

The Use of Force to Prevent War? The Bryce Group's “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” 1914–15

Sakiko Kaiga

Abstract This article reappraises the debate about war prevention in the Bryce Group, the first study circle in Britain to devise a plan for the League of Nations. While scholars have tended to associate pro-league of nations activists with idealism, more focused accounts of the group have mostly depicted its postwar plan as a product of realistic thinking. Drawing on the underused manuscripts of the intellectual founders of the League of Nations, this study first reveals that their early thinking defies simple categorization. Not only was their war prevention plan realistic about the role of armed force but it also depended critically on idealistic expectations about the moral force of public opinion. This article shows that realistic and idealistic views could rarely be separated, and both developed the group's plan for peace, which incorporated the collective use of force as a crucial element of the postwar order. A mixture of the two views, however, hardly ensured consistencies and a balance between them. The paradox of collective security discussed by the group in 1914–15—that peace at least in part rested on the threat of force—was unresolved by the foundation of the League, and remains intact to this day.

INTRODUCTION

After the First World War, the League of Nations was created as the first international organization to prevent future war. The Preamble of the Covenant stipulated the obligation of states not to resort to war to preserve peace. War—or at least initiating war—was now to be regulated in international law, and the idea of collective security was institutionalized.¹ The war-prevention functions of the league owed much to the Bryce Group, the study circle in Britain that developed the idea of a league of nations. Although it was discussed by many organizations, such as the Union of Democratic Control and the Fabian Society, the Bryce Group and its offshoot, the League of Nations Society, were the first to present a fully worked out idea and to organize the popular movement for establishing the League of

Sakiko Kaiga is a postdoctoral fellow at the Peace Research Institute, the International Christian University, Tokyo, and this article is drawn from the PhD dissertation submitted to Department of War Studies, King's College London. She is grateful to Joe Maiolo, who supervised the thesis and encouraged the publication of this piece. She particularly thanks the anonymous referees, the editors of the *Journal of British Studies*, Patricia Clavin, Gaynor Johnson, Martin Ceadel, Norie Takazawa, Hilary Davies, and Joy Peng. She also thanks the audiences at conferences in Bristol, Birmingham, and Niigata, where the earlier versions of the article were presented. Above all, she expresses her gratitude to Koji Yamamoto for warm support.

¹ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, The Avalon Project, Yale Law Library, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp; Martin Ceadel, “Enforced Pacific Settlement or Guaranteed Mutual Defence? British and US Approaches to Collective Security in the Eclectic Covenant of the League of Nations,” *International History Review* 35, no. 5 (October 2013): 993–1008.

Nations.² From November 1914 to February 1915, the Bryce Group produced its first privately circulated draft scheme for a postwar order, “Proposals for the Avoidance of War.” In 1915, the “Proposals” led league advocates in Britain to found the League of Nations Society.³ The Bryce Group also sent its “Proposals” to intellectuals in the United States, including the former ambassador to Belgium, Theodore Marburg, who organized an American pro-league group, the League to Enforce Peace, after studying the draft in 1915.⁴ In 1918, the Phillimore Committee, the Foreign Office’s official study group on the foundation of a postwar organization, examined the plans by pro-league groups, including the Bryce Group and its members; the committee reflected them in its official reports, which provided the basis for the discussion on the League of Nations Covenant at the Paris Peace Conference.⁵

This article, therefore, explores the contents and the making of the group’s “Proposals,” which became the springboard of wartime debates about future war

² On the Union of Democratic Control, see Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War* (Oxford, 1971); A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792–1939* (London, 1957); Stuart Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany: British Academics, 1914–1918* (Edinburgh, 1988).

³ Martin David Dubin, “Toward the Concept of Collective Security: The Bryce Group’s ‘Proposals for the Avoidance of War,’ 1914–1917,” *International Organization* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1970): 288–318; George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919* (Chapel Hill, 1978), 9–11; Henry R. Winkler, *The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain, 1914–1919* (New Brunswick, 1952), 16–18.

⁴ Warren Kuehl, *Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920* (Nashville, 1969), 179; Ruhl J. Bartlett, *The League to Enforce Peace* (Chapel Hill, 1944), 35. One of the leaders of the League to Enforce Peace, A. Lawrence Lowell, admitted that the American group’s plan was founded on the Bryce Group’s “Proposals”; for example, see A. L. Lowell to L. Dickinson, 17 August 1915, Graham Wallas Papers, box 4/5, British Library of Political and Economic Science (hereafter BLPEs). The League to Enforce Peace, before formally organized, read and discussed the Bryce Group’s proposal in meetings. See Minutes, January–April 9, 30 March 1915, *League to Enforce Peace Records* (Int 6722.8.25*), box 4, Houghton Library, Harvard University. With lawyers such as former American president William Howard Taft as its leaders, the platform of the League to Enforce Peace was legalistic in approach, based on its premise that states could form an international legal community. In contrast, the Bryce Group’s “Proposals” aimed to be practical from politicians’ point of view and rejected the assumption that the postwar world could be organized into one international community bound by law. Benjamin Allen Coates, *Legalist Empire: International Law and American Foreign Relations in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York, 2016); Stephen Wertheim, “The League of Nations: A Retreat from International Law?,” *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 2 (July 2012): 210–32; Stephen Wertheim, “The League That Wasn’t: American Designs for a Legalist-Sanctionist League of Nations and the Intellectual Origins of International Organization, 1914–1920,” *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 5 (November 2011): 797–836. As for the French side, intensified discussion about the league later in the war was led by the government, not private groups as in Britain and the United States. The French pro-league committee was appointed in June 1917, although its chairman, Léon Bourgeois, had already been thinking about a possible international organization after the war. See Michael Clinton, “‘The New World Will Create the New Europe’: Paul-Henri d’Estournelles de Constant, the United States, and International Peace,” *Journal of the Western Society for French History*, no. 40 (2012); Michael Clinton, “Wilsonians before Wilson: The French Peace Movement and the Société des Nations,” paper presented at the Western Society for French History Conference, Lafayette, LA, 21–24 October 2010; Peter Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the Politics of National Security in the Era of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2013), 178–82; Kuehl, *Seeking World Order*, 234–36.

⁵ Dubin, “Toward the Concept of Collective Security,” 305; Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 57; “The Committee on the League of Nations, Interim Report,” 20 March 1918, and “Final Report,” 3 July 1918, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CAB29/1.

prevention and ultimately influenced the authors of the 1919 Covenant of the League of Nations.

In previous research, while international relations scholars and historians have tended to associate pro-League of Nations activists with utopianism, idealism, or pacifism,⁶ more focused studies on the Bryce Group have mostly depicted its “Proposals” as a product of realistic thinking.⁷ These studies described the “Proposals” as a moderate and limited project by pointing to the fact that its authors did not advocate a world state or a federation⁸ and that its recommendations included an enforced period of delay at the commencement of an armed conflict and the consideration of international disputes by a council.⁹ These accounts, however, rarely do more than comment on the internal logic of the draft completed in February 1915.¹⁰ Apart from the brief accounts of Robbins and Ceadel, both of whom mention disagreements in the Bryce Group over international sanctions,¹¹ we know very little about what were in fact heated debates behind the drafting of the “Proposals.”¹²

This article redresses this imbalance by offering the first close examination of the drafting process of the “Proposals.” It reveals the group’s intense debates and disagreements over the use of force to enforce peace—what is now called collective security.¹³ The Bryce Group members were the first thinkers to propose collective action as a practical measure to prevent future war and it became the central pillar of their postwar scheme.¹⁴ By analyzing the rich yet underused manuscripts and

⁶ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1939; reprint, London, 2001), 97–98; Martin Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* (Oxford, 1987); Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement, 1870–1914* (Oxford, 2001), introduction and chap. 8; Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918–45* (Manchester, 2011), 135.

⁷ Egerton, *Britain and the Creation of the League*, 10; Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 6; Roland N. Stromberg, “Uncertainties and Obscurities about the League of Nations,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33, no. 1 (January/March 1972): 139–54, at 144; Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford, 2000), 205.

⁸ Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 18.

⁹ Egerton, *Britain and the Creation of the League*, 10; Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 19–20.

¹⁰ Dubin, “Toward the Concept of Collective Security,” 288–318. Dubin’s article provides a detailed account of the Bryce Group’s “Proposals” on the foundation of the League. It does not analyze the group’s discussion and the intellectual backdrop to the “Proposals.” Also see Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 18–20; Peter J. Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914–1925* (Oxford, 2009), 14–15; McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*; Egerton, *Britain and the Creation of the League*, 7–11; Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The ‘Peace Movement’ in Britain, 1914–1919* (Cardiff, 1976); Stromberg, “Uncertainties and Obscurities about the League of Nations,” 139–54. For the American pro-league activities, see Bartlett, *The League to Enforce Peace*; Wertheim, “The League of Nations,” 210–32; Wertheim, “The League That Wasn’t,” 797–836; Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York, 1993); C. Bouchard, *Le citoyen et l’ordre mondial (1914–1919): Le rêve d’une paix durable au lendemain de la Grande Guerre (France, Grande-Bretagne, États-Unis)* (Paris, 2008).

¹¹ Robbins, *Abolition of War*, 49–50; Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, 204–5.

¹² Egerton, *Britain and the Creation of the League*, 7–11; Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace*, 14–15; Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 18–20; Dubin, “Toward the Concept of Collective Security,” 291.

¹³ Alexander Orakhelashvili, *Collective Security* (Oxford, 2011), 1; David Weigall, *International Relations* (London, 2002), 48.

¹⁴ Richard K. Betts, “Systems for Peace or Causes of War? Collective Security, Arms Control, and the New Europe,” *International Security* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1992): 5–43, at 5; Egerton, *Britain and the Creation of the League*, 11.

correspondence of the group, this article illustrates how these early wartime debates culminated in the principle of collective security as enshrined by the League of Nations—with all of that principle's promises and problems.

Before investigating the Bryce Group's discussion, it is useful to revisit how labels such as “utopianism” and “realism” emerged.¹⁵ The term “utopianism” was first employed in the context of international relations by E. H. Carr in his foundational text *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939*.¹⁶ Although Carr's definition of realists and utopians was not always consistent, standard accounts suggest that realists were those who concentrated on the role of power such as military force and realpolitik rather than ideals and morality in international politics. On the other hand, utopians have been portrayed as those who emphasized the role of morality and the force of public opinion and who, by regarding the use of force to resist power as an evil, advocated nonresistance.¹⁷ Carr's depiction of inter-war international relations, a debate between realists and utopians, was profoundly influential and once broadly accepted by scholars in the fields of international relations theory and the history of international politics.¹⁸ Although idealism now

¹⁵ While the Bryce Group members did not use the terms “realism” and “idealism,” the terms they used, such as “utopian” and “practicable,” closely corresponded to the conception of idealism and realism as employed in traditional terminology of scholars of international relations. The category was an alleged theoretical dichotomy constructed after the Great War and further elaborated during the Cold War years. I therefore apply the terms “realistic” and “idealistic,” which are not intended to reify the binary of realism and idealism or attribute retroactively the lineaments of idealist or realist positions to earlier forms of thinking. For the Bryce Group members' use of the term *utopian*, see G. Lowes Dickinson, “The Way Out,” *War and Peace* 1, no. 12 (September 1914): 345–46; Lowes Dickinson to Bryce, 20 October 1914, James Bryce Papers (hereafter JBP), MS Bryce 58, Bodleian Library, Oxford (hereafter BLO); Mr. Ponsonby's Note on the Suggested Amendment to the “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Willoughby Dickinson Papers (hereafter WHP), MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; “Proposals for the Avoidance of War, with a Prefatory Note by Viscount Bryce, as Revised up to 24 February 1915,” Edwin Cannan Papers 970, BLPES. For practical and impracticable terms, see Lowes Dickinson, “The Way Out”; Mr. Ponsonby's Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; Lowes Dickinson to Bryce, 20 October 1914, JBP, MS Bryce 58, 14, BLO; Notes on Lord Bryce's Memorandum by Richard Cross, 27 November 1914, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; Mr. Lowes Dickinson's Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; Arthur Ponsonby, “Democracy and Foreign Diplomacy” *War and Peace* 2, no. 15 (December 1914): 40–41; Bryce to Ponsonby, 5 December 1914, Ponsonby Papers (hereafter PP), MS Eng. Hist. c.661, 146–7, BLO; Mr. Ponsonby's Notes, 10 December 1914, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; Lord Bryce's Memorandum with E. Richard Cross's Notes and the Revisions Made up to Jan. 19th, 1915 by the Group in Conference, Wallas Papers 4/5, BLPES; Lowes Dickinson to C. R. Ashbee, January 1915, The Papers of Charles Robert Ashbee, CRA3/4, King's College Archives, Cambridge; “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Cannan Papers 970, BLPES.

¹⁶ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*. Before the book's initial publication in 1939, scholars employed “realities” and “ideals” to analyze international affairs, including the League of Nations. See Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London, 1919).

¹⁷ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 92–93, 102; Peter Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth-Century Idealism* (New York, 2003), 20; Paul Wilkinson, *International Relations: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2007), 2–7; John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (New York, 2016), 4–5, 100–25; John W. Young, *International Relations since 1945* (New York, 2013), xxiv; Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainley, *Understanding International Relations* (Basingstoke, 2009), 18–26; Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories* (New York, 2013), chaps. 3, 5, 7; Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (New York, 2013), chaps. 2, 3.

¹⁸ For example, Hedley Bull framed international relations theory based on this antithesis: realism in the Hobbesian or Machiavellian tradition that stressed material power and war versus idealism in the Kantian

tends to be closely associated with liberal internationalism, widely used international relations textbooks still refer to these two concepts as the classical dichotomy.¹⁹

Upon closer inspection, however, Carr's intention of employing this dichotomy was not to attack utopianism but to maintain a delicate balance between realism and idealism, because "any sound political thought must be based on elements of both utopia and reality."²⁰ Suggesting that utopian and realistic thinking were "inextricably blended" in any responses to political situations, Carr argued that neither of them should be ignored in politics.²¹ Even though Carr's rather nuanced position once drew little attention from international relations scholars, such clear-cut dichotomies of international relations theory have been called into question by recent scholarship. Some scholars such as Lucian Ashworth examine whether a "great debate" in fact took place between the two clearly defined schools of thought, while others such as Peter Wilson argue that Carr's category of utopianism was a rhetorical device he used to discredit a rich variety of liberal internationalist thought with which disagreed.²²

These nuanced positions of revisionist international relations scholars, I suggest, can provide historians with a useful point of departure to reassess the history of internationalism. A careful reading of the records of the intellectual founders of the League of Nations shows that its early discussion of collective security likewise defies simple categorization. What was traditionally categorized as a realistic view rested on what international relations scholars tended to consider an idealistic one, and an idealistic perspective rested on what they considered a realistic one, neither excluding the other. While the group's war-prevention plan was moderate, practical, and realistic, as historians pointed out, a wide range of manuscript sources reveals that it also depended critically on idealistic expectations. The group's ideas about preventing future war ranged from idealistic devices such as the moral force of world public opinion against war to deter aggression to what it considered to be realistic measures, such as collective military force against an aggressor state. As Glenda Sluga has argued, in the discussion of "the national and international," realistic and idealistic concepts were entwined as complementary ways of thinking about peace.²³

tradition that underlined moral unity and the shared interests of all mankind. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Basingstoke, 1995), 23–25.

¹⁹ Dunne, Kurki, and Smith, *International Relations Theories*; Brown and Ainley, *Understanding International Relations*; Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations*; Steven C. Roach, Martin Griffiths, and Terry O'Callaghan, *International Relations: The Key Concepts* (Oxford, 2013).

²⁰ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 87; also *ibid.*, 10, 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 88, 92.

²² Lucian M. Ashworth, "Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations," *International Relations* 16, no. 1 (April 2002): 33–51; Lucian M. Ashworth, "Where Are the Idealists in Inter-War International Relations?," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 2006): 291–308; Peter Wilson, "The Myth of the 'First Great Debate,'" in *The Eighty Years' Crisis: International Relations, 1919–1999*, ed. Tim Dunne, Michael Cox, and Ken Booth (Cambridge, 1998), 1–16; Casper Sylvest, "Interwar Internationalism, the British Labour Party, and the Historiography of International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (June 2004): 409–32; Jeremy Weiss, "E. H. Carr, Norman Angell, and Reassessing the Realist-Utopian Debate," *International History Review*, 35, no. 5 (October 2013): 1156–84.

²³ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013), 150.

Note that the symbiosis between “idealistic” and “realistic” impulses should be a point of departure, not conclusion. Thus the detailed reconstruction of the group’s early discussion reveals that some parts of its war-prevention plan were logically inconsistent: it aimed to be “practical” but fundamentally depended on liberal internationalists’ belief in the “gradual progress” of the world, an international organization, and public opinion in particular. The members were conscious of the flaws and contradictions in their war-prevention plan, such as the necessity to threaten and ultimately to use force to maintain peace. Nevertheless, they never arrived at a coherent solution for striking a balance between “realistic” views and “idealistic” ones. By employing the terms *realistic* and *idealistic*, this article therefore illustrates not only a mixture of these categorization but also—more crucially—their profound ambiguities and instabilities. The innate weaknesses and the perennial dilemma of collective security that exercised the Bryce Group were never fully resolved in the foundation of the League of Nations and remain a pervasive problem to this day.

WAR-PREVENTION MEASURES IN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS PLAN

Before analyzing the discussions of the Bryce Group, we need first to look at how the group came into being in 1914. It was the group members’ backgrounds and varying reactions to the beginning of the war that gave rise to their war-prevention plan. The coming and outbreak of the war pressed some intellectuals in Britain to urgently form private groups against the war, such as the Union of Democratic Control and the British Neutrality Committee that existed for only a few days in the summer of 1914. The Bryce Group, one of such organizations, most strongly influenced public debates about a new peaceful order. The group was organized by the Cambridge classicist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, who first sketched out the scheme for a league of nations a few weeks after the British entry into the war and brought together those who might be interested in it.²⁴ Chaired by James Bryce, the former British ambassador in Washington and a specialist in international law, the group called a meeting at the beginning of November 1914.²⁵ The main members, including Lowes Dickinson and Bryce, were seven liberal intellectuals, politicians, and journalists. The other five were two Liberal MPs, Sir Willoughby H. Dickinson and Arthur Ponsonby; the Quaker lawyer and the business manager of the *Nation*, Richard Cross; the political philosopher Graham Wallas; and the economist and critic of imperialism John A. Hobson.

The Bryce Group shared personal connections, overlapping institutional ties, and common intellectual influences. Some of the members not only knew one another as

²⁴ G. Lowes Dickinson, *Autobiography of G. Lowes Dickinson and Other Unpublished Writings* (London, 1973); Papers of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, GLD 1/2/4, King’s College Archive Centre, Cambridge.

²⁵ Graham Wallas to Ada Wallas, 30 October 1914, Wallas Family Papers, WALLAS 1/1/24, Newnham College, Cambridge; Arthur Ponsonby’s Diary (transcript), 11 November 1914, Ponsonby’s Papers (private papers held by the Ponsonby family, read by permission of Lord Ponsonby). The diary is also used, for instance, by Martin Ceadel, *Living the Great Illusion: Sir Norman Angell, 1872–1967* (Oxford, 2009), chap. 8, n166.

friends or colleagues at universities²⁶ but also had overlapping institutional ties and social circles such as the *Nation* and the National Liberal Club that connected them in the pre-1914 period.²⁷ More significantly, members were liberal internationalists who, as Casper Sylvest has argued, grappled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the problem of international politics, including the causes of war, morality, progress, and securing peace.²⁸ 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.”²⁹ Indeed, as this article shows, these features of liberal internationalists were distinctive among the Bryce Group membership and profoundly influenced its thinking about the postwar organization.³⁰

At the outbreak of the war, some members supported Britain’s entry into the war; others were determinately against it. Despite their disagreement, group members still shared core values and, above all, the goal of preventing another war in the future. The initiator of the group, G. Lowes Dickinson, subsequently the author of *European Anarchy* (1916),³¹ identified the international system based on the “balance of power” as a principal cause of war that should be replaced by a new peaceful order.³² Initially, he called for “the League of Nations of Europe”—“something much more like a federation than concert”—that would unite European powers as in the United States.³³ Although James Bryce was initially undecided about the war,³⁴ he changed his mind. As a jurist who advocated the rule of law and the rights of small nations, the German invasion of Belgium was a sufficient cause for

²⁶ Wallas and Hobson knew each other as students in Oxford. Some members were professional academics at Oxford, Cambridge, or London. Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge, 1978), 51.

²⁷ The *Nation*, the liberal weekly magazine, organized lunch every week with some guests and the magazine’s staff. This lunch was “not a meal but a seminar,” where attendees such as Lowes Dickinson or Hobson, members of the Bryce Group, debated various contemporary issues. See Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 108.

²⁸ Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880–1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester, 2009), 3–4, 11, 26, 139, 197.

²⁹ Sandi E. Cooper, “Liberal Internationalists before World War I,” *Peace and Change* 1, no. 2 (April 1973): 11–19, at 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 (October 2011): 753–71; Matt Hann, *Egalitarian Rights Recognition: International Political Theory* (New York, 2016).

³⁰ Larger concerns about humanitarian interventions and humanitarianism at this period did not exercise the group to a significant degree, although the concerns and the group’s war-prevention plan shared a common intellectual origin in nineteenth-century Britain. See Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim, eds., *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge, 2011); Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914; The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice* (Princeton, 2012); Caroline Shaw, *Britannia’s Embrace: Modern Humanitarianism and the Imperial Origins of Refugee Relief* (Oxford, 2015); Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge, 2014).

³¹ G. Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy* (London, 1916).

³² Lowes Dickinson, “The Way Out”; Lowes Dickinson to Bryce, 20 October 1914, *JBP*, MS Bryce 58, 14–17, BLO.

³³ Lowes Dickinson, “The Way Out,” *Ceadel, Semi-Detached Idealists*, 204–5.

³⁴ Keith G. Robbins, “Lord Bryce and the First World War,” *Historical Journal* 10, no. 2 (January 1967): 255–78, at 255; H. A. L. Fisher, *James Bryce*, vol. 2 (London, 1927), 126–27.

his commitment to the war.³⁵ Bryce argued that unless nations respected treaties as sacred undertakings, international order would be destroyed.³⁶

The two MPs, Willoughby Dickinson and Arthur Ponsonby, were perceived in very different ways by the public. Inspired by his Anglican faith, Dickinson had already worked for progressive causes prior to the war and was widely respected as a man of principle.³⁷ Joining the Bryce Group, for him, was the continuation of his peace work.³⁸ Ponsonby, on the other hand, was one of the five radical MPs who decried the government's foreign policy on 3 August—the very day Foreign Secretary Edward Grey announced the British entry into war.³⁹ As a leading member of the Union of Democratic Control, he was publicly attacked as “pro-German” by jingoists.

A moving spirit of the group, Richard Cross was a very able solicitor of the Yorkshire business entrepreneur Rowntree family and “associated with good political work behind the scenes.”⁴⁰ A careful study of the negotiations before the war convinced him of “the complete bankruptcy of European statesmanship” and “the absolute futility of the attempt to keep the peace of Europe by dividing its peoples into two groups.”⁴¹ To tackle these problems, he specified some objectives, including the creation of a new order, for which those who worked for peace, such as the Bryce Group, ought to be “prepared to take action as opportunity offers.”⁴²

The other two members, Graham Wallas and John A. Hobson, were the founders of the British Neutrality Committee of 1914. Fearing that “political or social progress”—principal features of liberal internationalism in those days—would be “names without a meaning for our time” as a consequence of the war,⁴³ Wallas became a member of the Bryce Group; yet he was “more concerned to press [for] international cooperation in general than [the group's] particular and definite plan for preventing war.”⁴⁴ Prior to the war, Hobson was already critical of traditional European diplomacy and considered that the balance of power should be replaced by a new international order⁴⁵—a federation of popular governments, which

³⁵ Robbins, “Lord Bryce and the First World War,” 255. Fisher, *James Bryce*, 127.

³⁶ Robbins, “Lord Bryce and the First World War,” 256.

³⁷ Daniel Gorman, “Ecumenical Internationalism: Willoughby Dickinson, the League of Nations and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (January 2010): 51–73, at 52, 54.

³⁸ Hope Costley White, *Willoughby Hyett Dickinson, 1859–1943: A Memoir* (Gloucester, 1956), 64–66.

³⁹ PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.660, 74–81, 93–101, BLO; R. A. Jones, “Ponsonby, Arthur Augustus William Harry, first Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede (1871–1946),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35566?docPos=1>, accessed 20 June 2012; House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk/hansard/fullrec.do?source=config5.cfg&area=hcp-p&cid=CDS5CV0065P0-0011>, accessed 6 May 2012.

⁴⁰ Lowes Dickinson, *Autobiography*, 190.

⁴¹ E. Richard Cross, “The Rights of the War,” *Nation*, 29 August 1914, 791, 793; Marion Wilkinson, *E. Richard Cross: A Biographical Sketch with Literary Papers and Religious and Political Addresses* (London, 1917), 39–40.

⁴² Cross, “The Rights of the War,” *The Nation*, 791, 793.

⁴³ Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 166–67.

⁴⁴ Lowes Dickinson, *Autobiography*, 304; Papers of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, GLD 1/2/4, King's College Archive Centre, Cambridge.

⁴⁵ David Long, “J. A. Hobson and Idealism in International Relations,” *Review of International Studies* 17, no. 3 (July 1991): 285–304, at 290, 292–93.

would not only prevent war but also help to solve economic and imperial problems.⁴⁶ Hobson joined circles such as the Bryce Group and the Union of Democratic Control to influence their course and their eventual outcome. The Bryce Group remained a loose study group throughout the war, and therefore its membership was not necessarily restricted to the regular members listed above.⁴⁷

In its meetings, building upon the members' notes about possible international schemes, the group singled out as the primary cause of the war the existing European order founded on the balance of power.⁴⁸ Behind this common ground, we can detect evidence of a profound shift in British liberal internationalism from the late nineteenth century through to the interwar years. As Casper Sylvest has pointed out, British liberal internationalism's focus gradually changed from moral arguments to institutional ones, a trend that became accelerated after the beginning of the war.⁴⁹ Placing the Bryce Group's debates in this shift would enable us to understand a key intellectual background that shaped the development of the wartime ideas about a peaceful organization, including that of collective security. The moral arguments underlined the need for civilizational progress through the evolution of morality and ethics in the international domain.⁵⁰ The institutional arguments were based on international anarchy and the fallibility of human nature; they 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."⁵¹

From the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, moral arguments were mainstream, and many Victorian liberals such as the Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone were moral internationalists who attempted to reform international politics through the development of morality and rationality.⁵² At the beginning of the Great War, moral arguments were still prevalent and accepted by the Bryce Group members. In August 1914 when Britain entered the war, Lowes Dickinson still put his faith in the morality of the public rather than 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

⁴⁶ Robbins, *The Abolition of War*, 51, 53; Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, 96; Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 213–14.

⁴⁷ The architect and social reformer Charles Robert Ashbee indicated that he was a member of the Bryce Group. See The Papers of Charles Robert Ashbee, CRA 3/4, King's College Archives, Cambridge. Further, the peace campaigner and author Norman Angell was an absentee member. Although Angell kept in touch with the group, he did not submit comments on the Bryce's drafts of the "Proposals" in the group's meetings. See G. Lowes Dickinson, "Plans for a Discussion about the Establishment of an International Council," 1914(?), Wallas Papers 1/55, BLPES; Arthur Ponsonby's Diary, 11 November 1914; Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control*, 97–98; Martin Ceadel, *Living the Great Illusion: Sir Norman Angell, 1872–1967* (Oxford, 2009), 171, 177, 180, 195–96; Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980), 180.

⁴⁸ Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 198–99, 268–70.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 267–68; Casper Sylvest, "Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism," *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 2005): 263–83, at 266–67.

⁵¹ Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 198–99, 268–70; Sylvest, "Continuity and Change," 268.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 267–68.

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.⁵³

In 1914, Lowes Dickinson asserted that war was made not by the general public but by a handful of “men who have immediate power over other men.”⁵⁴ Similarly, Bryce blamed 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.”⁵⁵ Thus the moral arguments blamed conniving diplomats and cunning statesmen for making policy without consulting the public and thereby precluded the possibility of international progress.⁵⁶ Bryce, who admired German culture and had little hostility towards Germany,⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ The distinction drawn between the government and the general public enabled Bryce and other liberal internationalists to support the war.⁵⁹

The outbreak of the war, however, began to shift the focus of internationalists’ arguments towards institutional frameworks.⁶⁰ The shock of the war and its jingoistic public reception led group members such as Hobson to realize that his assumption, based on moral arguments that most civilized men were in essence rational, was mere illusion.⁶¹ In his 1915 pamphlet *Towards International Government*, he admitted that “public opinion and a common sense of justice are found inadequate safeguards” against war; therefore, “there must be an executive power enabled to apply an economic boycott, or in the last resort an international force.”⁶² Equally, Lowes Dickinson, facing the challenge of shaping public opinion, came to perceive that the public were “controlled more by passion than by reason.”⁶³ During the war, his pacifist reputation in the face of widespread jingoism,

⁵³ G. Lowes Dickinson, “Holy War,” *Nation*, 8 August 1914.

⁵⁴ G. Lowes Dickinson, *The War and the Way Out* (London, 1917), 8–9. In 1914–15, Lowes Dickinson explained the origin of the war by employing what he called “the governmental theory.” See G. Lowes Dickinson, *After the War* (London, 1915), 7–8; G. Lowes Dickinson, “Is War Inevitable?,” *War and Peace* 1, no. 8 (May 1914): 221–23, at 221; Lowes Dickinson, “Holy War.”

⁵⁵ Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, 90.

⁵⁶ Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 272–73, 281–82.

⁵⁷ Robbins, “Lord Bryce and The First World War,” 255; Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 161.

⁵⁸ Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 161; Cross also wrote a similar idea. See Cross, “The Rights of the War,” *Nation*, 791, 793.

⁵⁹ Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, 175.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 274–75.

⁶¹ John A. Hobson, *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (London, 1938), 93–94, 104; Clarke, *Liberal and Social Democrats*, 166, 170.

⁶² John A. Hobson, *Towards International Government* (New York, 1915), 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 120; L. Dickinson to Bryce, 26 March 1915, JBP, MS Bryce 58, 21, BLO; L. Dickinson to W. H. Dickinson, 1917(?), WHF, MS Eng. Hist. c.403, BLO; “Copies of Various Memoranda and Proposals for the League of Nations,” DAV325, Parliamentary Archives.

especially in 1914–16, made him “desperately pessimistic about the future of all civilization”⁶⁴ and led him to wonder “whether it is worthwhile preaching to the insane.”⁶⁵ In his *European Anarchy* (1916), Lowes Dickinson too shifted his emphasis to the international system and maintained that international politics had “meant Machiavellianism” since “the emergence of the sovereign State at the end of the fifteenth century”⁶⁶: 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.”⁶⁷

Lowes Dickinson now maintained that a new institution was needed to solve the problem of anarchy—the primary cause of war, which vitalized institutional arguments about war and peace among liberal internationalists.⁶⁸ 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, while liberal internationalists identified the primary cause of war as a lack of authority in international society. This shift in turn highlighted the need for an international institution. Thus, institution-driven frameworks “became a precondition of the arguments for an international organization for the prevention of war—a league of nations—which soon became a cornerstone of liberal internationalism.”⁶⁹

According to the Bryce Group’s institutional approach to international reform, the old system driven by the balance-of-power politics had caused the war and had endorsed the view that “the best way to maintain peace was to prepare war.” Such a view triggered arms races, a sharp division between alliance blocs, and, in the end, large-scale wars.⁷⁰ Although the members’ initial visions of the postwar order ranged from informal agreements among the powers to a world federation, they were unanimous in agreeing that “the organization of Europe on the basis of two opposing groups [military alliances] should come to an end.”⁷¹ Unless a new blueprint for an international order was devised by the end of the war, the balance of power would only be restored and cause great wars again.⁷²

To provide an alternative to the old European system, the Bryce Group proposed four interrelated war-prevention measures that would be central to the workings of a league of nations organization: the judicial settlement of international disputes; the formation of a so-called Council of Conciliation; a moratorium on hostilities; and ultimately, collective security. Underlying these four measures was the tacit assumption, explored below, that the force of public opinion against aggression would also serve to maintain the world order. These four main measures appeared in the first version of the Bryce Group’s “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” composed for

⁶⁴ Ponsonby’s Diary, 23 July 1915.

⁶⁵ Lowes Dickinson to Ponsonby, 22 January 1917, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.667, 183–84, BLO.

⁶⁶ Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy*, 9–10; Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 276.

⁶⁷ Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy*, 9–10.

⁶⁸ Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 276.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 281–82.

⁷⁰ Mr. Ponsonby and the War, 7 October 1914, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.661, 60–66, BLO; Ponsonby to Donaldson, 10 August 1914, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.660, 106–12, BLO.

⁷¹ Mr. Graham Wallas’s Note, WHR, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁷² Lowes Dickinson, “The Way Out;” Lowes Dickinson to Bryce, 20 October 1914, *JBR*, MS Bryce 58, 14–17, BLO.

private circulation in February 1915. While their expression slightly altered through revisions until their 1917 publication, these main points remained on their agenda throughout the war. Members of a future league would also commit themselves to all four measures.

In terms of a judicial settlement of disputes, the “Proposals” of February 1915 stated that the signatory powers would agree to submit disputes to the existing Hague Tribunal.⁷³ As well, the draft introduced the idea of creating a Council of Conciliation with a view to considering suggestions about the settlement of disputes, including settlement of non-justiciable disputes that could not be settled by diplomatic means.⁷⁴ The third measure, a moratorium on hostilities in the midst of a crisis on the verge of war, was called a “cooling off period.”⁷⁵ The “Proposals” suggested that signatory states should not resort to hostilities in advance of submission of cases to arbitration or the council, or within six months after the publication of the council’s report.⁷⁶ Finally, the fourth measure, collective security, was stipulated in articles 18 to 19 of the February 1915 draft:

18. All the signatory Powers to undertake that in case any signatory Power resorts to hostilities against another signatory Power, without first having submitted its case to an arbitral tribunal, or to the Council of Conciliation, or before the expiration of the prescribed period of delay, they will support the Power so attacked by such concerted measures, diplomatic, economic or forcible, as, in the judgement of the majority of them, are most effective and appropriate to the circumstances of the case.

19. The signatory Powers to undertake that if any Power shall fail to accept and give effect to the recommendations contained in any report of the Council, they will consider, in concert, the situation which has arisen by reason of such failure, and what collective action, if any, it is practicable to take in order to make such recommendations operative.⁷⁷

The Bryce Group’s “Proposals” thus introduced collective security, a new system to maintain peace. Although it was one of the four measures to prevent war and would only be considered after exhausting the other three measures, this idea provoked vigorous debates within the group about whether collective action should include the use of force.

“REALISTIC” OPINIONS ABOUT FORCIBLE ACTION: FORCE AS NECESSITY

The Quaker lawyer Richard Cross first raised the issue of collective security at a meeting of the Bryce Group in November 1914.⁷⁸ Postwar Europe, he said, should

⁷³ Lord Bryce’s Notes, “When the War Comes to an End,” WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁷⁴ The members of the Council of Conciliation were to be appointed by the signatory Powers for a fixed term of years. The Bryce Group’s “Proposals” indicated that the function of the council would be similar to the diplomatic representative of the powers, but “should enable its members to take a more international view.” The group also suggested that the great powers “might be given a greater representation” since they “would have a larger number of men qualified to be a members.” “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Cannan Papers, 970, BLPES.

⁷⁵ Dubin, “Toward the Concept of Collective Security,” 291–92.

⁷⁶ “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Cannan Papers, 970, BLPES.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Notes on Lord Bryce’s Memorandum by Richard Cross, 27 November 1914, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

respect the Christian ideal of brotherhood and international law. Cross argued that “the powers should bind themselves to assist each other in repelling any attack by powers not party to the [league].”⁷⁹ Lowes Dickinson also endorsed the necessity of force, claiming that there was “no other way of guaranteeing the reference to conciliation”: if “there is no threat of force behind the agreement, and States retain their armaments (which I am supposing) the temptation of a State to take the law into its own hands when the situation seems favourable might be irresistible.”⁸⁰ Having agreed with Lowes Dickinson, John A. Hobson, who aspired to a world federation, argued that an effective organization required military sanctions.⁸¹ Insisting that international society needed a police force just as any society did, he denied a doctrine that supposed economic sanctions to be “more moral” than military coercion.⁸² He also presumed that an international organization with a centralized force would reduce illegitimate force.⁸³ In varying degrees, most of the Bryce Group members agreed to adopt collective security on these terms—the use of military sanctions to prevent war.

On the assumption that the “council has been created” and “the principal Powers have agreed to submit to it all non-justiciable disputes which they have not been able to settle by diplomatic means,” Lowes Dickinson presented three main cases in which the adoption of forcible collective security could be justified.⁸⁴ In the first case, he suggested, if some states took or threatened military action before submitting a matter to conciliation, all the other signatory states had the duty to “intervene by the threat of force to coerce the offender.”⁸⁵ The second case he cited was when a dispute was referred to the Council of Conciliation and its suggestion was unacceptable to some or all of the parties. If all the parties were small powers, if they refused the suggestion, and if their dispute did not involve the interests of great powers, diplomatic pressure with the threat of force would be put on all parties after consultation among the powers.⁸⁶ In the same circumstance but where the great powers were involved, the threat of force would still be posed. This threat could trigger a war but should limit it to the immediately interested parties.⁸⁷ If, as in the third case, one or more parties accepted the suggestion but the others rejected it and resorted to military action, the signatory states were obliged to protect the accepting states against aggressive action by the rejecting states.⁸⁸ Having reviewed these potential cases in the context of the actual situation at the outbreak of the Great War, Lowes Dickinson concluded that there should have been no war, or that at least the war could have been confined to some powers, had their scheme been applied.⁸⁹

⁷⁹ E. Richard Cross, “The New Year and the New Europe,” 3 January 1915, in Wilkinson, *Richard Cross*, 227–30; Notes on Lord Bryce’s Memorandum by Richard Cross, 27 November 1914, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁸⁰ Mr. Lowes Dickinson’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁸¹ Robbins, *The Abolition of War*, 131; Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 144–45; Long, “Hobson and Idealism,” 288, 294; Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 281–82.

⁸² Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, 144–45.

⁸³ Long, “Hobson and Idealism,” 295.

⁸⁴ Mr. Lowes Dickinson’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

From what international relations scholars have traditionally called the “realistic” viewpoint, the Bryce Group thus promoted the use of force, or the possibility of the use of force, to maintain peace. Indeed, the group members judged that force would be necessary for a postwar league to be an effective and “realistic” organization. Although in their scheme collective security should only be implemented after exhausting the other options such as a judicial settlement, it was an essential part of their war-prevention scheme, because otherwise, as Bryce put it, “the whole thing will seem pointless and ineffective.”⁹⁰

“IDEALISTIC” VIEWS ABOUT FORCIBLE ACTION? THE CRITICISM OF THE USE OF FORCE

Arthur Ponsonby was strongly opposed to forcible action to promote peace.⁹¹ He underlined three interrelated problems of the use of force: the impracticability of military sanctions, the danger of triggering larger wars, and the potential damage to morality in international relations. Even though his objection to collective security might seem “idealistic” from conventional international relations perspectives, what is striking about Ponsonby’s objections is how grounded and pragmatic—one might say “realistic”—they were.

First, even though in the group’s scheme forcible action should be undertaken only after the other attempts at a peaceful settlement, Ponsonby highlighted that “questions that are capable of settlement by arbitration are not the most critical or dangerous.”⁹² Disputes that were incapable of settlement by arbitration would likely include not only the vital concerns of powers but also serious political differences, contributing to “spreading and intensifying the causes of quarrel.”⁹³

By presenting some examples, as Lowes Dickinson did, Ponsonby criticized the impracticability of military sanctions. He illustrated that if a dispute were so acute as to induce one of the parties involved to begin hostile preparations immediately, the obedient parties then “would receive not obligatory, but spontaneous support from other powers.”⁹⁴ Where both parties were making immediate preparations and beginning war before a cooling-off period, nonintervention would be the only solution for the limitation of war. As we will see below, this argument was a compelling one against military action to prevent another world war in the future. Further, following the claim of the eighteenth-century international lawyer Emmerich de Vattel, Ponsonby noted that both sides in a conflict would allege that they had acted rightly in the event of war:⁹⁵ “The nation responsible for the breach does not necessarily act from dishonourable and aggressive motives, but often because it believes that the national danger arising from the

⁹⁰ Lord Bryce Memorandum on Mr. J. A. Hobson’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁹¹ Ponsonby’s Diary, 15–16 December 1914.

⁹² Mr. Ponsonby’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Mr. Ponsonby’s Notes, 10 December 1914, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁹⁵ Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order* (London, 2000), 25; Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations: or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (Philadelphia, 1853), 305.

strict observance may out-balance the evil involved in the violation of an international agreement.⁹⁶ Ponsonby therefore affirmed that unless the involved states' purposes or circumstances were considered on a case-by-case basis, obligatory collective sanctions might be disadvantageous to the maintenance of future peace.

Second, Ponsonby warned that compulsory forcible action could preserve the old balance of power and trigger great wars. In his view, military sanctions meant "preserving peace by war," which would "destroy the possibility of impartial deliberation" about each dispute. Having indicated that the council could not always be unanimous, he pronounced that collective force would lead to "a break-up of the Council [of the League], a majority and minority, a grouping of powers, the formation of alliances, and all the old evils perpetuated."⁹⁷ Compulsory military action, he concluded, would thus create "a new method of making all wars European wars" that would forever prevent universal disarmament—a major issue on the league's action agenda.⁹⁸

Third, Ponsonby presupposed that force was the antithesis of morality, which would undermine the moral foundations of international law.⁹⁹ He maintained that the absence of a supreme executive international authority was a prime cause of war, and that the threat of collective force might inhibit the condition of anarchy from triggering wars. However, he also stressed that morality should be, and must be, the basis of international relations: "The observance of general precepts of international law as well as of particular agreements between sovereign states besides being the general rule ... has been all the stronger and more durable from the fact that it is backed by permanent moral authority and not by shifting physical force."¹⁰⁰

Ponsonby asserted that forcible action would not only be a step backwards for future peace but would also mean the destruction of the moral authority of the new international order.¹⁰¹ In other words, he distinguished between a negative peace enforced by the threat of force and a positive peace based on moral authority.¹⁰² His rejection of forcible action and his plea for international morality therefore cannot be cited as a substantial evidence for his "idealistic" standpoint, as conventionally defined by international relations scholars. A closer look at Ponsonby's argument reveals that his objection instead reflected what his colleagues would have deemed "realistic" perspectives on the intricate relationship of politics, war, and morality in the international order.

⁹⁶ Mr. Ponsonby's Notes, WHR, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁹⁷ Mr. Ponsonby's Notes, 10 December 1914, WHR, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.; Aneurin Williams, *A New Basis of International Peace* (London, 1915), 5, E(I)33, BLPES.

¹⁰⁰ Mr. Ponsonby's Notes, 10 December 1914, WHR, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² The concepts of negative and positive peace were first introduced by Johan Galtung, who defined them as "negative peace which is the absence of violence, absence of war—and positive peace which is the integration of human society." "An Editorial," *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (March 1964): 1–4. See also Paul Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (Hoboken, 2012), 83, 395.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN “REALISTIC” AND “IDEALISTIC” VIEWS

The conflicting views within the Bryce Group about forcible action might seem irreconcilable. They were not; manuscript letters and notes of the group members reveal that both sides acknowledged the validity of the other’s logic and the weakness of their own positions. As we have seen above, they shared similar intellectual backgrounds as British liberal internationalists, and their arguments were neither purely “idealistic” nor “realistic.” Hence, their disagreements arose between different priorities in their war-prevention scheme.¹⁰³

In their meetings, Ponsonby’s objection to the use of force aroused the other members’ sympathy, although his view was not incorporated in their “Proposals.” After reading Ponsonby’s note, for example, Bryce wrote to him that it was “very weighty—the strongest argument I have seen against the Force plan and personally I agree with most of it, and see little or no chance that the Powers will adopt such scheme [with forcible action], and not very much chance that they could be relied on to work it if adopted.”¹⁰⁴ In addition, it is evident that Lowes Dickinson, like Ponsonby, also regarded morality—a fundamental principle of liberal internationalism—as one of the most critical and effective aspects that the new system should rely on, although he thought it could emerge after the creation of the league and indeed through strenuous efforts to establish it.¹⁰⁵ Lowes Dickinson indicated that “if the Council of Conciliation succeeded in establishing a real moral authority its recommendations might be received in a friendly spirit and perhaps acted upon”; this would in turn lead the states to respect and be subject to the council’s suggestions.¹⁰⁶ Even though the Bryce Group decided to include military sanctions in order to keep the scheme effective, other group members in addition to Ponsonby agreed that forcible action was potentially dangerous to the whole scheme of the league as well as to morality in international relations.

Meanwhile, despite his strong objection, Ponsonby could not altogether deny that the threat of force or forcible action might be required as a last resort. Although Ponsonby may be remembered as a pacifist and indeed “seemed close to pacifism,” as Ceadel puts it,¹⁰⁷ he did not fully commit to pacifism until the 1920s, and neither did he unconditionally reject the use of force during the Great War.¹⁰⁸ What he objected to was “compulsory” forcible action and its stipulation in the scheme: “A flagrant breach of the international regulations laid down by the [League] Council or deliberate disobedience to the decisions of the Council might very well be so provocative in character as to lead naturally to combined military action on the part of the majority of the powers which were in agreement. The fear of this possibility is deterrent enough without the definite stipulation that such force should and must be used in certain circumstances.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 3–4, 11; Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 268.

¹⁰⁴ Bryce to Ponsonby, 14 December 1914, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.661, 190–91, BLO.

¹⁰⁵ Mr. Lowes Dickinson’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Raymond A. Jones, *Arthur Ponsonby: The Politics of Life* (Bromley, 1989), 2; Robbins, *The Abolition of War*, 203; Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, 268–69.

¹⁰⁸ Ponsonby changed his mind in the 1910s–1920s and was intellectually inconsistent. See *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Mr. Ponsonby’s Notes, 10 December 1914, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

In mentioning the case of a rule-breaking state, Ponsonby thus raised the possibility of joint military action. Like Bryce and Lowes Dickinson, he saw that the use of international force to maintain peace could and indeed should be spontaneously generated if the threat was imminent and the aggressor provocative enough.¹¹⁰

After the outbreak of the war, the emphasis of liberal internationalists gradually shifted from the force of morality to the importance of institutional frameworks for creating the conditions for peace among nations.¹¹¹ Despite its sympathies for the value of morality in international relations, the Bryce Group's "Proposals" downplayed it and highlighted collective security, thus reflecting the larger transition in liberal internationalist thinking. This trend helps to explain why even Ponsonby, who resisted war and the codification of forcible action, was never oblivious to the fact that international stability would require the threat of collective force as a potential deterrent. While the group members attached significance to morality, they, as international relations scholars have traditionally done, judged it to be too utopian, too "idealistic," to be incorporated in the "Proposals." They calculated that an international organization required what they thought of as "realistic" measures such as force to enforce peace, which would reveal their shared expectations of being "realistic" about a possible peaceful organization.

A "REALISTIC" PLAN FOR A PEACEFUL ORGANIZATION

The Bryce Group drafted their "Proposals" for the creation of a league based on two other—what they deemed "realistic"—points of view in addition to forcible action: they generally realized that war could not completely be abolished, and that the reality of international relations would require a postwar scheme that could be implemented without stirring up significant opposition. These views were influenced by Bryce's direction that the postwar proposal must not be radical, which was probably formulated through communication with the press as well as politicians, and his experience as an ambassador to the United States. In addition, in 1914 and 1915, anti-German riots erupted in London, and those who called for peace, including the Union of Democratic Control, became the targets of mob attacks.¹¹² To evade being tarnished by any hints of pacifism or an antiwar campaign, Bryce directed group members to adopt a limited plan and to deny any possibilities of promoting a world federation.

The group's aim was not so much to eradicate war as to reduce the risk of war and limit its scale. This is why one of the possible titles that the group considered for the 1915 proposal was "Proposals for Reducing the Number of Future Wars."¹¹³ War could not be abolished unless a world state was founded, in addition to achieving

¹¹⁰ Jones, *Arthur Ponsonby*, 2.

¹¹¹ Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 50–51, 198–99.

¹¹² Ponsonby's Diary, 14 May 1915; Kate Courtney, *Extracts from a Diary during the War* (London, 1927), 36–37; Charles Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 24 July 1915, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.662, BLO. Regarding the Union of Democratic Control, see "Mr. Ponsonby Hustled," *Times*, 22 July 1915, 6; "More German Darlings," *Times*, 23 July 1915, 9; G. Murray to Ponsonby, 22 July 1915, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.662, 139, BLO; Ponsonby's Diary, 23 and 28 July 1915; C. Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 24 July 1915, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.662, 152–55, BLO; A. Williams to Ponsonby, 24 July 1915, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.662, 156, BLO.

¹¹³ "Proposals for Reducing the Number of Future Wars, with a Prefatory Note by Viscount Bryce, as Revised up to 24 February 1915," WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

effective control over foreign policy through sufficiently educated public opinion, along with the other war-prevention measures. Given their recognition that war would break out in the future despite all their proposed devices against it, the Bryce Group's postwar scheme sought to introduce a system for preventing war from spreading beyond immediately interested parties. Lowes Dickinson, after acknowledging the possibility that war might occur, proclaimed that under their proposed scheme the involved parties or area could be limited.¹¹⁴ Subject to the agreement not to resort to war or to help the involved parties in the event of war, other states were not supposed to join or assist the warring states. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, limiting war to a smaller scale was also one of the reasons why Ponsonby rejected forcible action. He argued that non-intervention would "have the effect of confining hostilities to two disputants," whereas military sanctions would involve many parties without immediate interests and lead to a large-scale war.¹¹⁵ In either argument, the point was to disrupt the process of escalation in order to prevent another Great War.

As well, the group deemed that the implementation of its postwar plan depended on statesmen and the public recognizing the value and the attainability of their proposal. If the group's plan was viewed as pragmatic, particularly from the statesmen's perspectives, it would raise the prospect of their considering it. In their debates about military action, for instance, group members were conscious of obstacles to enforcing collective sanctions on states, especially great powers. As Ponsonby suggested, the league to enforce concerted action might even fail to obtain general consent for preliminary diplomatic cooperation.¹¹⁶ Whereas Lowes Dickinson also recognized the difficulty of binding powers to compulsory military sanctions, Bryce went as far as to say that any scheme involving the obligation of armed coercion would be impossible, or at least highly unlikely, for governments to adopt.¹¹⁷ Although the Bryce Group agreed on the necessity of military sanctions, they were concerned that the obligation to participate in collective military action might be unacceptable to governments and therefore wreck the whole idea of a league of nations.

To tackle this problem, the group stressed that their proposed league as a whole should not deviate far from the existing international system of sovereign states even as it proposed radical reforms. The "Proposals" declared in its introduction, "It is clear that the reforms to be introduced must be drastic if they are to be effective. For, as John Stuart Mill has said: 'Small remedies for great evils do not produce small effects. They produce no effects.' On the other hand, there must be continuity; for proposals involving too violent a breach with the established order are not likely to be seriously considered. What is attempted here is to put forward a scheme which, while it involves a real and radical advance upon the present organization of international relations, yet does not break so violently with the course of historical

¹¹⁴ Mr. Lowes Dickinson's Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; "Proposals for the Avoidance of War," Cannan Papers, 970, BLPES.

¹¹⁵ Mr. Ponsonby's Notes, 10 December 1914, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Mr. Lowes Dickinson's Notes; Lord Bryce Memorandum on Mr. Hobson's Notes, January 1915, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; Bryce to Ponsonby, 14 December 1914, PP, MS Eng. Hist. c.661, BLO.

development as to be fairly described as Utopian.”¹¹⁸ To prevent another war and also for the “Proposals” to be adopted by decision-makers, small remedies were insufficient, but a degree of continuity would be crucial.

Yet, in reality, “a real and radical advance” of the existing international order was hard to achieve unless one advocated world government or, as Lenin and his followers would do, the withering away of the state through workers’ revolutions. Even though the Bryce Group underlined the difference of its plan from the old international system, its war-prevention plan was fundamentally an evolutionary—not revolutionary—improvement.¹¹⁹ The group members, for example, had called for utilizing the existing Hague court since November 1914 when Bryce had suggested that signatory states should refer to Hague for the settlement of disputes.¹²⁰ They advocated strengthening the Hague court rather than inventing a new one.¹²¹

Indeed, the group members recognized the difficulties of pursuing an evolutionary approach to reforming international politics. They predicted that the war itself would leave a lasting legacy of antagonism between the victors and the vanquished. The divide would mirror the pre-war competitive system of great powers alliances that they identified as a cause of war. Hence, in the long run, it was crucial to unify the great powers into one group, not two, around a new system of collective security. Lowes Dickinson, for instance, in his letter to the economist Edwin Cannan of the London School of Economics, described the idea of overcoming the divide between winners and losers using a “snowball” analogy: “[The snowball] might so easily never ‘roll up’, but remain two opposing snowballs, as before this war. I should think it more hopeful to make your big snowball now at once. If Germany came in (you seem to think she might) I see no difficulty about any other power.”¹²²

As the group’s “Proposals” asserted, its planned scheme was “not a league of some States against others, but a union of as many as possible in their common interests.”¹²³ If the league did not have universal membership, the danger was that international politics would evolve again into armed alliances vying for a balance of power. In the hope of overcoming postwar divisions, they anticipated that one powerful league of great powers would gradually develop into a universal organization. Such expectations of the group, stemming from liberal internationalists’ belief about the progress of international society, are discussed below.

“IDEALISTIC” EXPECTATIONS: PEACEFUL PUBLIC OPINION AS A WAR-PREVENTION MEASURE

The Bryce Group’s war-prevention scheme was not devised by realistic calculations alone, as historians and international relations scholars have tended to

¹¹⁸ “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Cannan Papers, 970, BLPEs.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Lord Bryce’s Notes, “When the War Comes to an End,” WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO; “Lord Bryce’s Memorandum with E. Richard Cross’s Notes and the Revisions Made up to Jan. 19th, 1915 by the Group in Conference,” Wallas Papers 4/5, BLPEs.

¹²¹ Mr. Lowes Dickinson’s Notes; Mr. Graham Wallas’s Notes; and Memorandum by Mr. Graham Wallas, 8 February, 1915, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

¹²² Lowes Dickinson to E. Cannan, 26 March 1915, Cannan Papers, 970, BLPEs.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

suggest.¹²⁴ While the group's postwar plan depended on what scholars and also group members considered "realistic" viewpoints, what they would label "idealistic" ones also inspired them. An "idealistic" part of their postwar vision was encapsulated by their fifth, "unwritten" measure to prevent war: public opinion. Although "Proposals" did not specify public opinion as a war-prevention device, it played a pivotal role in the group's thinking about a peaceful international order.¹²⁵ In the tradition of Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Kant, the group attributed past wars to the aggressive ambitions of the dynasties and aristocratic elites that had dominated European governments. These ruling elites had manipulated popular opinion to their own ends. If freed to determine their own choices, ordinary people would shun the dreadful costs of war and opt for peace. Thus, according to the Bryce Group and liberal internationalists in general, if popular opinion could be liberated from the sway of governments and mobilized for peace, it would serve as a powerful war-prevention mechanism.¹²⁶ Hobson, especially in the pre-war years, tended to believe that the public was peaceful in nature¹²⁷ and that the harmonies of interest between people were "simply waiting to surface."¹²⁸ If popular governments were established, people would not become enemies, and neither would they support war.¹²⁹ As Ponsonby put it, "The exclusive management of international relations rests in the hands of a small number of men in each country, whose perspective is restricted, whose vision is narrow, and whose sense of proportion is vitiated by the very fact that their work is screened from the public eye. The people, whose greatest interest is peace, would be able to take a broader view on main principles, and their influence, were they in a position to exercise it, would, undoubtedly, be pacific."¹³⁰ While the Bryce Group proposed some specific measures to maintain peace, such as a judicial settlement and the Council of Conciliation, it saw public opinion as an effective remedy for future war.¹³¹

¹²⁴ See note 7 above.

¹²⁵ The fact that Bryce, who agitated public opinion with the Bryce Report of May 1915, which proclaimed German war outrages during the invasion of Belgium, argued for the maintenance of peace by public opinion, might seem contradictory. See Trevor Wilson, "Lord Bryce's Investigation into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium, 1914–15," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 3 (July 1979): 369–83; Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (July 1997): 714–47. However, the Bryce Group and wartime pro-League activists regarded the Allies' victory as the premise of the creation of a new peaceful order; victory, they assumed, required public support for the war. Hence, in their theory, agitating the public for supporting the war and arguing the public's role in world peace hardly contradicted each other.

¹²⁶ Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (London, 2008), 13–15; Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay, 1795* (London, 1903), 122–23.

¹²⁷ Long, "Hobson and Idealism," 288, 292.

¹²⁸ Robbins, *Abolition of War*, 24. The impact of prewar idealist thinking on J. A. Hobson and other liberal internationalists is also discussed in Sandra M. den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford, 1996); Michael Freedman, ed., *Reappraising J. A. Hobson: Humanism and Welfare* (London, 2009); Peter Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of British Idealists: Selected Case Studies* (Cambridge, 1990), 221–28; Colin Tyler, *Common Good Politics: British Idealism and Justice in the Contemporary World* (London, 2017), 131–71.

¹²⁹ Robbins, *Abolition of War*, 24.

¹³⁰ "'Parliament and Foreign Policy' by Arthur Ponsonby," Union of Democratic Control pamphlet no. 5, MOREL/F13/6, BLPES.

¹³¹ The group members did not define what *public opinion* meant. However, from what they said and wrote during the war, *public opinion* was in their view an amorphous combination of "elite opinion" as

Yet at the same time, group members were conscious that public opinion at the time was unprepared to serve this role or even to discuss possible peace terms of the ongoing war, due to jingoism and wartime propaganda.¹³² Hobson acknowledged that the progress of international morality still needed help.¹³³ Even Ponsonby, who called for war prevention through morality, not force, observed that “the binding force of moral obligation may be insufficient at present owing to the comparatively low standard of international morality.”¹³⁴ The group members, therefore, regarded the education of public opinion as indispensable for future peace. Lowes Dickinson stated that their league plan relied heavily on public opinion’s expected role in war prevention: “Without pretending that public opinion is always and everywhere pacific, we believe that, when properly instructed, it is more likely to favour peace than do the secret operations of diplomacy.”¹³⁵ According to the group, the postwar order had to be founded on an educated Europe where the people were sufficiently instructed so that public opinion could prevent war.¹³⁶ In short, the group’s “Proposals” rested on three assumptions about public opinion’s role in preventing war: people were essentially peaceful; the public could be educated about international relations in the way and with the results that the group imagined; and, finally, if was adequately informed, instructed, and mobilized, popular opinion would suffice to prevent future wars. A passage by Bryce in the 1915 draft summarizes such ideas and thus deserves a long quotation:

The only effective and permanent remedy [for future wars] would be to convince the several peoples of the world that they have far more to lose than to gain from strife, and to replace by a sentiment of mutual international goodwill the violent national antagonisms that now exist. But this, we may well fear, would be a slow process. Meaning that which may be done, and which it seems possible to do at once, is to provide [a] machinery by and through which that great body of international public opinion which favours peace may express itself, and bring its power to bear upon the governments of those nations in which there may, from time to time, exist a spirit of aggression, or a readiness to embark on war in pursuit of selfish interests or at the bidding of national pride. The public opinion of the world would surely prove to possess a greater force than it has yet [shown] if it could but find an effective organ through which to act.¹³⁷

Bryce suggested that a league be established as a first step, which would allow time for public opinion to be sufficiently educated to express its peaceful views and thus prevent wars.

Group members hoped that public opinion would play its role during a moratorium on hostilities—the “cooling-off period”—after the submission of a case to the

expressed in newspapers and other public venues and a more general expression of the wishes of the world’s populations. Often, group members seemed to assume that the first more or less reflected the second.

¹³² Lowes Dickinson to Bryce, 20 October 1914, JBP, MS Bryce 58, 14, BLO; Mr. Ponsonby’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

¹³³ Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, 74; Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 281–82.

¹³⁴ Mr. Ponsonby’s Notes, WHP, MS Eng. Hist. c.402, BLO.

¹³⁵ “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Cannan Papers, 970, BLPES.

¹³⁶ Cross, “The New Year and the New Europe,” 3 January 1915, in Wilkinson, *Richard Cross*, 22, 228–29; Ponsonby, “Parliament and Foreign Policy.”

¹³⁷ “Proposals for the Avoidance of War,” Cannan Papers, 970, BLPES.

Council of Conciliation and before the implementation of collective security. The group believed that a moratorium would give decision-makers and the public time to calmly reflect on the costs versus benefits of what was at stake and danger of the war at hand; it would also give intellectuals and opinion-makers like the group members time to influence the “public opinion of the world in favour of peace.”¹³⁸ This assumption also implied that public opinion, as an unwritten measure of war prevention in their “Proposals,” might serve to prevent the actual implementation of collective military action. In other words, if public opinion opposed war during a cooling-off period and succeeded in stopping war, war-prevention measures would not reach the next stage of collective security, which could only be implemented after exhausting the other three measures.

As mentioned above, the Bryce Group maintained that collective security would pose the potential danger of escalating war and that the great powers might disagree about military sanctions. Therefore, if war could be prevented before the implementation of collective sanctions, that would be more secure and reliable than commencing military action. In fact, such an assumption was founded upon liberal internationalists’ belief in progress: public opinion would gradually develop and become a strong measure to prevent war. Although the league would initially require collective force, it would evolve—once international morality was developed—into an organization that fundamentally relied upon the force of public opinion, thereby making the threat of collective action less and less crucial in future war prevention mechanism. Of course, the Bryce Group understood that educating public opinion would require time and that the force of public opinion alone could not avoid war. Hence, the group included collective security in their “Proposals,” but only as a last resort. The group’s discussions of public opinion thus combined what international relations scholars, as well as members themselves, called “realistic” views of contemporary international affairs with what they might say was “idealistic” anticipation of the progress of international morality, which constituted a vital part of their war-prevention plan.

The group’s members were, however, disappointed by the public’s jingoistic reaction to the outbreak of the war. Even prior to this, they were aware of the less pacific public reactions to the Boer War¹³⁹ and the possibility of the public becoming “the tyranny of the majority.”¹⁴⁰ Why, then, did they still presume the moral progress of the public in the future? It was because the wartime liberal internationalists, including the Bryce Group members, were in the midst of the transition from moral arguments to institutional ones and they maintained both perspectives. While group members were disillusioned about the rationality of human beings, they still believed that the public, if appropriately informed, would in future be able to prevent war.¹⁴¹ Perhaps they considered, as Lowes Dickinson put it, that even though public opinion

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Jacqueline Beaumont Hughes, “The Press and the Public during the Boer War, 1899–1902,” *Historian* 61 (Spring 1999): 10–15; Mark Hampton, “The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion: C. P. Scott, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the Boer War, 1899–1902,” *Historical Journal* 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 177–97; David Long, “Hobson and Idealism,” 285–304; John A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London, 1901).

¹⁴⁰ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London, 1864).

¹⁴¹ Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 281–82.

was fallible, “one does have a chance of enlightening opinion, but one has none of enlightening foreign office officials and militarists and diplomats.”¹⁴² Indeed, Lowes Dickinson remained as a believer in moral internationalists’ argument and envisaged the postwar order resting on the moral progress of humanity.¹⁴³ To the Bryce Group, the creation of an international organization could not only solve the problem of anarchy but also offer the public the help required for moral progress.¹⁴⁴

Indeed, the Bryce Group’s assumption about the future evolution of an international organization was founded on its belief in progress—moral, social, and political.¹⁴⁵ Group members assumed that once a league was established, it would evolve over time into a better organization, however imperfect it was at the time of its formation. Stressing institutional arguments rather than moral ones, they still considered the moral and rational progress of humanity as a core element of preventing future war. Lowes Dickinson observed that the interplay of moral and institutional elements would be able to enforce a liberal international order after the war,¹⁴⁶ even though the process of educating the public would be slow and gradual.

Yet this reliance upon moral progress was at best a longing, at worst an unfounded presumption, leaving the problem of how, and whether, the public could be educated. The Fabian writer Leonard Woolf pointed out the improbability of assuming that the establishment of an international organization could change the public mind or promote a higher standard of morality:¹⁴⁷ “That machinery to be effective, must at every moment be exactly fitted to the international consciousness of the moment ... No people exist in the world in which the international mind is in anything but an immature state, and the machinery of any international council, established in the next twenty years, would have to reflect this immaturity ... Machinery cannot create mind. It can only translate it into action. The only way to build is from the bottom upwards, whether you are building a house or a democracy.”¹⁴⁸

Bryce Group members were conscious of obstacles to educating the public, promoting moral progress, and uniting the world under an international organization. Nevertheless, they did not, or could not, offer an antidote to these obstacles, striving to maintain a balance between their “realistic” calculations and their “idealistic” expectations. While the primary focus of the group, based on liberal internationalists’ arguments, was shifting from moral elements to institutional ones, their intellectual scope remained firmly embedded within the framework of these two.

CONCLUSION

A closer look into the Bryce Group in 1914–15 shows that neither realism nor idealism alone generated its ideas about war prevention that later crystallized in the League of Nations. The rich manuscript records of the group have confirmed that

¹⁴² Lowes Dickinson to E. Cannan, 11 September 1914, Cannan Papers, 1022, BLPES.

¹⁴³ Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, 115.

¹⁴⁴ Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 281–82.

¹⁴⁵ Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 3–4, 11, 26, 139, 197.

¹⁴⁶ Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 281.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 278; Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, 98.

¹⁴⁸ Leonard Woolf, “The International Mind,” *Nation*, 7 August 1915, 614; Sylvest, “Continuity and Change,” 280.

international relations scholars are right to question the notion that their discipline was founded in the first great debate between idealists and realists. Whereas the group's postwar proposal aimed to be moderate and "realistic," as scholars have indicated, it was also firmly underpinned by its "idealistic" views on public opinion and on the future development of the League of Nations. The group's ideas about preventing future war ranged from what scholars and the group members regarded as "idealistic" devices, such as the force of world public opinion against war to deter aggression, to what the group considered "realistic" measures, such as collective military force against an aggressor state. In the group's debates, realistic ideas and idealistic ones could hardly be separated; the members—not pure realists or idealists but a mix of both—attempted to strike a balance between views.

As a war-prevention measure, the group considered collective security to be a last resort to be implemented after exhausting all other closely connected measures: a judicial settlement, the Council of Conciliation, a moratorium on hostilities, and ultimately, the force of public opinion. While agreeing on this general framework, the group was sharply divided over the question of whether collective security with military sanctions should be incorporated into the future League of Nations. Some, including Bryce and Lowes Dickinson, advocated the necessity of force to deter aggressive action and to make their scheme effective, while others, including Pensonby, criticized it for its impracticability, its danger of triggering even larger wars, and the damage the use of collective force would do to international law and morality. From a "realistic" point of view, the group members appreciated that war could not be abolished and that their plan needed to be achievable from the diplomats' points of view. Meanwhile, from an "idealistic" perspective, they assumed that public opinion could eventually serve as an underlying mechanism for preventing war. Analysis of their arguments reveals that realistic and idealistic viewpoints rested on each other and that these views were not regarded as *opposing* but instead *inseparable*, illustrating how hard it was to clearly specify what was "idealistic" and "realistic" in practice.

Although the Bryce Group members understood the problems of their "Proposals," they anticipated that the league would gradually evolve into a better organization that would chiefly rely on the force of public opinion instead of collective action. This belief was built by the shift in liberal internationalists' position, to which the Bryce Group intellectually subscribed. The focus of British liberal internationalists' arguments was changing from moral arguments to institutional ones, and the Bryce Group was in the midst of this larger transition. From both moral and institutional perspectives, the group envisaged a new peaceful order and sought to change international norms of behavior by a mix of measures, including the use of force at least for a time. Like those of the interwar "utopians," the Bryce Group's early debates about war prevention were subtle and could hardly be described by any single existing category.

In the Covenant of the League of Nations, war was regulated but neither outlawed nor excluded; while states should submit a dispute to arbitration, if it failed, they could resort to war after a three-month cooling-off period.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, if economic

¹⁴⁹ The Covenant of the League of Nations, The Avalon Project; Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (New York, 2005), 351.

or diplomatic sanctions were unsuccessful, the Council of Conciliation could recommend that states adopt military measures as a last resort.¹⁵⁰ As the Bryce Group discussed in 1914–15, collective security contained a profound paradox: in seeking to prevent war, it incorporated the collective use of force as an indispensable element for the maintenance of peace. Group members also acknowledged the possibility that war in the name of sanctions might easily escalate into world-wide war, contrary to their aim to prevent or at least limit war. Indeed, as Zara Steiner has observed, “The gap between the normative rules in the Covenant and the realities of international behaviour was recognized from the start”—not only from the establishment of the League of Nations but from its very planning stage during the Great War.¹⁵¹

The members of the Bryce Group in fact realized the deficiencies of both “realistic” and “idealistic” measures against war and the perceived ambiguities of their mixtures. Nonetheless, they merged these two without coming up with remedies for their weaknesses, attempting to maintain a balance between them—what Carr valued as “sound political thought.”¹⁵² The balance, however, was at best delicate and even explosively unstable. The group members agreed that collective military force was necessary notwithstanding its risk of escalating wars; they also expected public opinion to prevent wars, having admitted that it might, on the contrary, be jingoistic due to a lack of the type of liberal internationalist education they believed essential to future peace. Further, the group also understood that collective security itself relied on several assumptions: for example, that aggression would be deterred by sanctions; that member states would be united against an aggressor; that an aggressor would be clearly defined; and that most disputes would be resolved before actually resorting to collective security.¹⁵³ The failure of collective security in the form of the League of Nations to address the breakdown of international order in the 1930s played a major role in discrediting early liberal internationalist thought and in the dichotomy in Cold War international relations theory between realist and idealist perspectives. The great irony of that outcome is that the Bryce Group’s early discussion about collective security anticipated the problems that the League of Nations would face in the 1930s, because it had recognized the possibilities and limitations of both idealistic and realistic thinking about international order.

¹⁵⁰ Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, 351.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁵² Carr, *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, 10, 14, 87.

¹⁵³ David Armstrong, Lorna Lloyd, and John Redmond, *International Organisation in World Politics* (Basingstoke, 2004), 22; Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, 352.