
**Rezensiert von:** Katharina Rietzler, Pembroke College, Cambridge

What is international society? In his study of Anglophone internationalism in the 1920s Daniel Gorman describes it as ‘the shared norms and values of states and non-state actors and the means by which they regulate and shape international relations’ (p. 16), citing Hedley Bull’s 1977 landmark study *The Anarchical Society*. Indeed, Bull argued that international society need not be a universal phenomenon but emerges when a group of states conscious of common interests and values decide to come together as an ordered community.¹ Gorman explores whether such notions of community existed in Britain, the British Empire and the United States in seven case studies on intra-imperial relations, campaigns against trafficking, imperial citizenship, international sport events, organised internationalism, ecumenicalism and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Inter-state relations in the 1920s were complicated in unprecedented ways due to the presence of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization and new modes of transnational campaigning. Older forms of supra-national organisation had to reckon with these new structures. To Gorman, it is the intertwining of changing intra-imperial relations with post-1919 internationalism that defines norms and values in international relations in the 1920s. In the post-World War I age of democratic nationalism the anachronism of empire was recast as an innovation. In Gorman’s account, the British Empire in particular served as a template for internationalists. At the same time, the League and other internationalist hubs were sites where Britain’s white Dominions renegotiated intra-imperial relations. For example, they asserted their autonomy as independent members of the League Assembly, even as Britain represented them on the League Council. These ambiguities whittled away the British legal doctrine of *inter se*, which stated that relations between Britain and its Dominions were exempt from international law (p. 23). Formerly domestic issues became international issues; new international structures gave those who challenged the Empire a new space for their battles. Such battles could be futile, as Gorman recounts in a lengthy chapter on the failed campaign of Kenyan Indians for imperial citizenship in the 1920s, but were nonetheless evidence of the new kinds of appeals to the ‘international’ now available to colonial peoples. Here, a more sustained comparison with Tanganyika, which was, unlike Kenya, a British League of Nations mandate and also possessed a sizeable Indian population, could have shed light on the question how League-focused internationalism and imperial internationalism interacted within the mandates system.

The League’s humanitarian efforts, part of its ‘technical’ work, receive a positive appraisal in two chapters on its campaign against international sex trafficking. Serving as a rallying point for national nongovernmental organisations and pressure groups, the League’s Social Section, and its capable head Rachel Crowdy, managed to transform a domestic moral concern into an international problem with an international solution – the 1921 International Convention on the Traffic of Women and Children. Crowdy herself became a figurehead for women’s international activism and the belief that domestic social reform successfully could be internationalised. However, Britain ultimately refused to implement further League recommendations on trafficking, as the diversity of local circumstances in its Empire meant that it was reluctant to devise a uniform policy. Here, the domestic analogy, i.e. the idea that „international politics should mirror the ideal functioning of a liberal democratic national government“ (p. 226), did not work and internationalism reached its limits. Nevertheless, worldwide regulated prostitution declined globally as a result of League efforts. Gorman’s fourth case study, on the 1930 Empire Games in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, underlines that imperial internationalism could function as just another subcat-

---


© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.
egory of internationalism. The precursor to the Commonwealth Games heavily borrowed from practices and procedures established by the international Olympic movement, did not feature ‘imperial sports’ such as cricket and had a strong Anglo-American dimension.

Anglo-American liberal internationalism makes up the second part of Gorman’s study, which features much organisational history. One chapter covers well-known pressure groups such as the League to Enforce Peace and the League of Nations Association, detailing their efforts to function as a link between American public opinion and Geneva-centred internationalism. A short excursion on the League’s Intellectual Cooperation Organisation’s efforts to internationalise intellectual property rights puzzlingly states that these came to nothing by the end of the 1920s, although other researchers have argued that the harmonisation of intellectual property law made important strides in the 1930s with the participation of Latin American states, contrary to the familiar narrative of the anti-internationalist 1930s.2 A second chapter on the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches usefully details the life of an internationalist organisation at work: its educational efforts, the pitfalls of coordinating national branches, its unofficial but highly effective relationship with the League and attempts to introduce internationalist rituals in the form of Peace Sunday. What is missing is a comparative angle, notably a brief exploration of Catholic internationalism in this period. The World Alliance contained „a latent anti-Catholic streak“ (p. 246) and one wonders about the limits of religious internationalism, a topic which researchers are only beginning to explore.3

The final chapters of the book deal with the Anglo-American outlawry movement which reached its apogee with the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact. Here, Gorman offers a slightly novel take on a well-known story by highlighting the role of private Anglo-American connections in the promotion of the pact. Ultimately, though, he frames his discussion in familiar terms of realism and idealism (p. 266), when a more thorough discussion on the role of international public opinion may have been more fruitful, and in this context the different ways in which organisations such as the British League of Nations Union or the American Foreign Policy Association – a woefully under-researched organisation – sought to harness it.

This ambitious study draws out a number of themes which held Anglophone liberal internationalism together in the 1920s: the intertwined nature of imperial and international relations; the domestic analogy; the prominence of non-state actors; Protestant ecumenicalism; and the various ways in which the League tinted the lenses worn by people in the business of ‘looking at the world’, such as international lawyers and colonial administrators. Gorman makes it clear in his introduction that he has no intention to move beyond the Anglosphere, and it would be unfair to demand it of him; yet, his explorations whet an appetite for much more research on the ‘other’ international societies that may or may not have existed. Where are the French and the Dutch and their empires in all this? Where would someone like Léon Bourgeois, another architect of the League, fit in? Was there such a thing as fascist international society? If Anglo-American internationalism was „associational, voluntary and normative“ (p. 15), was there another internationalism of the non-associational, involuntary and non-normative kind? Other internationalisms competed with liberal internationalism, not least that of the communists. These rival claims to building an international society merit attention, even if liberal internationalists themselves preferred to ignore them. Is it accurate to treat the 1930s as a barren plane on which international society could not grow, when issues such as intellectual property rights complicate this assumption? Towards the end of the book, there is some conceptual slippage and ‘international society’ is used synonymously with ‘internationalism’. Bull, the originator of the former term, chiefly wrote about states. Gorman does

---


© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.
not, and this calls for some clarification, for example by exploring whether international society is merely the end result of successful internationalism(s).

Finally, there are more minor inaccuracies: Elihu Root is misnamed Elijah Root in a later chapter, the League of Nations Conference for the Codification of International Law takes place one year before it actually did, the United States did not stay outside the Permanent Court of International Justice until 1931 but never ratified the protocol it signed in 1935, and David Mitrany, the Romanian-born British scholar, could only loosely be described as a federalist.

Small mistakes are perhaps unavoidable in such a wide-ranging narrative. As a whole, this study offers a number of stimulating case studies that will be of interest to scholars of interwar internationalism, particularly those seeking to explore its imperial dimension. Some chapters, for example the one on sport, seem particularly suitable for undergraduate teaching, as they illustrate the different facets of lived internationalism rather than dwelling on abstract concepts. At the same time, the book challenges researchers to investigate internationalisms that may have been less successful than the liberal Anglophone variety but were just as ambitious.