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Chapter 6

Non-Socialist Internationalisms before and after the First World War

Pasi Ihalainen and Jörn Leonhard

While socialist internationalism has been explored in a sophisticated body of literature (Eley 2002; Chapter 4), there has been a tendency to lump non-socialist conceptualizations together under the generalizing category ‘liberal internationalism’, especially as regards the interwar era. A major challenge to non-socialists or ‘bourgeois’ politicians sympathetic to international cooperation in the aftermath of the First World War was that the very term ‘international’ had become associated with the Socialist International and transnational class struggle against nationalism and capitalism (Sluga 2013: 4). ‘Internationalism’, in particular, appeared in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution as the counter-concept to nation states and bourgeois political and social order, implying in its most radical form the creation of a dictatorship by the international proletariat (Koselleck 1992: 403). In practice, however, nation states and internationalism did not necessarily exclude each other in socialist thought, and labour internationalism had been overshadowed by revisionist social democrats supporting national defence during the First World War. As a consequence of the division of the left, internationalism had also become associated with failed pacifist projects.

Wartime propagandistic ideas of a league of nations, circulated as part of competition for world opinion and advocated by the US President Woodrow Wilson above all, pushed the victorious states to plan new practical solutions for international cooperation, while the losing side – especially Germany – would soon view such projects as merely new forms of Western hegemony. The anti-German atmosphere among the Western powers led to the exclusion of Germany and its allies from the League of Nations. Soviet Russia denounced the League as capitalist and anti-revolutionary, forming a counter-force with the Communist International at the same time when

the League was formed, in spring 1919 (Mazover 2013: 173–75), and encouraging communist parties that continued to challenge the capitalist order in the spirit of Marxist internationalism. In these circumstances, liberals and conservatives needed to either redefine ‘internationalism’ as peaceful cooperation between capitalist nation states, replace it in discourses on international cooperation with alternative expressions, or continuously denounce ‘internationalism’ as antinationalist and anticapitalist. Their practical solution was often to prioritize nation states in cooperation and to look for common ground in opposing Bolshevism (Sluga 2013: 5). Revisionist social democrats found themselves between ideals of labour internationalism and the search for democratic and parliamentary reformism within nation states, which made them look for a third-way compromise while continuously being subjected to liberal and conservative accusations of Marxist internationalism.

In this chapter, we first discuss the prewar and wartime transformations of the concept of internationalism and then proceed to analyse the multi-sited, polyvocal and conflicting non-socialist conceptualizations of internationalism in national parliaments and the party press in the interwar years, demonstrating similar tendencies in different national contexts and seeking explanations for divergent long-term developments. Even if they rarely proclaimed any gospel of internationalism, liberal and conservative politicians played key roles in national governments trying to construct a new international order between pressures from communist internationalism and far-right anti-internationalism – or as the ones who questioned the realism of internationalism. These non-socialist views became decisive especially once the pressures increased in the 1930s, and hence attention needs to be paid to liberal and conservative expressions of ideologically acceptable international cooperation and their opposition to it.

The available digitized data on discourses of internationalism are extensive; to enable cross-national comparability, we limit our focus to explicit talk about ‘internationalism’ in parliaments. Some related debates – such as those on ‘the world’ – are excluded by this limitation. In order to understand the dynamics of the ideological debate on internationalism we need to pay attention to competing socialist conceptualizations (on socialist theorists, see Chapter 4) and far-right arguments to which the liberals and conservatives were responding.

In much of the previous research, ‘internationalism’ has been used as an analytical category, making only limited references to its actual usage by past politicians. The conventional

interpretation of British ‘liberal internationalism’, for instance, is that it tried to reconcile nationalism and internationalism with global free trade. The ‘liberal internationalists’ carried on prewar debates on the nature and causes of war, ethics, law and the ways to secure peace. Rationality, morality, political progress, order, justice and prosperity in international relations were their themes. The Bolshevik Revolution and far-right reactions after the First World War added to the goal of preventing revolutions to this agenda. While the institutional solutions of the League of Nations were increasingly emphasized after the war and economic and social interdependence seen as a way to build an international society, beliefs in moral evolution, democracy and peace attained through education remained characteristic of ‘liberal internationalism’ (Holbraad 2003: 38, 42–43; Sylvest 2009: 2–4, 10–11, 197–99; Trentmann 2009; Pugh 2012: 2, 8). Such ways of thinking are discernible in interwar parliamentary debates, too, but we demonstrate that the representatives of liberal parties were often hesitant to articulate them so distinctly. Instead of emphasizing internationalism as an ideal they rather pointed at the practical benefits of international cooperation for nation states.

‘Conservative internationalism’ is even more difficult to discern as an empirical phenomenon in interwar political discourse. Using such an analytical category, Holbraad calls ‘conservative internationalism’ the oldest version of international thought based on realist traditions that built on the primacy of sovereign states. The Russian Revolution connected liberals and conservatives in a common fight not only against Bolshevism but also against more moderate forms of socialist internationalism. Unlike many liberals, conservatives remained doubtful about the League due to its tendency to bypass conference diplomacy between sovereign states. Later in the interwar era, conservatism tended to be overshadowed by far-right nationalist movements (Holbraad 2003: 11–13, 15, 22). Conservative ways of thinking are again reflected in parliamentary discourse, especially in great powers, but we demonstrate that interwar economic and geopolitical circumstances could have enabled expressions of conservative internationalism. Most distinctly in the Nordic countries, caught between the Soviet threat and the prospects of rising rightist extremism in Germany and at home, experiences of the benefits of international cooperation made some conservatives reconceptualize internationalism.

In order to reveal the common and peculiar features of liberal and conservative interwar discourses on internationalism in great powers, we discuss examples from the British, French, German,

Swedish and Finnish parliaments. Britain was a leading actor in the construction of the League whose conservative and liberal politicians conceptualized international cooperation primarily from the perspective of its empire (McCarthy 2011), while fears of Bolshevism and National Socialism kept criticisms of internationalism alive. The French right prioritized national interests (Mouton 1995: 3–4), while French socialists continued traditional labour conceptualizations of internationalism. This made national debates highly confrontational. In Germany, optimistic non-socialist conceptualizations of internationalism were overshadowed by the Treaty of Versailles that reinforced doubts about internationalism similar and linked to the concepts of democracy and parliamentarism as ‘un-German’ (Jörke and Llanque 2016; Leonhard 2018a). In our analysis, Sweden represents a former great power redirecting its international cooperation in the postwar situation though building on a tradition of neutrality, while Finland was a newly independent nation state aiming at strengthening national sovereignty with engagement in the new legalistic international order (Jonas 2019).

We begin by analysing longer-term changes in conceptualizations of internationalism from the late nineteenth century, through the First World War and to the postwar peace conferences, taking transatlantic and global perspectives into consideration. We then contrast these with conceptualizations of the League in national parliaments in the immediate postwar situation and proceed to discuss rising liberal optimism and continuous conservative scepticism in different national contexts during the 1920s. This leads us to analyse how weakening internationalism tended to be overtaken by nationalism during the 1930s but also point at some noteworthy countercurrents.

‘Internationalism’ During and Immediately After the First World War

Prior to the First World War, two major trends existed in the semantics of ‘internationalism’ reflecting major developments since the last decades of the nineteenth century. First, the concept represented a new idea of stability between states in international relations, often coupled with connotations of pacifism. Lord Hobbart used the word ‘internationalism’ in 1867 with reference to Richard Cobden, champion of the free trade movement in Britain. He described Cobden’s

political mission which had aimed at an international federation of states based on a universal state of law in the international sphere:

What is certain is, that for the complete realisation of internationalism in its ultimate result, political association, it is requisite that nations in general should possess a very large measure of real political liberty ... Complete political liberty once established in the world, some form of international federation would be the natural result (Lord Hobbart, January 1867: 38–39).

Second, ‘internationalism’ was used to describe various processes of internationalization (Hervé 1910; Chapters 3 and 5). Even when Marx and other leading socialists used the concept in the last third of the century, it did not have a particularly ideological meaning, thereby provoking semantic dichotomies or counter-concepts. Nor did it necessarily signify transnational solidarity among workers of all countries, as was the case for contemporary concepts of ‘cosmopolitanism’ or ‘fraternization’ (see Chapter 4). In 1883, August Bebel summed up what characterized the international in his own epoch: ‘international trade and shipping agreements, international post treaties, international exhibitions ... our trade and traffic, all this and many other examples prove the international character, which the relations between different civilized nations has developed’. Although explanations of social origins still presupposed the horizon of nation and nation state, Bebel had no doubt that ‘we find ourselves in an age of internationalism’ (Bebel [1879] 1883: 195; see also Friedmann and Hölscher 1995: 394).

The semantic horizon of the concept – the description of internationalization in many political, economic, scientific and cultural areas – began to change at the beginning of the new century. Critics of contemporary colonial practice like John Hobson formulated a clear dichotomy between imperialism and internationalism, the latter denoting an international system that would allow peace and stability by overcoming the former. This definition would be taken up by socialist authors and became radicalized during the First World War. In his influential book on imperialism, published in 1905, Hobson wrote: ‘Not only does aggressive Imperialism defeat the movement towards internationalism by fostering animosities among competing empires: its attack upon the liberties and the existence of weaker and lower races stimulates in them a corresponding excess of national self-consciousness’ (Hobson 1905: 3–4; Groh and Walther 1995: 216).

During the same year the liberal German politician Friedrich Naumann summed up different layers of meaning, resulting from experiences of the nineteenth century, to underline a growing antagonism between the national viewpoint and internationalism. The concept came under growing pressure when identified with anti-patriotic behaviour and doubtful loyalty. Naumann referred to the ‘viewpoint of proletarian internationality’ (*Standpunkt proletarischer Internationalität*) on the one hand, and to an anti-patriotic mentality of Catholics in their own ‘internationalism’ on the other. By this he reflected the long shadow of both antisocialist legislation and anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf* in the German Empire since its foundation in 1871. According to his interpretation, internationalism referred to an imagined future instead of a concrete political agenda among Social Democrats, whereas Catholics’ internationalism in his view reflected the ideal of a community of life not defined by nations (Naumann 1906: 125; Friedmann and Höscher 1995: 395). Naumann’s diagnosis was important because it anticipated a development that would dominate the first years of the First World War: a negative view of internationalism as a potential instrument to weaken nation states and their societies engaged in war. When proofs of loyalty became ever more important on the military and home fronts after August 1914, internationalism could easily be identified as another variant of defeatism and nourished various stab-in-the-back narratives even before it became prominent in Germany in late 1918.

Since late 1916, a number of developments combined and paved the way for ‘internationalism’ to become a key concept during and immediately after the First World War. The combination of war weariness, war and revolution in Russia and various peace initiatives in 1917 marked a major watershed in the development of the concept. Thus before the war’s long global end, the Paris Peace Conference peace treaties and foundation of the League of Nations, an ideological polarization was under way. From 1917 onwards, the concept was coupled with competing scenarios for how to end the war and create a new international order that had to be different from the status quo ante 1914.

The first scenario, which integrated ‘internationalism’, unfolded in the course of 1917 when the Bolshevik Revolution demonstrated that a long-awaited fundamental change could be actively implemented. In this context ‘internationalism’ began to overshadow ‘internationality’, which had been an established key concept before 1914, and became the polemical counter-concept to both ‘nationalism’ and ‘imperialism’ (Leonhard 2018: 581–90). As early as 1916, the socialist

Alexander Trojanowski pointed to this fundamental ideological dichotomy, brought about by the war and condensed in the two counter-concepts of internationalism and imperialism:

It is now a question of life or death of the International. Either it will become, after a period of hesitation, errors and lack of organisation, the real weapon of the international workers' movement and stand on stable ground, or else it will become a sort of church asylum which has no real function. Either internationalism or imperialism (Trojanowski 1916: 32; W. I. Lenin [1917], cited in: *Werke* vol. 24, 1974: 59).

Whereas Lenin insisted on the 'internationalism of deeds' in contrast to the false 'internationalism of words' which he used polemically in his critique of moderate socialists, Karl Liebknecht claimed that if 'legitimacy and nationality' could be identified as the two natural enemies of Napoleon, the contrast was now between socialism and 'proletarian internationalism' on one side and 'German imperialism' on the other (Liebknecht [May 1918] in: *Werke* vol. 24; Schumacher et al. 1968: 502; Friedmann and Hölscher 1995: 395–96). Behind these definitions lay the expectation of a chain of Bolshevik revolutions that would result in world revolution. Very soon, however, the limits of this prospect became obvious, not only in the contained revolutionary upheavals in Germany, Austria and Hungary, but also in the Russian Civil War.

The second scenario was identified with Woodrow Wilson when the American president developed his own variant of an end to the war and a future world order. Against the background of the Bolshevik takeover and their first decrees advocating self-determination in Europe and colonial societies, an ideological competition between different understandings of 'internationalism' developed. In the European perception of Wilson 'internationalism' became a synonym of 'New Diplomacy' while American war propaganda fostered the export of the new vocabularies to many societies, not only in crumbling European continental empires, but also to colonial societies in Asia or Africa. For all their ideological differences, Lenin and Wilson shared this focus on the international dimension, beyond the European states and their imperial protrusions: for the one, an international civil war would revolutionize all class societies; for the other, a 'people's war' would achieve the democratic principles of self-determination. In September 1918, Wilson developed his vision of 'internationalism' as a supranational order: the world war should end not in the resumption of traditional foreign policies but in a global internal

policy: ‘national purposes have fallen more and more into the background and the common purpose of enlightened mankind has taken their place’ (Wilson, 27 September 1918, cited in: Steigerwald 1994: 37).

In American discourse, ‘internationalism’ reflected a very national perspective that affected debates globally. Unlike the German discussion of war aims, the concept of the nation held by liberal intellectuals in the United States did not start from annexationist ambitions but focused on a new social and national democracy and a new vision of loyalty for the heterogeneous immigrant society of the United States. Progressivists advocated an international system of collective security that would include the United States and became identified with ‘internationalism’. But the global perception of Wilson’s agenda neglected the fact that its main focus remained national politics. Thus, Herbert Croly emphasized that a ‘national purpose’ would redefine the common good beyond materialist culture and class interests. This vision of the nation was supposed to overcome both the stateless individualism of the pioneering age and the one-sided material and economic egotism of the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States. *The New Republic*, mouthpiece of the Progressivists, gave expression to these hopes of American liberals. In April 1917, following America’s entry into the war, it wrote: ‘Never was a war fought so far from the battlefield for purposes so distinct from the battlefield’ (*The New Republic*, 19 February 1916: 62–67 and 21 April 1917: 338; see also Leonhard 2018 630–31).

As a result of war weariness and the ever more difficult mobilization of home fronts, ideological polarization grew sharper in all war societies after late 1916. On top of defensive operations against the left and right at home, many liberals had to face ideological competition from democratic egalitarianism and Bolshevik Revolution, bound together by ‘internationalism’. The persuasiveness of liberal ideas had to be measured against the new political, social and international models represented by Lenin and Wilson. Petrograd provided laboratory-like conditions for demonstrating how war and revolution were interlinked, and how traditional institutions such as dynasty, monarchy and empire could be swept aside in short order. These dramatic experiences explain why the vocabulary around ‘internationalism’ enabled contemporaries to formulate their expectations vis-à-vis the construction of peace when the war came to an end. At the same time, ‘internationalism’ had already acquired layers of meaning that went beyond the liberal–communist dichotomy. It was used to underline the internationalization

of new problems the war had generated. Issues like the integration and repatriation of refugees and prisoners of war stretched across national boundaries, and the League of Nations and other organizations such as the Red Cross expanded their activities in this context.

Furthermore, ‘internationalism’ had a utopian dimension: Its promise to overcome the very principle of war. The abstract line from individual through family and nation to a single humanity was already a major theme for many people during the war. In 1916 Ernst Joël referred ‘to the paradoxical fact today ... that the community of the truly patriotic is an international, supranational’ community (Ernst Joël quoted in Hiller 1916: 162). Henri Barbusse, the author of the savagely critical war novel *Le Feu*, emphasized in 1918: ‘Humanity instead of nation. The revolutionaries of 1789 said: “All Frenchmen are equal.” We should say: “All men.” Equality demands common laws for everyone who lives on earth.’ (Barbusse 1920: 92; see also Leonhard 2018: 904). This hope, that the war and its enormous sacrifices should not have been in vain and that they should lead to the creation of a new global order, is probably the most influential and was a normative claim that became associated with ‘internationalism’ at the end of the war.

The complexity of ‘internationalism’ became particularly obvious in the context of a crumbling multi-ethnic empire towards the end of the war. The German-Austrian Social Democratic Party understood itself ‘as a democratic and international party’ and supported the principle of national self-determination. But it also called upon fellow parties to fight ‘any attempt by their nations’ bourgeoisies’ to ‘enslave other nations in the name of the freedom of their own nation’. This was an attempt to halt the spread of irredenta nationalism in all parts of the monarchy. Keeping up ‘internationalism’, the right to national self-determination was to be based only on ‘the full victory of democracy’ and ‘the international class struggle’ (quoted in Neck 1968: 42–43).

The victory of democracy would bring statehood to all people of the crumbling multi-ethnic empires. But by the same token, ‘German Austria [would be separated] from the Austrian mixture of peoples as a distinctive polity’ (quoted in Neck 1968: 44). The problem in defining ‘internationalism’ here was to prevent national self-determination from fuelling limitless competition among different nationalisms, and to reject aggressive nationalism directed against ethnic minorities as a distinguishing characteristic of the bourgeoisie. How could the Habsburg Monarchy continue to exist in a new age of ‘internationalism’? In 1918, Karl Renner for one still

spoke in favour of a Habsburg ‘state of nationalities’, which could ‘offer an example for the future national organization of humanity’ (quoted in Mazower 1998: 45; see also Leonhard 2018: 799–800).

In the immediate postwar period, when the Bolsheviks were paralysed by civil war and the Allies intervened in the former Russian Empire, the semantics of ‘internationalism’ were coined by the American political agenda. Wilson based his vision on a very suggestive analysis of the factors he believed had caused the world war: a misguided European system of militarization and the uncontrolled development of state power, secret diplomacy and autocratic empires which had suppressed the rights and interests of national minorities. He promised a counter model to the exhausted variants of European liberalism. This shifted the traditional focus on the balance of power and the sovereignty of states to international law, the idea of collective security, the League of Nations as an international forum and the premise of national self-determination as the basis for drawing new maps. Here ‘internationalism’ represented a quasi-universal democratization of both societies and the international order that bridged the gap between domestic politics and the international system.

Wilson’s and Lenin’s ideas could not just be applied to national minorities within continental European empires but, from 1917 onwards, they had a global meaning, in China and Korea as well as in India or in South America. The result was not a simplistic ‘Wilsonian Moment’, as if one could translate Wilson’s ideas and American war propaganda into liberation movements seeking emancipation from colonial or quasi-colonial oppression (Manela 2007). Instead a new postwar variant of the tension between universalism and particularism arose, between internationalist rhetoric and local conditions – this allowed particular constellations, conflicts and interests to be integrated into global entanglements. However, Wilson’s vision was controversial from the first, particularly in the United States. Former US President Theodore Roosevelt criticized Wilson’s internationalism and vision of the League of Nations – they would negate US sovereignty and force the United States to support military interventions: ‘We are no internationalists, but we are American nationalists’ (*Chicago Tribune*, 27 August 1918; see also Knock 1992: 169; Berg 2017: 153; Leonhard 2019: 410–11).

Outside the United States, many political actors used ‘internationalism’ to formulate their expectations and interests vis-à-vis the Paris Peace Conference. The German reference to a ‘Wilson peace’ stood in this context (Leonhard 2019: 137, 229, 261, 440, 459, 822–23 and 950). The new government in Berlin formed after the Revolution of November 1918 and the new chief diplomat, Count Brockdorff Rantzau, relied on what they regarded as American guarantees for a moderate peace without victors, reparations or annexations, based on Wilson’s fourteen-point programme. Takeover by moderate social democrats and liberals and the transition from military monarchy to democratic republic were seen as prerequisites for a new postwar Germany to be admitted to the League of Nations. When the German peace conference delegation assembled in Paris in May 1919, Carl Legien as chairman of the German trade unions pointed out that by their revolution, the German people could count on the solidarity of European workers’ movements. After the collapse of the monarchical nation, this ‘internationalism’ was Germany’s only possible future (Stampfer 1957: 237; Leonhard 2019: 958).

In the course of the Paris Peace Conference, ‘international’ became identified with a whole spectrum of new institutions. The internationalization of political deliberation in the League of Nations proved partly successful as there now existed a public forum, although without executive power, to implement collective security. ‘Internationalization’ could be seen in action in the League of Nations’ administration of the free city of Danzig, the Saarland and the mandatory territories. In contrast to the prewar period a range of institutions promoted the meaning of ‘internationalism’ in their names, such as the International Labour Organization (Leonhard 2019: 703–5; see Chapter 4).

As a result of the Peace Conference, however, ‘internationalism’ became an extremely contested concept. The hitherto unknown number of war victims which had to be legitimized through the results of the peace, ever radicalizing war aims, the ideal of a new international order which would make future wars impossible, new mass markets for public deliberations and the new relation between ‘international’ and ‘domestic’ politics in an age of mass media and democratic franchise: all these factors contributed to a massive disillusion and disappointment with the peace settlement. Referring to the widening gap between expectations and outcomes and contradictions of the peace treaties John Maynard Keynes saw ‘internationalism’ as under enormous pressure: ‘Our power of feeling or caring beyond the immediate questions of our own material well-being is temporarily

eclipsed ... We have been moved already beyond endurance, and need rest. Never in the lifetime of men now living has the universal element in the soul of man burnt so dimly.’ (Keynes 1919, cited in *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes* vol. 2, 1971: 188–89; Leonhard 2019: 629).

When the conditions of the Versailles Treaty became obvious, the ‘Wilson peace’ as a synonym of a fair internationalism was met with bitter resentment in Germany. To the nation state not admitted to the League of Nations, ‘internationalism’ now seemed to denote either broken promises and the unfair order implemented by the victorious powers or else the danger of civil war, stimulated by Bolshevik dreams of internationalist class struggle. Turning away from and countering ‘internationalism’ paved the way for multiple national revisionisms. These could easily be used in domestic conflicts – thus, foreign political revisionism fuelled political conflicts and ideological polarization within postwar societies.

That was the case not only in Germany – or Hungary – but also in Italy. Here the *vittoria mutilata* corresponded well to the various stab-in-the-back myths and narratives of conspiracy or treachery which would further weaken the reputation of postwar liberal political regimes and contribute considerably to the rise of Fascism (Antonio Gibelli quoted in Horne 2010: 472–75). For the defeated Germans, the economic and monetary legacy of the peace settlement but also the question of war-guilt linked any domestic political conflict easily to the trauma of Versailles. This poisoned German political culture and prevented the evolution of a positive republican narrative after 1918. When Adolf Hitler developed his *Weltanschauung* in the early 1920s to give his new party a basis and to position it above the spectrum of other parties, he referred to Marxism. Despite the obvious ideological polarization, he stated that the *völkische Weltanschauung* needed a kind of weapon, ‘similar to the way in which the Marxist party organization creates ample space for internationalism’ (Hitler [1922/27] 1939: 375; Brunner, Conze and Koselleck 1992: 502). In the course of the 1920s and early 1930 he developed an enemy image in which capitalism, the idea of a Jewish conspiracy, Bolshevism and internationalism became amalgamated. By insisting that ‘internationalism’ and ‘democracy’ were inseparable he found a key concept in his fight against the democratic republic which he portrayed as un-German (Hitler, speech given on 1 May 1923, quoted in: Siebarth 1935: 86; Hitler, speech given on 27 January 1932, quoted in Siebarth 1935: 78; Friedmann and Hölscher 1995: 396).

The Immediate Reception of the League of Nations in National Parliaments

As the contexts of discourses on internationalism were radically different in victorious Britain and France, disappointed Germany, neutral Sweden and newly independent Finland – despite shared transnational trends –, we discuss the national parliamentary debates separately while considering their remaining transnational connections. In the postwar situation, wartime focus on the security of the nation state continued everywhere. The non-socialist parties wished to carry on policies based on the truce, *union-sacré*, *Burgfrieden* or *borgfreden*, which implied that political forces considered disloyal to the nation should be excluded. A further unifying theme in discourse on internationalism was anti-Bolshevism – except for the extreme left.

Not even the British press and parliament were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the Convention of the League of Nations (Holmila and Ihalainen 2018). *The Times*, a moderate conservative voice, associated internationalism with Bolshevism and the destruction of nation states (14 January 1919: 3; 30 January 1919: 3), while the left-liberal *Manchester Guardian* called for ‘a stronger internationalism’ (20 March 1919: 12). The conservative *Daily Telegraph* wrote that the League gave rise to ‘the highest hopes for a better regulation of the world’s affairs’ but doubted whether human nature could be changed or the public opinion trusted (23 July 1919: 8). In Parliament, Robert Cecil, a rare conservative spokesman for the League, assured members that patriotism and the notion that ‘all nations are part of a larger whole’ were mutually supportive and that the League supported the interests of the British Empire (HC, 21 July 1919: 987). MPs typically prioritized international law, financial questions and the conditions of workers, whereas the peers focused on morality and law while recognizing the existence of an ‘international spirit’ (Ihalainen and Sahala 2020). ‘Liberal internationalism’ was most explicitly summarized in the Lords by James Bryce, a member of the International Court, who viewed the League as based on ‘the feeling that the world has now become one[,] one in a new sense never dreamed of before; that the fortunes of each people affect those of all other peoples, and that the well-being of each makes for the well-being of all’. The League rested on ‘the belief that the community of the world requires that a new spirit should prevail in international relations – a spirit which seeks to substitute friendship for enmity’ (HL, 24 July 1919: 1019). Even if the Empire remained the starting point for conceptualizing

international cooperation, George Curzon, the acting foreign secretary and a well-known imperialist, emphasized his belief in

the international spirit, the kind of idea that the future unit is not to be the race, the community, the small group, but is to be the great world of mankind, and that in that area you try and induce a common feeling, you try and produce co-operation which will be a better solvent of international difficulties (HL, 24 July 1919: 1029).

Both men represented official optimism regarding a new start in international relations after the victory over Germany, while some backbenchers criticized the Treaty of Versailles for its hard peace terms on Germany and French nationalist interpretations of the League (Holmila and Ihalainen 2018).

In France, the government and public opinion indeed prioritized national security, seeing the League as a means to control German militarism (Henig 1995: 30–32, 36, 43) even if doubtful about its military power. In parliament, internationalism was associated with either opportunities opened or threats posed by socialist ideology and the labour movement. Party-political polarization over internationalism followed partly from the very name of the socialist party, *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*, which defined socialism through internationalism and turned *internationaliste* into a party denomination. Such a practice differs from the German, Swedish and Finnish social democratic parties whose names made more explicit reference to the respective nation states. French debates typically led the right to prioritize patriotism over internationalism and the left to allege that ‘the internationalism of capital’ ran the world. Deeply ideological trajectories made the debates focus on political divisions *within* France rather than on international cooperation.

In Germany, the League was generally seen as a new form of British and French imperialism imposed on weaker nations and violating German interests (Carr 2001 [1939]: 78–80). As we saw, some had initially held positive views on the League, expecting mild terms of peace from Wilson, but by May 1919 the Treaty of Versailles and the League with it were interpreted as further means to repress Germany. Even if several neutral states supported German membership of the League as a counterweight to France (Wintzer 2006: 78), internationalism remained a highly pejorative

term for most German non-socialists. In the National Assembly, it was a contested party-political concept associated with Marxist internationalism. Even left-liberals were disappointed when they realized that the Austrians were denied self-determination. Gertrud Bäumer argued in anti-internationalist terms, denouncing ‘shallow internationalism’ in favour of ‘the holiness of the nation’ (NV, 15 July 1919: 328:1907). While moderate Social Democrats insisted that their internationalism served the interests of the ‘fatherland’, the extreme left carried on Marxist discourse on proletarian internationalism (Wilhelm Keil, NV, 14 Feb 1919: 326:79; Oscar Cohn, NV, 30 July 1919: 328:2100), which only provoked the right. The right emphasized the suffering such ‘international – or as it was earlier called: cosmopolitan – thinking’ had caused the German people (Franz Heinrich Költzsch, NV, 15 April 1919: 327:1058) or suggested that ‘the illusion of internationalism’ and ‘the international solidarity of the proletariat’ had been destroyed by the war once the workers had supported their governments against Germany (Gottfried Traub, German Nationalists, NV, 9 July 1919: 328:1411), which, by implication, the German socialists had not done.

Sweden joined the League in 1920 simultaneously with Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. The Swedish membership entailed both the rejection of previous pro-German policies and the reinforcement of Western parliamentary democracy as established with a recent suffrage reform (Ihalainen 2017; Ihalainen 2019). The Liberal–Social Democratic coalition represented the membership as a way to contribute to a new judicial community of states while denying that ‘supranational’ (*överstatlig*) aspects of the League (the liberal *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 February 1920). Liberal Prime Minister Nils Edén combined discourses on the universal and national good when emphasizing Swedish connections to ‘the uniting world culture’ as ‘a limb of the entire humanity’ and the need to think about ‘the great universal problem of justice and peace in the world’ as part of national security (AK, 18 February 1920: 18:25–26). He did not deny the tendency of the League to serve the interests of the Western powers (Nils Edén, AK, 18 February 1920: 18:23). His coalition partner Hjalmar Branting, the revisionist Social Democrat leader, turned to the older vocabulary of ‘universality’ instead of ideologically charged internationalism (AK, 18 February 1920: 18:27–28, 54), while Gustav Möller of the same party did not hesitate to welcome the rise of ‘the international state’ out of labour initiatives (FK, 3 March 1920: 19:48; see Chapter 4). The Right Party responded by emphasizing the looming dangers of socialist internationalist democracy

(Ernst Trygger, FK, 3 March 1920: 19:23, 113), defending national sovereignty, cultural ties to Germany and inherited great power identity but rejecting any idea of Swedish politicians turning ‘internationalists’, as their duty was to view international relations from the perspective of Sweden, not of all ‘humanity’ (Arvid Lindman, AK, 18 February 1920: 18:13, 16–18; 3 March 1920: 23:33–4). Whereas the Swedish Liberals joined the Social Democrats in the rhetoric of an internationalist breakthrough, the Swedish Conservatives retained their nationalist stand.

Finland, which had recently experienced a civil war with German, Russian and Swedish interventions, was invited to join the League on British initiative in 1920, partly in order to solve a border dispute with Sweden and to gain an anti-Bolshevist ally against Soviet Russia. The non-socialist coalition presented the membership as supportive of independence and implicitly also as a way to stabilize Finland as a Western parliamentary democracy. In a country with historical experience of defending the constitution against Russian authoritarianism, the international legalism of the League was welcomed (Ihalainen 2019). According to Conservative Prime Minister Rafael Erich, the League allowed small states to retain independence while offering them chances to be heard by the great powers. In the face of the Bolshevik threat, Finland was seeking ‘legal protection and also factual political guarantees’ as well as ‘broader possibilities for such peaceful international interaction’ (EK, 4 May 1920, 474–75). The liberal organ *Helsingin Sanomat* welcomed membership (13 May 1920: 2) while the conservative *Uusi Suomi* remained sceptical (8 May 1920: 4). Some Finland-Swedish activists rather welcomed ‘new nationalism’ that would stop ‘vulgar internationalism’ and ‘internal Bolshevism’ (P. L. Bolinder to Swedish-speaking students in Helsinki, *Aftonbladet*, 21 May 1919: 5). As in the other countries, Finnish liberals supportive of the League referred to national interests side by side with the creation of a legal international order. Conservative scepticism remained strong everywhere and took over in France, Germany and Sweden, whereas the leaders of the Finnish conservatives (National Coalition Party) welcomed Western internationalism as a survival strategy of a small nation. In Britain, the League was accepted as an extension of the Empire.

Rising Liberal Optimism and Continuous Conservative Scepticism in the 1920s

In the 1920s, conservative internationalism remained exceptional in Britain and hardly existed in France, Germany or Sweden but found some support among Finnish conservatives, as practical internationalization progressed. Liberal defenders of internationalism, too, were fewer than might be expected from the generalizing category of ‘liberal internationalism’; the liberals continued to qualify internationalism by defining it as cooperation between nation states and prioritizing bilateral over multilateral collaboration.

Robert Cecil, a founding father of the League, was a lonely figure as a conservative defender of internationalism. As the League was criticized in an Oxford debate as based on ‘the spirit of internationalism’ supportive of a revolution that endangered English nationalism and all civilization, Cecil defended ‘the growing spirit of internationalism’, insisting that public opinion and the League constituted ‘the conscience of mankind’ fortified by ‘co-operation among the nations’ (*The Manchester Guardian*, 24 October 1919: 8). The other Conservatives were critical of emerging democratic Germany and feared both the growth of the Labour Party and the progress of revolutionary Bolshevism (Parson 2007: 4, 310–11, 313–14, 324–27). Their fears made Labour leaders cautious: while Arthur Henderson defined his party as the supporter of ‘true internationalism’ (*The Manchester Guardian*, 1 January 1920: 4), Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald emphasized the patriotism of his party (*The Daily Telegraph*, 7 October 1924: 11). As the Conservatives were so strong, even the moderate left instrumentalized internationalism in order to demonstrate their legitimacy.

The Conservatives remained highly critical of internationalism throughout the 1920s. In the beginning of the decade, Britain was involved in war in Ireland and crises in Egypt and India, which made the value of internationalism appear doubtful. Arthur Balfour, a former prime minister, denounced cosmopolitan and socialist internationalism, insisting that nationalism remained the strongest political force and welcoming an alternative internationalism based on cooperation between nation states. According to him, ‘true internationalism’ could not be achieved with destructive ‘cosmopolitanism’ that attacked ‘not the excesses of nationalism, but nationalism itself’ and pretended that ‘patriotism is played out’. While ‘international comprehension’ in the sense of understanding the aims and points of view of other countries was needed, it was to be ‘carefully cultivated by the best statesmen and writers of the day, who are themselves secure

against the odious charge of being the friends of every country but their own' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1920: 10). J. D. Rees, a former colonial administrator, defined internationalism as 'the negation of patriotism and the abnegation of everything of which we should be proud', concluding that 'instead of extending internationalism I long myself to see it abolished completely off the face of the earth' (HC, 1 November 1920: 106). Field Marshal Henry Wilson remained 'an intense nationalist' and did not believe 'in this period of the world's history in internationalism' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 26 April 1922: 8). Doubts about all British socialists cooperating with Moscow against the British Empire made Richard Glover attack the alleged Labour "Anti-Britishism", camouflaged as internationalism, aimed at our national life by destroying our national confidence'. For Glover, '[t]he continued preaching of internationalism ... had damaged the moral strength of the nation, which brought in its train weakness and unemployment' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 18 August 1926: 10). By 1926 even Cecil had to concede that growth in international spirit had been precarious and that patriotism was 'a splendid thing' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 15 October 1926: 6). After his resignation from the British Delegation to the League, he was criticized for having 'in his ardent advocacy of a new internationalism ... ignored the fact that this country is an island, able and entitled to avoid foreign commitments' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 31 August 1927: 9). Austen Chamberlain, Cecil's successor, was instead thanked for having spoken in the League both for the British Empire and internationalism (*The Daily Telegraph*, 12 September 1927: 10).

Meanwhile, the Liberals welcomed 'a sane internationalism' standing for 'a European as opposed to a merely insular outlook' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 16 March 1920: 8). H. H. Asquith and Edward Grey, together with Robert Cecil and J. R. Clynes of the Conservatives and Labour, signed a declaration supportive of the League 'leading men from nationalism to internationalism' as citizens would control foreign policy and censor 'national egoism' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 7 April 1920: 6). Yet the Liberals continued to emphasize that internationalism based on patriotism served best the interests of nation states. Grey criticized socialist and communist internationalists for having taken over the word 'international' and denouncing patriotism (*The Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1920: 10). According to Victor Finney,

the vital spirit of nationalism would [not] be lost in following the international ideal [as] an international conception should mean a call to each nation to act according to the highest standard and to develop to the best possible condition, so that its contribution to the life of the whole world should be the best it could make (*The Manchester Guardian*, 16 October 1925: 11).

Fred Maddison, secretary of the International Arbitration League, called for the rise of ‘a world patriotism and for a fuller realisation of the fact that humanity was never contained alone in any one particular nation’ (*The Manchester Guardian*, 23 November 1928: 13). Economic internationalism was viewed positively: every Englishman was ‘in his daily life an internationalist’ thanks to international trade (Callisthenes, *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 November 1934: 10). Liberal internationalism existed but was mainly concerned with economic cooperation benefiting nation states.

Such non-socialist discourse on internationalism is hardly traceable in France: the parliamentarians continued to view internationalism as an aspect of socialist ideology, particularly as the wartime *union-sacrée* style of politics no longer worked. A leading conservative newspaper close to the foreign ministry attacked ‘the error of internationalism itself’ (*Le Temps*, 12 January 1922: 2), warning about ‘revolutionary internationalism and Soviet propaganda’ (*Le Temps*, 19 February 1923: 2). For Vincent Auriol, a leading socialist, the destiny of France and the cause of world peace were inseparable yet the socialist understanding of patriotism and internationalism could be reconciled (CD, 15 March 1921: 1244; see Chapter 4 on Jean Jaurès). Such revisionist formulations were needed as even the radical (liberal) leader Édouard Herriot insisted that ‘sincere internationalism’ superimposed itself on ‘true patriotism’ (*Le Petit Parisien*, 19 November 1922: 2). Raoul Péret, the President of the Chambre des députés, expressed the views of the centre-left even more directly: ‘We are ... for the homeland against internationalism.’ (*Le Petit Parisien*, 5 May 1924: 3). After 1923, there was an attempt to overcome antagonism with Germany but this was put into question by the political and economic crisis of the Weimar Republic.

Quite similar patterns can be found in the German Reichstag though with an earlier and more distinct rise of far-right discourse motivated by the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles as

fraudulent internationalism. An old polarization between the German organic national *Kultur* and the supposedly individualistic and materialistic *Zivilisation* (allegedly supported by a worldwide Jewish conspiracy) grew stronger. Some intellectuals were supportive of a stronger international law and receptive to liberal democratic thought (Harrington 2016: 3–4, 8); attempts to build cross-cultural understanding between the French and Germans emerged as well (Passman 2009: 1–2), but such activities were not reflected in parliamentary discourse. Antisocialist liberals continuously found it difficult to argue for any ‘Western’ form of democracy or internationalism, given their traditional concern that social democratic internationalism challenged the German nation state (Leonhard 2019: 86, 88–89). The nationalistic, antisocialist and anti-Bolshevist conservatives were opposed to internationalist projects, approaching the far right in their argumentation (Parson 2007: 4, 6, 8, 323–24). Politicians actively engaged in international cooperation, such as the right-liberal Gustav Stresemann, had to find alternative ways to legitimate their actions. One way to interpret the international in a German way had been provided by the rise of *Völkerrecht* and expectations of international solidarity between all moderate social democratic governments. Another was to cooperate with other defeated nations excluded from the League as in the case of Russia in the Treaty of Rapallo. A further method was the socioeconomic discourse on the world economy (*Weltwirtschaftspolitik*) that aimed at overcoming German diplomatic isolation while avoiding the political connotations of communist internationalism (see Chapter 7).

The Conservatives dominated parliamentary discourse on ‘internationalism’, blurring far-right authoritarian discourses with medical vocabulary to construct persuasive images of a pandemic to be healed with nationalism. Such rhetoric built on the narrative that the war had been lost due to domestic treason and on the interpretation of all compliance policies as expressions of anti-German Western internationalism. Count Kuno von Westarp of the pan-German Nationalist People’s Party condemned all internationalism as Marxism, insisting that ‘the delusions of internationalism, the interests of class struggle and inciting agitation’ should be replaced with ‘the unanimous unity of the German people’ (DR, 12 March 1921: 348:2865). Such *völkisch* thinking was presented as ‘a necessary reaction to the aberrations of internationalism’, the German people having ‘become ill from the poison of internationalism’ and likely to recover once the youth turned to nationalism (Wilhelm Bazille, Nationalist, DR, 18 July 1922: 356:8691).

This anti-internationalist discourse turned expressly antisemitic (*Vorwärts*, 20 February 1920: 2), carrying on traditions that surfaced in other countries as well. Albrecht von Graefe presented ‘Jewish Marxism and Jewish capitalist internationalism’ as antitheses of every ‘strong, national, civic heart’ (DR, 25 November 1922: 357:9166). Ernst Graf zu Reventlow (German Völkisch Freedom Party) equated and questioned ‘the idea of internationalism and the forces of judaized vision of the world’ (DR, 28 August 1924: 381:1038), claiming that internationalism originated from ‘the Jewish blood’ of German leftist politicians (DR, 11 February 1930: 426:3962). For him, the League constituted ‘the leading supporter of disintegrating internationalism, Jewishness’ (zu Reventlow, DR, 24 November 1926: 391:8173). Social Democrats he accused of advancing ‘internationalism at any cost, also at the cost of the loss of German sovereignty’ (zu Reventlow, DR, 6 July 1927: 393:11342) and the Weimar coalition of subordinating the German economy to ‘internationalist foreign policy and capitalist internationalism’ (DR, 5 March 1928: 395:13188). Stresemann’s ideas about a united states of Europe and his alleged ‘Europeanization of Germany’ appeared in the rhetoric of the far right as identical with the decomposition of the German state (DR, 11 February 1930, 426:3962). Authoritarian far-right rhetoric climaxed in Joseph Goebbels’ definition of internationalism as ‘plain treason’ that undermined the German nation:

Being an internationalist can mean nothing other than belonging to the morally and spiritually poor and lacking. ... As what is called internationalism in Germany today is no longer a connection between the German nation and the world, but outright treason, ... nothing other than undermining the national sense of honour, nothing other than the systematic destruction of the national existence of the German people (DR, 8 June 1929: 425:2220).[1]

The liberals did not respond to these condemnations. Their representatives spoke cautiously for international cooperation, refrained from defending it or simply denounced internationalism. The German Democrats prioritized national feeling over both chauvinism and communist internationalism (*Vorwärts*, 12 December 1920: 17). Adolf Korell, who had been expelled from the Rhineland by the French authorities, emphasized ‘national sense and national allegiance ... in an age of delirious unspiritual internationalism’ with which he meant Bolshevism and Entente

nationalism taking revenge on Germany (DR, 28 June 1924: 381:436). Within the Catholic Centre, ‘Christian internationalism’ that considered the nation and humankind as a whole might still find advocates (Heinrich Brauns, *Vorwärts*, 15 June 1921: 2), but Deputy Speaker Johannes Bell was doubtful of ‘theoretical pacifism or any internationalism’ while still speaking for German involvement ‘in the organism of the European whole’ (*der europäische Gesamtorganismus*; DR, 20 May 1925: 385:1963) through the League. The Social Democrats remained the only party to speak for internationalism in revisionist terms, prioritizing national work for ‘the international liberation of the peoples’ over any ‘boundless internationalism’ (*Vorwärts*, 17 June 1922: 2) of communism. Rudolf Breitscheid hence responded to nationalist attacks by insisting that ‘our internationalism is nothing else but the embodiment of national interests on a broader basis’ (*Vorwärts*, 28 January 1925: 2) and arguing, as a German delegate to the League: ‘We know that through this internationalism the way has gone onwards and upwards and will continue to go onwards and upwards despite the burdens that are placed upon us’ (DR, 11 February 1930: 426:3915).

What may surprise in the case of Sweden is the lack of outspoken liberal discourse on internationalism, despite their initially positive stand on the League, and the unwillingness of their conservatives to compromise. The Right Party hence dominated non-socialist discourse, insisting that labour internationalism hardly had a place in an international order based on nationality (*Aftonbladet*, 20 October 1920: 11) and rejecting the ‘fad internationalism of social democracy’ (*Aftonbladet*, 3 August 1929: 4). The Social Democrats consequently distinguished themselves from communist internationalism, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Hjalmar Branting who was not ready to give up nations in favour of ‘cosmopolitan collaboration’ (*Dagens Nyheter*, 20 June 1922: 8). Developers of the ideology of a people’s homeland (*folkhemmet*) maintained that working-class internationalism constituted the strongest foundation for ‘healthy nationalism’ (Arthur Engberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 July 1931: 13). Yet they denounced the way of distinguishing between national and international interests formulated by the Right Party’s Foreign Minister Ernst Trygger as ‘national egoism’ (Olof Olsson, FK, 15 February 1930: 9:21–2). In Swedish discourse, internationalism reconciled with nationalism remained the identity of the revisionists.

In Finland, the Social Democrats were no longer the only advocates of internationalism as ideological confrontations following the civil war led to the construction of competing internationality, if not internationalism. According to two women MPs, the Social Democrats opposed alliances between nationalism and ‘international capitalism’ (EK, Olga Leinonen 3 February 1922: 1876) and supported education that strengthened ‘the feeling of democracy’ and ‘the spirit of internationality’ (EK, Hilda Seppälä 6 December 1924: 1503). Socialist theory was seen to imply that the ongoing internationalization and rise of the world economy made class distinctions international, strengthening solidarity across borders and weakening nationalism (*Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 7 January 1928: 5; see Chapter 4). Some liberals recognized the Social Democratic transformation from ‘international perspectives’ to ones ‘suitable for a political party in an independent state’ (Kaarlo Vuokoski, EK, 17 December 1926: 2078), while others continued to criticize Finnish socialists for being exceptionally ambivalent about nationality (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 24 January 1926: 4). The liberal organ *Helsingin Sanomat* advised the bourgeois parties to support ‘international interaction’ provided that the advancement of the cause of the nation was ensured, as that only entailed progress (5 August 1923: 2).

The Finnish conservatives not only prioritized the nation state but also allowed right-wing criticisms of internationalism. The National Coalition Party questioned the motives of the Social Democrats, emphasizing ‘the national’ in the Finnish Constitution as opposed to ‘the internationalist, international way of thinking in a social democratic sense’ (Kaarlo Kares, EK, 17 December 1926: 2063). ‘A patriotic way of thinking and the national principle’ were presented as the right foundations of international politics and the Social Democrats were advised to denounce Jewish ‘international Marxism’ (Johannes in *Uusi Suomi*, 1 August 1931: 2) willing to ‘destroy national borders and national defence in order to realise an international order through a general violent war’ (Juho Vennola, EK, 27 September 1927: 334). The Finnish conservatives were clearly in danger of turning to antisemitism in their antisocialism.

One suggested way to strengthen ‘national undercurrents’ as opposed to socialist internationalism was that ‘the bourgeois world found an international’ (Antisosialisti, *Uusi Suomi*, 28 September 1924: 9; also 19 June 1928: 7). The conservative organ welcomed the growing ‘international’ of economy, technology and manners as natural development (*Uusi Suomi*, 14 July 1925: 4). It wrote

that even if ‘internationality [*kansainvälisyys*] does not have in most circles among us any beautiful tone’, ‘international life’ was becoming increasingly interconnected and efficient in terms of economy and technology (*Uusi Suomi*, 21 September 1927: 9). The vernacular *kansainvälisyys*, or ‘internationality’, was easier for the conservatives to approve than the ideologically loaded and foreign *internationalismi*. This may be partly explained by the generally positive sense of the word *kansa* (people/nation), which referred to both national sovereignty and to people’s power, and the word combination identifying Finland with civilized (Germanic) nations, thus realizing an old emancipatory Fennoman goal. Rightist leaders believed in ‘the principles of modern internationality and international solidarity’ within the League as favourable to small nations (Rafael Erich, *Uusi Suomi*, 7 December 1923: 9). In a striking counterpoint to the Lutheran foundation of Finnish national identity, *Uusi Suomi* encouraged the Church of Finland, too, to become more international (29 July 1928: 5). The Fennoman conservatives were overcoming their prejudices towards internationality, welcoming scientific, economic, cultural, political and potentially even confessional internationalization.

Weak Internationalism Overtaken by Nationalism in the 1930s

In this section we demonstrate the weakness of internationalist discourse in the British and French parliaments after Hitler’s accession to power in 1933. National histories were entangled so that transnational perceptions of what was happening in Germany were translated to other contexts; foreign and domestic politics became permeable. There was a general feeling of a crisis, not just of internationalism but also of democracy. Nordic conservatives, by contrast, found themselves between National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union, and chose to believe in international cooperation as their strategy of national survival.

In Britain, a Labour minority government was replaced by a Conservative one in the early 1930s, which amplified Conservative voices critical of internationalism, particularly as the economy was declining and fascism making progress on the Continent. For a typical Conservative there was no way of forgetting ‘a reasonable nationalism in our new internationalism’ (John Buchan, HC, 9 May 1932: 1625). After Hitler’s rise to power a supporter of Anglo-American cooperation assured

the House of Commons that the British government had done more than any other ‘to establish the spirit of internationalism’ (James Henderson Stewart, National Liberals, HC, 27 April 1933: 366). The generally acknowledged problem was that Germany had ‘removed pacifism and internationalism from her vocabulary’ and was instead preaching ‘the gospel of militarism and war’ (Seymour Cocks, Labour, HC, 13 November 1933: 665). An increasing number of rightists concluded that ‘[i]n this changing world internationalism is madness’ (J. Gibson Jarvie, *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 1933: 12). By 1937, Ralph Rayner saw it as ‘extremely dangerous to teach pacifism, internationalism, and the brotherhood of man’ in schools (HC, 14 June 1937: 112–13). In the days of appeasement, which still counted on legalistic practices in international politics, the Conservatives revived nationalistic, imperialistic, antisocialist and downright anti-internationalist rhetoric. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain attacked socialism – with an implicit reference to the ongoing Spanish Civil War – as ‘always at the mercy of its own extremists and attempting to handle foreign affairs on no other principle than that of a cloudy internationalism’, which opened the way to communism and fascism (*The Daily Telegraph*, 29 June 1937: 14). Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald (National Labour) directed British internationalism towards the Empire, speaking for ‘a practical internationalism’ among ‘the free and equal nations of the earth’ as a model to others (*The Daily Telegraph*, 24 May 1938: 13). The Empire, or idealistic dreams about it, continued to constitute an alternative to internationalist projects to all British parties, despite obvious challenges to the imperial order.

The French right did not hesitate to declare that ‘the internationalists ... in France, support German policy’ (*Le Temps*, 7 January 1931: 1) and to complain about ‘the dangerous follies of internationalism and the indolences of Europeanism’ (*Le Temps*, 11 April 1931: 2, citing *Figaro*). For them, given that the Paris Commune (1871) challenged the government during the Franco-German War, ‘socialist internationalism is indeed anti-patriotism’ (*Le Temps*, 15 April 1931: 1). The radical liberal Herriot wished for understanding between France and Germany, looking for a compromise in a typically liberal manner: ‘No illusory internationalism, but no surly nationalism either’ (*Le Petit Parisien*, 8 November 1931: 2). The socialist Frédéric Brunet drew conclusions that provoked non-socialists: ‘We have reached the point where we must choose: we must continue to be closely nationalist or become truly European or more completely internationalist’ (CD, 19 November 1931: 3948). During confrontational debates, centrists were likewise critical of

‘doctrinaire internationalism’ and policies of one-sided disarmament by the socialists ‘in the face of nationalist German socialism’, condemning associated Marxism as a non-French, *German*, ideology (CD, Jean Autrand, 21 January 1932: 84). On the centre-right, Prime Minister André Tardieu rejected both ‘negative nationalism’ for denouncing all negotiations and ‘reckless internationalism’, for promoting ‘firmness’ and ‘conciliation’ (*Le Petit Parisien*, 7 April 1932: 1). After 1933, leftist discourse on internationalism declined. In the words of Jean Montigny, the pacifist general secretary of the Radical Socialists and delegate to the League of Nations, the antagonistic ideologies of ‘racism and internationalism, Hitlerism and communism, and, finally, fascism and democracy’ were confronting each other in Europe in ways that made the situation worse than in 1913 (CD, 31 July 1936: 2325).

Internationalism had indeed become one of the major scapegoats of the National Socialists. They depicted social democracy that had carried on internationalist discourse in the Reichstag as ‘un-German’, ‘anational’, ‘anti-national’ and ‘inter-national’ (*Vorwärts*, 14 February 1933: 3). On 30 January 1934, Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler denounced ‘the more or less nationally embellished bourgeois democracy’, ‘the unconcealed Marxist internationalism’ and ‘parliamentary government’ as destructive of the interests of the German nation (DR, 458:8). Internationalism stood in his regime for a Bolshevik and Jewish conspiracy against the nation, the two representing ideological and racial internationalism.

Among Swedish and Finnish conservatives, the rise of dictatorship in Germany and pro-fascist right-wing movements in their own countries led to the emergence of more positive stances towards parliamentary democracy as Nordic legacy; dictatorship was defined as antinational (Kurunmäki 2010: 45, 47, 76). Such rethinking also concerned international cooperation: mainstream conservatism recognized the League as a forum for negotiation, counting on its potential to develop into ‘a good instrument for international understanding’ (Emanuel Björck, AK, 19 February 1936: 10:40). Professor Gösta Bagge, the conservative leader, maintained that Sweden should strive for better international relations through the League despite its obvious weaknesses (AK, 22 May 1937: 34:53); the chairman of his parliamentary group, Fritiof Domö, was more doubtful (FK, 1 June 1938: 40:35–6). In domestic battles, ‘the misunderstood internationalism’ of socialism was still attacked, particularly once Thorvald Stauning, the Social

Democratic Prime Minister of Denmark, had said that ‘the national’ should be prioritized as ‘internationalism does not belong to the values of the day’ (*Aftonbladet*, 28 June 1935: 4). *Dagens Nyheter* reported on such debates on internationalism without taking a stand, maintaining liberal ambiguity. In the Riksdag, defences of the League as the only solid organization of the international community were heard (Carl Axel Reuterskiöld, FK, 19 February 1936: 10:2). By 1939, even Social Democrats tended to lose faith (FK, Östen Undén, 9 June 1939: 39:46–7). All major parties had nevertheless turned international in the sense of sympathizing with the League, despite their disappointment with its achievements.

In Finland, too, the far-right challenge reinforced pragmatic attitudes towards democracy and internationalism among mainstream conservatives: they distanced themselves from German developments, were unwilling to revive the divisions of the Civil War and counted on the backing of the League under Soviet pressures. When some rightists demanded that the Social Democrats ‘leave the paragraphs on the international out of their programmes’ or otherwise ban them (Pekka Pennanen, EK, 26 April 1933: 2870), R. A. Wrede of the conservative Swedish People’s Party (who had been critical of universal suffrage and parliamentarism in 1918) concluded that internationalism was no crime and that the Finns benefited from international organizations (Hesekiel in *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 16 June 1933: 4); for him, the League giving Åland to Finland rather than Sweden was a case in point. The far right did borrow anti-internationalist discourse from Germany, condemning ‘Marxism of Jewish origins’ and ‘liberalism favouring internationalism’ (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 9 December 1933: 7). As they insisted that Marxism and internationalism should be stopped like in Germany, a centrist MP shouted: ‘No Nazi speeches are needed here!’ (K. R. Kares, EK, 8 December 1933: 1520). Far-right conspiracy theories, critique of ‘the sickly nature of parliamentarism’ (Eino Tuomivaara, EK, 13 March 1934: 665; Hilja Riipinen, 22 March 1938: 272; 5 April 1938: 420) and suggestion that all the other parties were compromisingly ‘international’ gave rise to hilarity (Reino Ala-Kulju, EK, 13 March 1934: 705). Due to their experiences of pre-independence Russification and fears of Bolshevik internationalism, the Finnish centre-right had become stout supporters of Western international cooperation based on legal norms. This was also increasingly the stand of the Social Democrats who appeared supportive of the nation state, denouncing the ‘perverted internationalism’ of communism (*Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 14 July 1931: 6). Before the Winter War in 1939, they

emphasized the connected patriotism and internationalism of their party ever more strongly (K.-A. Fagerholm, *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 31 October 1939: 3). The Winter War itself, which the League was unable to prevent, united the two sides of the Civil War in defence of Western civilization.

Conclusion

We have shown that many British and Scandinavian liberals viewed internationalism optimistically in the aftermath of the First World War but on the condition that international cooperation was maintained what they considered positive nationalism or patriotism within nation states. Given the strengthened Bolshevist tone of internationalism the liberals remained cautious about openly advocating it, with the exception of a few British and French demands for ‘sane’ and ‘sincere’ internationalism. In Britain, the usual argument for the League was that it enabled the reconciliation of nationalism and internationalism while safeguarding the interests of the Empire.

Typically, non-socialist discourse in all studied countries drew negative associations between internationalism and socialism and by implication with communism, suggesting that internationalism stood for anti-patriotism. Anti-Bolshevism was common to most references to internationalism but its connotations varied depending on the motives of the speakers. Internationalism had established itself as a disputed political concept after the First World War but the interwar period saw the multiplication of its connotations, either returning to the nineteenth-century descriptive language of international cooperation or approaching ideas about a world economy and legally bound international order. Such developments were put to an end by the rise of Hitler.

In the Nordic countries, a pragmatic non-socialist concept of internationality emerged between the two world wars. Whereas the Swedish Liberals and Social Democrats were stout supporters of League internationalism and the Finnish non-socialists increasingly counted on its legalism, the Swedish right was initially sceptical and the Finnish conservatives typically blamed all socialists of internationalism undermining the nation state. Several factors nevertheless made the Swedish

and Finnish conservatives opt for international cooperation as opposed to far-right nationalism: the economic benefits of practical international cooperation, the Soviet threat, the warning example of National Socialist Germany, the legalism of the League that reminded them of national constitutional traditions and the redefinition of democracy as a national legacy all made them distance themselves from anti-internationalism and see potential in ‘bourgeois’ internationalism instead.

Internationalism was at no stage approved by the French or German right, which did not prevent them from cooperating transnationally to counter Bolshevism without using the concept (Gerwarth and Horne 2012). ‘Internationalism’ retained its socialist or Marxist tone, a lot like ‘democracy’, despite revisionist assurances of their dedication to both internationalism and the *patrie/Vaterland*. Liberals did not defend internationalism in explicit terms: in France they continued to talk derisively about socialist internationalism; in Germany parliamentary discourse on internationalism was dominated by the anti-internationalism of the far right, while the liberals found it increasingly difficult to defend international cooperation or Western democracy after disappointment with Wilson’s promises and the Treaty of Versailles. The rise of National Socialism reinforced conservative doubts about internationalism in Britain and France, while Swedish and Finnish conservatives mainly moved towards majority democracy and League internationalism. Insinuations of subversive socialist internationalism were not entirely rejected despite the revisionist parties consistently emphasizing their denouncement of communism and dedication to the nation states. National Socialist discourses were imitated by the far right, but for the mainstream conservatives economic, political and even cultural internationalism turned into a survival strategy for Nordic democracy between communism and National Socialism.

Notes

1 ‘Wir meinen, daß dann Internationalist sein nichts anderes heißen kann, als zu den moralisch und geistig Minderbemittelten und Enterbten zu gehören. (Sehr wahr! bei den Nationalsozialisten.) Denn was heute in Deutschland unter der Marke Internationalismus umgeht, ist nicht mehr eine Inbeziehungsetzung der Deutschen Nation zur Welt, sondern glatter Landesverrat, (sehr wahr! bei

den Nationalsozialisten) ist nichts anderes als Unterhöhlung des nationalen Ehrbewußtseins, nichts anderes als systematische Vernichtung der nationalen Existenzen des deutschen Volkes.’

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