same time, the Second World War had increased Britain's dependence on the USA and Empire in ways that distanced it from Europe.

230: 1 (2016) 227-260; Ewald Grothe (ed.), *Liberales Denken in der Krise der Weltkriegsepoche: Moritz Julius Bonn* (Hamburg, 2018).

[73] Clavin and Dungy, 'Trade, Law and the Global Order of 1919'.

If these were important breaks, there were continuities to Britain's making of global order after 1919. Let me conclude with two of them. Firstly, it remained committed to multilateral co-ordination, co-operation, and the promotion of international legal norms. Secondly, Britain continued to value institutionalized co-operation as a means to manage problems with the global balance of power. It recognized that without international institutions and legal norms - however flawed they may be - the world's most powerful states and economic actors operated unchecked. Governance as much as government mattered. As Salter himself put it, 'the League demonstrates the unparalleled value of bringing together 'expert advice' and 'representative advice'.[74]

[74] Arthur Salter, *The Framework of an Ordered Society* (Cambridge, 1933), 46-47.