1 Precursors

Thinking about War and Peace before 1914

Introduction

This chapter investigates the background of the British pro-league movement and its ideas. In previous studies of the pro-league movement and the prehistory of the League of Nations, the principal concern has been with the later years of the First World War to the 1930s.[1] Although research into the movement has often neglected its social and intellectual backgrounds, pro-league activists already had networks of influence that they could exploit to form and promote the movement prior to the war. The pro-league activists also drew upon a rich intellectual tradition of thought regarding how war could be prevented: for example, the necessity for the legal regulations for the conduct of war and an understanding of structural causes of war.[2] In order to fully appreciate the origins of the ideas and activities behind the first international organisation for peace, we need to analyse them within a wider historical context.

This chapter, therefore, examines both the short- and the long-term developments that led to the pro–league of nations movement and thereby weaves its network and ideas into a more expansive story. The chapter first traces the evolution of the pro-league movement immediately before the war and then investigates how the intellectual legacy, which liberal internationalism inherited in Western Europe beginning in the fourth century and embraced up to the eve of the Great War, influenced that development. While rooted in the accumulated tradition of thought, the problems that pro-leaguers confronted – specifically, the legacy of the Concert of Europe, its breakdown and the rise of nationalism – differed from those of their predecessors. These new

[1] See Introduction, nn. 15 and 24.

[2] F. H. Hinsley, 'Introduction', in *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 1–9; Alan Sharp, 'The New Diplomacy and the New Europe, 1916–1922', in Nicholas Doumanis (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of European History, 1914–1945* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 123.

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challenges brought fresh perspectives on the origins of war and the conditions for peace, which prompted the pro-leaguers to think about a new way to organise peace through an institution – specifically, a league of nations.

The project of the league of nations was an attempt to reform international politics. By creating an organisation based on the principles of cooperation and the peaceful resolution of disputes, the pro-league activists sought to replace the old order of great power rivalries. One could argue that the pro-leaguers were trying to initiate what Paul Schroeder has described as the normative transformation of international politics. The war-time activists presumed that 'the old order is no longer sustainable or tolerable and that something new and different must replace it'.[3] While this recognition was limited to the pro-league thinkers in 1914–1915, it later became sufficiently widespread to bring about a new order. Revealing the prehistory of the pro-league movement will illuminate how an international change could be planned and introduced at the non-governmental level and how deep the roots of the ideas about a peaceful order were.

Networks As the Basis of the Movement

The pro–league of nations movement came into existence not only as a reaction to the outbreak of the Great War but also as a consequence of exploiting the close pre-war network of British intellectuals. In this network, which Noel Annan has described as an 'intellectual aristocracy',[4] pro-leaguers were bound together 'by ties of kinship and shared assumptions based on intermarriage and common educational background'.[5] Most of them were liberal in their political outlook and were highly educated professional elites, such as academics, MPs or journalists. By the outbreak of the First World War, they were around forty to fifty years old and therefore too old to go to the battlefield. Staying at home led them to think not only about the current war but its future implications for their lives.[6]

[3] Paul W. Schroeder, 'The Cold War and Its Ending in "Long-Duration" International History', in P. W. Schroeder et al. (eds.), *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 248.

[4] J. H. Plumb (ed.), *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan* (Longmans, 1955), chapter VIII.

[5] Stuart Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany: British Academics 1914–1918* (Donald, 1988), p. 3.

[6] See Chapter 3.

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These elite networks had three crucial features: personal links, overlapping organisational ties and, most significantly, the common intellectual ground of liberal internationalism.[7] First, most of the leading activists were male and retained personal links from their university days, predominantly at either Oxford or Cambridge, where many of them studied from the late 1870s to 1880s. Some of them were professional academics at Oxford or Cambridge or taught at universities such as the London School of Economics and Political Science, which was founded by the Fabians in 1895. For instance, the political scientist Graham Wallas and the economist John A. Hobson, both of whom participated in one of the first pro-league circles, the Bryce Group, knew each other from their Oxford days and resumed contact in 1887 when Hobson came to London.[8] In the universities, future pro-leaguers built close links through student societies, such as the Apostles in Cambridge, in which the members debated topics such as ethics and politics. Members of the Apostles met regularly with undergraduate students and occasionally with former members to cultivate their acquaintance with one another. Leonard Woolf, the author of *International Government* (1916), which became one of the critical pro-league books during the war, received his formative education largely through the Apostles.[9] The Apostles had an impact on Woolf's political writings and put him in contact with leading pro-league intellectuals such as Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and Bertrand Russell.[10]

Second, pro-leaguers maintained organisational ties that connected them in the pre-1914 period. Building on the personal links they had formed during their university days, future pro-league activists belonged to the same social circles, which frequently had overlapping memberships. Four meeting places became the main hubs of their intellectual networks: the Fabian Society, the Rainbow Circle, the offices of the *Nation* and the National Liberal Club. The Fabian Society, which was associated with eminent names such as the Webbs, George Bernard Shaw and Leonard Woolf, was one of the most notable meeting places; it had been founded in 1884 for 'the reconstruction of Society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities'.[11] Many key figures of the war-

[7] Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), pp. 112, 116, 127.
[8] Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 51.
[9] S. P. Rosenbaum, 'Woolf, Leonard Sidney (1880–1969)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37019?docPos=1.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (E. P. Dutton & Company, 1916), p. 31.

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time pro-league or anti-war movement, such as Graham Wallas, John A. Hobson, Ramsay MacDonald, Leonard Woolf and Henry Brailsford, met through their Fabian connections. Although some like Wallas left the Fabian Society before the war, their unbroken contact with members perhaps fostered collaboration between the League of Nations Society and the Fabian Society for a league plan by 1916.[12] Similarly, the political and social discussion group, the Rainbow Circle, served as a meeting place for like-minded liberal intellectuals in London. Between 1894 and 1931, regular members included Hobson, MacDonald and the Fabian essayist Sydney Olivier. Furthermore, prominent figures such as Wallas, Brailsford, Noel Buxton MP, Fabian educationalist Leonard Hobhouse and Charles Trevelyan MP were occasional attendees. They were mostly social reformers who pursued common ground among progressives of different political perspectives. The third hub formed around the *Nation*, a liberal weekly magazine edited by the journalist Henry William Massingham from 1907. The *Nation*'s business manager was Richard Cross, the secretary of the pro-league Bryce Group as well as the solicitor of the Yorkshire entrepreneurial Rowntree family who owned the *Nation*. Massingham inaugurated a weekly lunch at the *Nation* for the magazine's staff and some guests. As Peter Clarke has described it, this lunch was 'not a meal but a seminar' where they discussed various contemporary issues such as women's suffrage.[13] Contributors, including Hobson, Hobhouse and Brailsford, were regular attendees, whereas some, such as Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, were invited as guests. The *Nation* lunch was usually held at the National Liberal Club, which was another networking site. Founded by Gladstone as a social venue for the liberals in 1882, the club was frequently used as a meeting place for liberal intellectuals as well as MPs, providing opportunities for future pro-leaguers to 'meet in friendly intercourse, and interchange information and views'.[14] Indeed, with prominent individuals such as the former American ambassador Viscount James Bryce, the club helped forge important links for the pro-league activities during the war.

More significantly, the pro-league activists were liberal internationalists who, as Casper Sylvest has argued, had grappled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the problem of

[12] George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919* (Scolar Press, 1978), p. 18.
[13] Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, p. 108.
[14] BL, General Reference Collection 8139.a.48, 'The National Liberal Club – a Description with Illustrations' (London, 1894), pp. 7–8.

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international politics, including the causes of war, morality, progress and how to secure peace.[15] In the words of Sandi Cooper, these liberal thinkers at the beginning of the twentieth century believed in human nature as well as progress, and 'provided an energetic counter-argument to the international anarchy and the status-quo of alliances, balance of power and the attendant arms race'.[16] In fact, this third feature of elite networks – liberal internationalism – was built upon the European history of thinking about the origins of war and the conditions of peace. To understand how this intellectual common ground formed the foundation for the notion of the first international peace organisation, we need to understand the tradition of ideas about international relations in a larger historical context.

From the Just War to Morality in the Renaissance Period

The long-term historical context for the emergence of the pro–league of nations movement was the rich European intellectual legacy of thought regarding the nature of war and peace. Reviewing this tradition and the trajectory of liberal internationalism, common ground that pro-leaguers shared for the post-war planning, this section aims to show how ideas that accumulated over many centuries were also highly relevant to the contemporary views on international relations.

We begin with the idea of just war, the oldest tradition that continues to be an influential approach to the issue of using force in the modern day. During the First World War, one of the core beliefs that buttressed the pro-leaguers' war prevention plan was the necessity for *just* war in order to maintain peace. In the League of Nations Covenant established after the war, wars of aggression were outlawed but wars for collective security were legal; it distinguished between acceptable and unacceptable, that is, just and unjust, wars. To understand the origin of just war theory and its influence, we should look to its original advocate in the fourth century, St Augustine. *Jus ad bellum*, as it is called, regulated the waging of war without just reasons and defined the distinction between justified and unjustified wars. Augustine condemned war as a

[15] Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880–1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 3–4, 11, 26, 139, 197.

[16] Sandi E. Cooper, 'Liberal Internationalists before World War I', *Peace & Change* 1, no. 2 (April 1973), p. 12. In addition, liberal internationalists discussed a wide range of subjects such as rights, law and society. See David Boucher, 'The Recognition Theory of Rights, Customary International Law and Human Rights', *Political Studies* 59, no. 3 (2011); Matt Hann, *Egalitarian Rights Recognition: International Political Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

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disturbance to the social order and an affront to Christian morality. By introducing the ideas of what later became known as just war theory, he sought to warn against war without limits, to regulate war through law and to lay down the ethical foundations for permissible violence. For a religious leader such as Augustine, the law amounted to religious precepts and a just war was a 'Holy War'.[17] While asserting that war within Christendom was sinful both from a religious and a social point of view, Augustine admitted that war against heathens could be justified since wars against external peoples were necessary to restore peace and protect the unity of the Roman Empire.[18] Just war had to be fought under legitimate authority and only as a last resort to obtain peace – out of necessity and not out of choice.[19] Having advocated certain sorts of wars, he drew the line between just wars and unjust wars – in a way similar to that of the pro-league activists as they developed their post-war plan.

In Europe, just war theory continued to be the dominant thinking about war and peace well into the sixteenth century. While morally objecting to war in and of itself, the philosophers of this period also recognised the need for some types of war. The Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus, however, declared that 'there is scarcely any peace so unjust, but it is preferable, upon the whole, to the just(est) war'.[20] Erasmus denied that war could be justified under some circumstances and remained pacifistic because his Christian faith urged him to associate peace with Christ and war with 'unlike Christ' and with the grand destroyer.[21] In his work *Complaint of Peace* (1517), Erasmus appealed to all Christians 'to unite with one heart and one soul, in the abolition of war, and the establishment of perpetual and universal peace'.[22]

In this period, the modern concept of war – a necessary political instrument for preserving an orderly system of interstate relations – began to appear in the work of the Italian statesman Niccolo Machiavelli.[23] This rising trend to consider war as a necessary evil

[17] John Langan, 'The Elements of St. Augustine's Just War Theory', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12, no. 1 (Spring, 1984), p. 25.

[18] Ibid., pp. 27–28; Sophia Moesch, *Augustine and the Art of Ruling in the Carolingian Imperial Period: Political Discourse in Alcuin of York and Hincmar of Rheims* (Routledge, 2019), pp. 194–95.

[19] Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 9; Langan, 'The Elements of St. Augustine's Just War Theory', pp. 26–27.

[20] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Complaint of Peace* (Chicago, 1917), p. 44.

[21] Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 29–30; Erasmus, *The Complaint of Peace*, pp. 18, 77; Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 8.

[22] Erasmus, *The Complaint of Peace*, pp. 18, 77.

[23] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 8.

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seemed to have exerted little influence on Erasmus.[24] The concept of just war, or law to justify war, also divided Erasmus from his contemporary English scholar Thomas More. Although he regarded war as brutal, detestable and inhumane, More agreed with Machiavelli that war could be a continuation of politics.[25] In his famous work *Utopia*, the people of Utopia also utterly loathe war, yet they reluctantly conduct war for the following reasons:[26]

> either to protect their own territory or drive an invading enemy out of their friends' country, or when in pity for a nation oppressed by tyranny they seek to deliver them by force of arms from the yoke and bondage of a tyrant, a course prompted merely by human sympathy. Though they oblige their friends with help, not always indeed to defend them, but sometimes also to avenge and requite injuries previously done to them, they only do it if they are consulted before any step is taken, and recommend that war should be declared only after they have approved the cause and demand for restitution has been made in vain.[27]

These reasons were, according to Michael Howard, derived from medieval legal texts that stated war could be waged to help friends, to protect territories, to avenge injuries or in self-defence.[28] Renaissance humanists, while condemning war on moral grounds, mostly affirmed that war could be legally upheld under certain conditions or circumstances.

Jus ad Bellum and *Jus in Bello*: International Lawyers after the Peace of Westphalia

In the seventeenth century, a normative base for discussion of war and peace began to shift from the moral-theological conception of the ancient and medieval periods to a conception of legal order.[29] Until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, international lawyers' ideas about war, which developed after the Peace of Westphalia, remained crucial in legal texts regarding issues of war and peace. The Thirty Years War and the ensuing Peace of Westphalia of 1648 caused international lawyers to tackle the question of how to prevent war through the law. In 1625, one of the most famous international lawyers of this period, Hugo Grotius, published *On the Law of War and Peace* (*De Jure Belli ac Pacis*). While proposing that the rights and wrongs of war might be judged by universal moral standards, Grotius' book addressed three justifiable

[24] Ibid. [25] Ibid., pp. 8–9. [26] Thomas More, *Utopia* (Oxford, 1923), p. 94.
[27] Ibid. Also see, Thomas More, *Utopia*, George M. Logan (ed.), Robert M. Adams (trans.) (Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 89–90.
[28] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 9.
[29] Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 4, 7, 248–49.

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causes of wars: defence, indemnity and punishment.[30] Just as for Augustine, Grotius' principles were formulated in order to avert war as something essentially irrational. As Frédéric Mégret has described, among international lawyers Grotius was an 'idealist' – to him the law of nations (*jus gentium*) was mandated by natural law and therefore should rest on what 'ought' to be rather than what 'is'.[31]

By contrast, Grotius' eighteenth-century successor, Emmerich de Vattel, focused more narrowly on *jus in bello* – the law of war. He not only set out the conditions for initiating war, which were less critical for him than questions regarding *the ways to conduct war*, but also clearly highlighted a weakness of just war theory itself.[32] Whereas in war time both fighting parties would claim to act justly, international society had no superior authority to adjudicate one side right and the other wrong. Hence, the reasoning of justifiable war was bound to be irrelevant and useless in practice, except as an expedient means to rally opinion in favour of war. This, in effect, undermined just war theory's distinction between acceptable and unacceptable wars. Any war *could be* interpreted as acceptable. Concentrating on the law of war, Vattel sought to minimise the possible damage caused by warfare and to end conflict at the earliest opportunity.[33] Admittedly, in the nineteenth century, the great powers at the Concert of Europe had come to mutual understandings about 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' state actions, such as war for the settlement of disputes.[34] In international law, however, Vattel's critique of just war theory prevailed on the eve of the Great War and remained central until the League of Nations Covenant once again drew the line between justifiable and unjustifiable wars.

A Decision-Making Structure As a Cause of War

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, another strand of thinking about the cause of war became prevalent in Europe, which would later

[30] Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace: Including the Law of Nature and of Nations*, A. C. Campbell (trans.) (M. W. Dunne, 1901), p. 75. Also see, Hugo Grotius, *Hugo Grotius on the Law of War and Peace*, Stephen C. Neff (ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 82.

[31] Frédéric Mégret, 'International Law As Law', in James Crawford and Martti Koskenniemi (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to International Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 75.

[32] Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations: Or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*, Joseph Chitty (ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 304–5.

[33] Michael Howard, *Invention of Peace* (Profile Books, 2000), p. 25.

[34] John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 107.

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have a profound impact on ideas about the league of nations.[35] European political thinkers began to focus on the domestic decision-making system of states as the prime cause of war and on public opinion as a powerful tool to prevent wars. Dynastic elites who dominated the decision-making process were war-prone, while public opinion tended to be pacific and resisted war. As Hidemi Suganami has called, in reference to democratic confederalism, 'state executives are often autocratic, and reflect the popular will far less accurately than do (representative) legislatures'.[36]

In the seventeenth century, the close connection between war and the structure of domestic society was highlighted by the French monk Eméric Crucé. He asserted that 'neither international obstacles, nor differences of religion, nor diversity of nationality are legitimate causes for war'.[37] His book, *the New Cyneas*, was addressed to the monarchy and the ruling class, 'not to men who are subject to a master', and assumed the former made 'the decision of whether there shall be peace or war'.[38]

As an answer to the problem of war, Crucé encouraged peaceful occupations, such as agriculture and commerce, instead of becoming a warrior.[39] Especially, he valued free trade that would make 'countries more interdependent' and consequently 'cause wars to grow less frequent'.[40] By increasing the wealth and power of the peace-loving population, free trade would put people of different nations into constant contact with one another. It could raise people's awareness of the community of interests in shared prosperity, thereby helping promote international understanding.[41] As a promoter of international peace, the notion of free trade became widely embraced in subsequent generations.

Thinkers in the eighteenth century, such as Montesquieu and Rousseau, similarly addressed the problem of decision-making as the main cause of war. Opposing Hobbes' theory that men were born in a state of war, Montesquieu professed peace, not war, to be 'the first law of nature',[42] because individuals in a state of nature were defenceless and

[35] See Chapter 2.
[36] Hidemi Suganami, *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 166.
[37] Eméric Crucé, *The New Cyneas of Émerie Crucé* (Philadelphia, 1909), pp. xv.
[38] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 11; Crucé, *The New Cyneas of Émerie Crucé*, p. x.
[39] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 11.
[40] Ibid., p. xii. Also see, Béla Kapossy, Isaac Nikhimovsky and Richard Whatmore (eds.), 'Introduction', in *Commerce and Peace in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1–19.
[41] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 11–12.
[42] Charles-Louis de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (London, 1758), p. 5; Also see, Charles-Louis de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone (trans. and eds.) (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

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too timid to start war.[43] Nonetheless, when individuals formed a society, war became possible:

> as soon as mankind enter into a state of society, they lose the sense of their weakness; the equality ceases, and then commences the state of war. Each particular society begins to feel its strength, whence arises a state of war betwixt different nations. The individuals likewise of each society become sensible of their strength; hence the principal advantages of this society they endeavour to convert to their own emolument, which constitutes between them a state of war.[44]

For Montesquieu, war was the product of social organisation, not of individual human nature. Although war might be waged if required, for instance, for self-defence, states must provide compelling reasons that would satisfy the principles of justice.[45] To Rousseau as well, war was a social evil that arose from the social order and could only be cured by severing the bonds holding society together. Identifying the wilful machinations of decision-makers as a major cause of war,[46] he denied war could be abolished or controlled by law.[47] Rather, Rousseau expected public opinion to be a powerful mechanism for discouraging statesmen from commencing wars. As Mark Mazower has noted, to thinkers such as Rousseau, 'it is politicians who entangle men in wars, and special interests that corrupt man's innate selflessness'.[48] Public opinion, according to this theory, will always choose peace and be hostile to the elites who determine foreign policy.[49]

This fundamental thinking about the causes of war was shared by the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century. First, Kant rejected the concept of just war and of a law of war as self-contradictory. Any justification for war was the antithesis of the moral law, since perpetual peace was the highest good that people should strive to achieve.[50] In the sense of refusing to 'draw a neat distinction between morality and law', Kant, as well as Grotius, was an idealist who supposed that 'international law is law *because* it is moral or because it is moral for it to be so'.[51] Moreover, Kant also considered the ways in domestic

[43] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 12.
[44] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, p. 7. Also see, Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Cohler, Miller, Stone (trans. and eds.), p. 7.
[45] Stephen J. Rosow, 'Commerce, Power and Justice: Montesquieu on International Politics', *The Review of Politics* 46, no. 3 (July 1984), p. 363.
[46] Howard, *War and the Liberal Concience*, p. 15. [47] Ibid., pp. 13–14.
[48] Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (Penguin Books, 2012), p. 45.
[49] Ibid., *Governing the World*, p. 45. [50] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 17.
[51] Mégret, 'International Law As Law', in Crawford and Koskenniemi (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to International Law*, p. 75.

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policy-making could lead to war and how public opinion could be an effective means to prevent statesmen from going to war. In his *Perpetual Peace* of 1795, Kant called for the creation of republican constitutions, the gradual abolition of standing armies and a federation of free states.[52] According to him, non-republican government could 'decide on war for the most trifling reasons, as if it were a kind of pleasure party', while people 'should weigh the matter well' because of the high costs of war.[53] Such a stance, along with that of Montesquieu and Rousseau, influenced the pro-leaguers' expectation that public opinion would play a pivotal role in their war prevention plan. This assumption was transmitted to the architects of the League of Nations and shaped their idea that it could serve as one of the principal sanctions of the League.[54]

Developments in the Nineteenth Century

The pro–league of nations movement was also the product of events in Europe from the nineteenth century to the First World War. Particularly significant issues were the growth of peace movements, the rise of nationalism and the development of international law and of international organisations. First, fledgling peace movements gained impetus during the Napoleonic Wars, driven by a strong moral reaction against war. Not only did many people suffer from the wars, but the middle class also began to obtain education, wealth and influence, which allowed popular movements to evolve.[55] Notably, the Society of Friends, known as Quakers, were a leading peace-lobbying group inspired by a new strain of evangelism. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, some Quaker families, such as the Frys, Cadburys and Lloyds, were becoming prosperous and politically influential in Britain and the United States. In 1816, the Quaker William Allen founded the first Peace Society in London and called it the Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace; a similar body was established in the United States. A variety of peace groups, including women's organisations, began to be formed and held several international conferences throughout the

[52] Toshiki Mogami, *International Organisations* (Tokyo University Press, 2006) [in Japanese], p. 22; Suganami, *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals*; Kapossy, Nikhimovsky and Whatmore (eds.), *Commerce and Peace in the Enlightenment*, introduction.
[53] Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay, 1795* (London, 1903), pp. 122–23.
[54] Mazower, *Governing the World*, p. 45.
[55] Martin Ceadel, 'Pacifism', in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

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nineteenth century.[56] Their activities were strengthened by a newly founded movement for free trade initiated by the English political reformer Richard Cobden. Following Crucé's approach, Cobden reiterated that free trade, along with disarmament and international arbitration, could eliminate the barriers between nations that incited hatred and triggered wars.[57]

Although many peace movements appeared in the late nineteenth century, they also encountered a great obstacle: the upsurge of nationalism. Chiefly after the French Revolution and in reaction to the Napoleonic conquests, nationalism grew as a foundation of the modern state.[58] In Europe from the late nineteenth century to the outbreak of the Great War, nationalism evolved rapidly with xenophobic sentiments, encouraging both the state and the public to become more bellicose. Eric Hobsbawm has described the emergence of nationalism as follows:

> For the period 1880 to 1914 was also that of the greatest mass migration yet known, within and between states, of imperialism and of growing international rivalries ending in world war. All these underlined the differences between 'us' and 'them'. And there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of restless peoples than to unite them against outsiders ....[59]

From the ruling classes' point of view, a wave of nationalism was convenient for creating the public's loyalty to the nation-state.[60] Exploiting rampant nationalism, governments presented war as a defence against foreign threats and as a national policy that served the whole nation not just elite interests.[61] Even Cobden, faced with chauvinist hatred, realised that not only the aristocracy but also 'entire peoples could be belligerent'.[62] The Crimean War, in particular, shocked him in that he learnt that 'the press and the public opinion they had been accustomed to appealing to [promote peace] could turn to aggression so easily'.[63] In light of nationalism's impact on nation-states' relations, the assumption that public opinion would always be rational and oppose war became increasingly doubtful.

[56] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 29–31. [57] Ibid., pp. 34–35.
[58] James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 43, 152.
[59] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 91.
[60] Ibid., p. 83; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), chapters 6 and 8.
[61] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, p. 89; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, chapters 6 and 8.
[62] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 37.
[63] Mazower, *Governing the World*, p. 46.

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The convening of the Hague Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907 attracted fresh attention to war prevention by law.[64] The political nature of the conferences was highlighted by the initiative of the Czar of Russia, Nicholas II, who proposed to stop the arms race so that Russia, suffering from financial difficulties, could spend less on armaments. Nevertheless, 'the sincerity of the Czar in seeking to halt the arms race', and the efforts of peace groups should perhaps not be underestimated.[65] As a result of the two Hague Conferences, where topics including the peaceful settlement of disputes, arms control and arbitration procedures were discussed, a permanent court of arbitration was established and many of the laws of warfare were codified. A lawyer and a French delegate to the Conferences, Léon Bourgeois, declared that the Conferences were 'a tangible illustration of solidarism in action' and could be recognised as an early feature of a league of nations.[66] Still, the thrust of the Conferences was on the law of war – in other words, the manner of conducting war – and not on the regulation or prevention of war itself.[67] While some agreements such as the Bryan Treaties of 1913–1914 sought to renounce war between individual states, most discussions of war and law, echoing Vattel's thought, concentrated on the conduct of war rather than on the adjudication of war's rightness.

In the nineteenth century, several international organisations also gradually evolved for facilitating communication and coordination in Europe.[68] These organisations, or the 'public international unions' in Inis Claude's phrase, arose as a consequence of the increasing flow of goods, services, people and ideas across national frontiers.[69] Some of the first organisations were, for instance, the various international river commissions of Europe, the International Telegraphic Union in 1865 and the Universal Postal Union in 1874. Through international administration, these organisations fostered genuine international cooperation and set a precedent as well as a model for a league of nations.[70]

[64] Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870–1960* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 87; Maartje Abbenhuis, *The Hague Conferences and International Politics, 1898–1915* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

[65] Scott A. Keefer, 'Great Britain and Naval Arms Control: International Law and Security 1898–1914', the London School of Economics and Political Science PhD thesis, 2011, p. 87. See also, Scott Andrew Keefer, *The Law of Nations and Britain's Quest for Naval Security: International Law and Arms Control, 1898–1914* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[66] Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, pp. 286–87.

[67] Keefer, *Great Britain and Naval Arms Contro*l, pp. 13, 235; Keefer, *The Law of Nations and Britain's Quest for Naval Security*.

[68] Inis L. Claude, *Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (Random House, 1987), p 34.

[69] Ibid., p. 34. [70] Mogami, *International Organisations*, pp. 31–36.

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Thinking about War on the Eve of the Great War

While the pro–league of nations activists inherited the legacy of European ideas about war and peace, their settings – especially the rise of nationalism and the breakdown of the Concert of Europe – were different from those of their predecessors. These developments prompted the pro-leaguers to re-examine the major causes of war and to think in new ways about how to organise peace. First, nationalism, which fuelled hostilities among European states and impeded the growing peace movements, divided the pro-leaguers from their predecessors regarding expectations about public opinion. Crucé and Kant had presumed the primary cause of international conflict was the domestic decision-making system dominated by the ruling classes. Under this assumption, public opinion would behave rationally and oppose war and thereby help preserve peace. Nationalism, however, made this assumption far less tenable, since both the elite and the public became bellicose, as the peace activists of the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century witnessed.[71]

Nevertheless, thinkers did not completely lose faith in public opinion as a promoter of peace. Instead of presupposing that public opinion would automatically turn to rational choices such as peace, thinkers now assumed that public opinion had to be educated and enlightened to do so.[72] The English author Norman Angell, for instance, stressed the education of public opinion in *The Great Illusion* (1910). This book argued that war between modern industrial states was economically unsustainable and pointless; military power had nothing to do with the prosperity of the people, nor would war be profitable even to the victors.[73] Meanwhile, Angell reminded readers that ‘war is not impossible … it is not the likelihood of war which is the illusion, but its benefits’.[74] War was possible unless people were convinced of war’s futility: ‘so long as his notions of what war can accomplish in an economic or commercial sense remain what they are, the average man will not deem that his prospective enemy is likely to make the peace ideal a guide of conduct’.[75] As a solution to this problem of war, Angell

[71] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 37; Mazower, *Governing the World*, p. 46; Casper Sylvest, ‘Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism, c. 1900–1930’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2005), pp. 281–82.

[72] See Chapter 2; also see Stephen Wertheim, ‘Reading the International Mind: International Public Opinion in Early Twentieth Century Anglo-American Thought’, in Daniel Bessner and Nicolas Guilhot (eds.), *The Decisionist Imagination: Democracy, Sovereignty, and Social Science in the 20th Century* (Berghahn Books, 2018).

[73] Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Military Power to National Advantage* (London, 1913), p. x.

[74] Ibid., p. 387. [75] Ibid., p. 372.

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proposed the education of public opinion.[76] If the public recognised the futility of war, they would act to avoid it. During the Great War, the education of public opinion arose as a crucial task of the pro-league groups. Overwhelming public support for war founded on nationalism became an impediment to the pro-league movement, a trend that compelled activists to be careful and covert in the early years of the war. Even so, the goal of transforming public opinion was never forgotten. Despite the war-time jingoism, they produced educational leaflets to improve the public's understanding of international relations as well as of the need for a new international organisation to promote peace.[77]

Another issue that divided the pro-leaguers from their predecessors was their perception of the Concert of Europe. On the eve of the Great War, the most dominant thoughts on war and peace from the nineteenth century derived from the British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone. The pro-league activists mostly accepted Gladstone's theory of international relations, especially regarding intervention. Gladstone was neither an unrestrained interventionist nor a war-mongering statesman; he believed that war or any military intervention 'needed to be justified by reference to a common interest of mankind over and above the maintenance of the security state or the maintenance of a stable balance of power'.[78] For instance, at the outbreak of the Crimean War, Gladstone was convinced that Britain and France had the right, if not the duty, to intervene. He 'believed it to be morally justified, because Russia had unilaterally applied force against Turkey in breach of "international law", or the diplomatic conventions of the "Concert of Europe"'.[79] In order to protect the European order, intervention was necessary.

Gladstone's stance on intervention was shared with the pro–league of nations activists during the Great War. Most of the war-time pro-leaguers also affirmed that intervention could be justified if it would restore a stable and legitimate peace and undo an injustice. On the eve of the war, most pro-leaguers were against British entry. The German invasion of Belgium, however, convinced many of them that defending the sanctity of international law and the rights of small nations justified British intervention.[80] During the war, the pro-league groups adopted Gladstone as a central reference point for their public education campaign. For example, Prime Minister Asquith's speech in 1914, which mentioned Gladstone's phrase 'public right', was frequently

[76] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 60. [77] See Chapter 3.
[78] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 47–48.
[79] Eugenio F. Biagini, *Gladstone* (Macmillan, 2000), p. 35. [80] See Chapter 2.

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quoted in the war-time pro-league pamphlets. In this speech, Asquith proclaimed that:

> [Gladstone] said 'The greatest triumph of our time will be the enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea of European politics.' … The idea of public right, what does it mean when translated into concrete terms? … And it means, finally, or it ought to mean, perhaps by a slow and gradual process, the substitution for force, for the clash of competing ambitions, for groupings and alliances and precious equipoise, the substitution for all these things of a real European partnership, based on the recognition of equal right and established and enforced by a common will.[81]

In 1914, British statesmen also adopted the Gladstonian view of just war in order to defend Britain's entry into the war. The Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, for instance, announced that Britain had to go to war due to the German invasion of Belgium and the need to uphold Britain's own honour and trust in Europe. Accordingly, the Gladstonian approach was employed as a rhetorical and logical device to justify both the current conflict and the prevention of future wars.

Although following Gladstone's line of intervention, the pro-leaguers disagreed about whether the Concert of Europe should be used as a system to preserve the European order. The Concert of Europe, a diplomatic practice and legal framework for great power cooperation that emerged after the Napoleonic Wars, aimed to prevent radical revolutions, to maintain the territorial status quo and resolve international disputes through negotiation.[82] Embracing the notion of the 'unity of Europe' in the Christian sense, Gladstone considered the Concert of Europe the fundamental European political system – potentially 'a secular proxy for the authority of the universal church'.[83] Intervention within the Concert, therefore, was endorsed by 'its moral authority as an agent of the divine will'.[84] As Martin Ceadel has noted, Gladstone deemed that 'the Concert was allowed to interfere in the affairs of other states and sometimes even coerce them only "because it represented the best

[81] British Library of Economic and Political Science, CANNAN 970, *Proposals for the Avoidance of War with a prefatory note by Viscount Bryce As revised up to 24 February 1915.*

[82] Biagini, *Gladstone*, p. 79; Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Clarendon Press, 1996); Paul W. Schroeder, *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[83] Peter Clarke, *A Question of Leadership: British Rulers: Gladstone to Thatcher* (Penguin, 1991), p. 33.

[84] Martin Ceadel, 'Gladstone and a Liberal Theory of International Relations', in Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman (eds.), *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain: Essays in Memory of Colin Matthew* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 80.

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available institutional representation of Christian morality in international affairs"'.[85] By emphasising the moral and humanitarian purposes of intervention such as the defence of innocent people, Gladstone was able to advocate his Christian faith, the expansion of the British Empire and its role in the world and international law altogether.[86]

By the outbreak of the war in 1914, the Concert of Europe had become associated with the balance-of-power system that the pro-leaguers identified as the primary cause of arms races, international hostility and war. Indeed, this stand was related to the transformation of the focus of British liberal internationalists' argument from the late nineteenth century through the inter-war years. As Sylvest has pointed out, British liberal internationalism's focus gradually changed from moral arguments to institutional ones, a trend that became accelerated from the Great War onwards.[87] The moral arguments underscored the need for civilisational progress through the development of morality in the international domain.[88] The institutional arguments were based on international anarchy and the fallibility of human nature; liberal thinkers accordingly assumed that progress required not only morality but also institutional mechanisms that could help or even 'force people to act in ways deemed morally defensible'.[89] From the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, moral arguments were mainstream, and many Victorian liberals including Gladstone were moral internationalists who pursued the reform of international politics through the development of morality and rationality.[90] At the beginning of the Great War, moral arguments were still prevalent and were advocated by some pro-league leaders such as Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson. Although he is known as an author of *European Anarchy* – a book that offered a framework for institutional arguments – when Britain entered the war in August 1914,

[85] Ibid.
[86] Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 271–72; Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914: The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice* (Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 154–57.
[87] Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 198–99, 268–70; also see Nazli Pinar Kaymaz, 'From Imperialism to Internationalism: British Idealism and Human Rights', *The International History Review*, vol. 41, no. 6 (2019), pp. 1235–55.
[88] Ibid., pp. 267–68; Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2005), pp. 266–67; Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[89] Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 198–99, 268–70; Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', pp. 268.
[90] Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', pp. 267–68.

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he still put his faith in the morality of the public rather than in political institutions.

Not one of the men employed in this [war] work of destruction wants to perform it; not one of them knows how it has come about that he is performing it; not one of them knows what object is to be served by performing it. The non-combatants are in the same case. They did not foresee this, they did not want it, they did not choose it. They were never consulted. No one in Europe desires to be engaged in such work. We are sane people. But our acts are mad. Why? Because we are all in the hands of some score of individuals called Governments. Some score among the hundreds of millions of Europeans. These men have willed this thing for us over our heads. No nation has had the chance of saying No.[91]

Dickinson asserted that war was made not by the public but by a handful of 'men who have immediate power over other men',[92] as Rousseau and Kant had thought in the eighteenth century. Similarly, James Bryce, a renowned scholar and a key leading figure of the pro-league movement, criticised a few diplomats for determining Britain's entry into the war: 'how few are the persons in every state in whose hands lie issues of war and peace .... If they had decided otherwise than they did, the thing [the war] would not have happened'.[93] Thus, the moral arguments blamed conniving diplomats and cunning statesmen for making policy without consulting the general public and for precluding the possibility of international progress.[94] Bryce, who admired German culture,[95] could not believe that the German people he knew 'could possibly approve of the action of their Government'. By underscoring the British government's responsibility, he argued that their 'quarrel is with the German Government', not with the German people.[96] The distinction drawn between the government and the general public enabled Bryce and other liberal internationalists to support the war and to place a great deal of faith in the potential of public education and opinion.[97]

[91] G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Holy War', *The Nation*, 8 August 1914.

[92] G. Lowes Dickinson, *The War and the Way Out* (Chancery Lane Press, 1917), pp. 8–9. In 1914–1915, Lowes Dickinson explained the origin of the war by employing what he called 'the governmental theory'. See Lowes Dickinson, *After the War* (Fifield, 1915), pp. 7–8; G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Is War Inevitable?' *War and Peace*, vol. 1, no. 8 (May 1914), p. 221; Lowes Dickinson, 'Holy War'; Also see Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, pp. 18, 113–16.

[93] Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, p. 90.

[94] Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change', pp. 272–73, 281–82.

[95] Robbins, 'Lord Bryce and The First World War', p. 255; Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, p. 161.

[96] Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, p. 161; Richard Cross also wrote about a similar idea. See Cross, 'The Rights of the War', *The Nation*, pp. 791, 793.

[97] Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, p. 175.

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The outbreak of the war, however, triggered the shift of the focus of internationalists' arguments towards institutional frameworks. Prior to the war, the Hague Conferences in 1899 and 1907 'stimulated interest in international law, arbitration, and other institutions in international politics'.[98] Yet, the major factors for this change were the shock of the war and its jingoistic public reception that refuted moral arguments.[99] For example, liberal internationalists such as John A. Hobson realised that his assumption based on moral arguments – most civilised men were rational in essence – was mere illusion.[100] In his 1915 pamphlet *Towards International Government*, Hobson admitted 'public opinion and a common sense of justice are found inadequate safeguards' against war. Hence, 'there must be an executive power enabled to apply an economic boycott, or in the last resort an international force'.[101] Equally, Lowes Dickinson, confronting the challenge of mobilising public opinion, came to perceive that the public were 'controlled more by passion than by reason'.[102] During the war, his pacifist reputation, especially in the face of widespread jingoism in 1914–1916, made him 'desperately pessimistic about the future of all civilization'[103] and led him to wonder 'whether it is worthwhile preaching to the insane'.[104] In his *European Anarchy* of 1916, Lowes Dickinson too shifted his emphasis to the international system; international politics had 'meant Machiavellianism' since 'the emergence of the sovereign State at the end of the fifteenth century':[105]

> They [decision-makers] could not, indeed, practise anything else [other than Machiavellianism]. For it is as true of an aggregation of states as of an aggregation of individuals that, whatever moral sentiments may prevail, if there is no common law and no common force the best intentions will be defeated by lack of confidence and security.[106]

[98] Ibid., pp. 269–70. [99] Ibid., pp. 274–75.
[100] John A. Hobson, *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (G. Allen & Unwin, 1938), pp. 93–94, 104; Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, pp. 166, 170.
[101] John A. Hobson, *Towards International Government* (Macmillan, 1915), p. 6.
[102] Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, p. 120; Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Bryce Papers, MS. Bryce 58, 21, a letter from G. Lowes Dickinson to Bryce, 26 March 1915; OBL, Willoughby Dickinson Papers, MSEng.hist.c.403, a letter from G. Lowes Dickinson to W. H. Dickinson, 1917?; Parliamentary Archives, DAV325, 'Copies of Various Memoranda and Proposals for the League of Nations'.
[103] Arthur Ponsonby's diary (transcript), 23 July 1915.
[104] OBL, The Papers of Arthur Augustus William Harry Ponsonby, 1st Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede, MS. Eng. hist. c.667, 183–84, a letter from G. Lowes Dickinson to Ponsonby, 22 January 1917.
[105] G. Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy* (George Allen & Unwin, 1916), pp. 9–10; Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', *Review of International Studies*, p. 276.
[106] Dickinson, *The European Anarchy*, pp. 9–10.

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Lowes Dickinson now acknowledged the necessity of solving the problem of anarchy – the prime cause of war, which bolstered institutional arguments among liberal internationalists.[107]

During the Great War, the league of nations activists debated future international order in the middle of this transition in liberal internationalism from moral to institutional arguments and therefore viewed international relations from both moral and institutional perspectives. Although the pro-leaguers, including Dickinson and Hobson, were disillusioned about the rationality of human beings, they still supposed the public, if appropriately informed, would become a powerful force to prevent future war.[108] They called for the creation of a league of nations, a new institution that could not only solve the problem of anarchy but also provide the public with the focus, inspiration and education required for moral progress.[109] While moral internationalists' arguments that war was caused by a handful of aristocratic statesmen and that human rationality would promote international progress were on the wane, they identified a lack of authority in international society as the prime cause of war. This shift in turn demanded the creation of an international institution. The institution-driven framework 'became a precondition of the arguments for an international organisation for the prevention of war – a league of nations – which soon became a cornerstone of liberal internationalism'.[110]

Conclusion

Even though previous scholarship has little explored it, the questions of how and why the league of nations movement emerged needs to be discussed by contextualising its network and ideas in both short- and long-term history. For the short term, the pro-league activists already had pre-war networks of influence that they could exploit to organise the pro-league movement. Their networks consisted in an 'intellectual aristocracy' who were closely bound by common educational background and organisational ties.[111] Above all, most of them were liberal

[107] Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', *Review of International Studies*, p. 276.

[108] See Chapter 2; Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', *Review of International Studies*, pp. 281–82.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Sylvest, 'Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism', pp. 274–77, 281–82.

[111] J. H. Plumb (ed.), *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan* (Longmans, 1955), chapter VIII; Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, p. 3.

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internationalists who subscribed to a European legacy of thinking about war – the long-term context of the ideas about the league. Following the intellectual tradition, most of the pro-league activists objected to war on moral grounds, yet simultaneously recognised there were just and unjust wars – wars of aggression were unjust, and wars for collective security were just. In addition to the legal regulation of international conflicts as well as an understanding of the structural causes of war, they also regarded public opinion as a means to avert future wars. Whereas the growth of peace movements, international organisations and conferences fostered supportive environments for popular movements in the nineteenth century, the problems activists confronted in an age of nationalism and industrial total war were different in scale and kind from those encountered by their predecessors. To challenge the new problems – the Concert of Europe and its breakdown and the rise of nationalism – the pro-leaguers now devised a scheme of a new international order centred on the league of nations. This peaceful international organisation was designed with the legacy of thinking about war and peace in Europe and also shaped by the milieu of the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, the pro-leaguers' fundamental views about the post-war order consisted of both new and traditional thinking about war, as well as of both moral and institutional arguments of British liberal internationalism. The prehistory of the pro–league of nations movement and its ideas also suggests how the old intellectual traditions still have a pervasive influence on today's view on war and peace and how the non-governmental movement could lead to the emergence of a new international order.[112]

[112] Schroeder, 'The Cold War and Its Ending in "Long-Duration" International History', in Schroeder and Wetzel et al. (eds.), *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft*, p. 248.

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