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CHAPTER 12

Evolving Conceptualisations of Internationalism in the UK Parliament

Collocation Analyses from the League to Brexit

Pasi Ihalainen and Aleksi Sahala

Introduction¹

While the history of the diplomatic events and institutions of 20th-century international politics has been comprehensively explored,² macro-historical and long-term computer-assisted analyses of conceptualisations of the ‘international’ have not yet been attempted. With the increasing availability of digitised parliamentary debates, such an analysis of the everyday language of politics has become possible. In the conceptual history of internationalism, focus on Parliament is particularly pertinent in the British case, as the country has been one of the most active agents in the field of international cooperation while regarding Parliament as *the* forum of ideological debate. Parliament has had a say in foreign policy, too, regarding membership in international organisations.

After having previously analysed parliamentary debates with more conventional close-reading methods of the history of political discourse,³ we turn here to text analysis programmes to explore their benefits for conceptual history.

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Our goal is to reconstruct meanings assigned to international issues in the UK Parliament in the long 20th century: How has the ‘international’ been experienced, understood, conceptualised, constructed, debated and redefined? How and why has the ‘international’ been given meaning and implicitly defined through its use in a variety of (ideologically motivated) political arguments, particularly in connection with membership in international organisations? To what extent and when, how, why and with what consequences has this attribute turned into an ‘ism’?

We argue that the distant reading of extensive series of digitised UK parliamentary debates by the means of a collocation analysis helps to extend and deepen conceptual analysis so that previously unnoticed ways to discuss international cooperation can be discovered and the close reading of sources is more effectively focused. We supplement the analysis of parliamentary discourse at macro level with collocation analyses of particular debates and contextualised conceptual analyses in concrete speaking situations. The latter correspond with the criteria of historical research for understanding meaning created in specific contexts and provide checks to premature conclusions drawn on the basis of computer-assisted distant reading. In this exploration, conclusions of the distant reading remain suggestive so that problems rising from decontextualised interpretations can be pointed out. Thus, our investigation provides an example of interaction between text analysis programmes and an analytical mind familiar with the genre and discourses of the primary sources.

While doubts about the application of collocation analyses to intellectual history have by no means been overcome,⁴ in corpus linguistics they have been used productively.⁵ For sociolinguists, collocation is ‘an accepted, linguistically meaningful measurement’⁶ referring to ‘the co-occurrence of two words within a pre-specified span, when the frequency of the co-occurrence is above chance, taking into account the frequencies of the “node” (the word in focus), its collocates, and the collocation itself.’⁷ Applications thus far include a diachronic analysis of UK parliamentary speaking on Ireland,⁸ an analysis of a parliamentary debate on the climate change⁹ and an analysis of adjective collocates qualifying capitalism. Foxlee has aimed at combining more semantically and more pragmatically oriented versions of conceptual history with computer-assisted text analysis.¹⁰ Guldi has demonstrated how word counts and text mining produce indices of historical change.¹¹ Lähdesmäki and Wagenaar have used collocation analysis to explore discourses of diversity within the Council of Europe by grouping the key terms in semantic fields (collocation networks) and measuring the frequencies of those fields in order to reveal how concepts were produced as policy.¹² The current authors share such an understanding of politics as primarily discursive and of the need to focus on conceptual innovations and active uses of language aimed at affecting policies.¹³

The Hansard Corpus (<https://www.english-corpora.org/hansard/>) contains nearly every speech given in the UK Parliament between 1803 and 2005,

1.6 billion words in total, and allows researchers to search on parliamentary debates, including collocation searches. While the scanned records have been proofread and optical character recognition (OCR) is not an issue, something like 5% of the debates have not been included in the Historic Hansard database (<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/index.html>) from which the data originates, which causes some uncertainty with search results. We started our distant reading with a collocation analysis of the noun collocates of ‘internationalism’ based on the tool of the Hansard Corpus, quoting selected examples from Historic Hansard to give more concrete content to the discernible trends. We then proceeded to collocation analyses of the entire vocabulary of ‘international’ in a selection of Commons (HC) and Lords (HL) debates concerning British membership in international organisations.

For the collocation analysis, we used a measure called PMI²,¹⁴ which is a less low-frequency sensitive improvement of the Church and Hanks’ word association measure built around the idea of Pointwise Mutual Information (PMI).¹⁵ The core idea of the PMI-based measures is to divide the corpus into forward-looking or bi-directional windows of fixed size, which define the maximum distance between the keywords and their possible collocates. The keywords are paired with each word that can be found within the defined window size, and the actual joint probability of each pair is compared to the expected probability of those words co-occurring independently. *The maximum score of 0* indicates that the words are only found together, and the minimum of $-\infty$ that the words never co-occur within the given window size. For calculating the scores, we used a Python script called *pmizer*, which is an open source script for calculating different PMI-based association measures from tokenised text.¹⁶ We did not lemmatise our data, as we wanted to preserve singular and plural forms separately. To avoid our data being overcrowded with conjunctions, prepositions and pronouns, we filtered most of these out by using a simple stop-word list.

For the analysis of membership debates, there was no need to limit search terms as single debates varying from one to a few days were in question, and hence all references to the ‘international’ could be considered. A broad collocation window of 10 words both ways was used to discover every politically significant noun associated with the ‘international’. The scores calculated with PMI² are reported below in the form ‘(number of collocates within the span of ten words both ways/score/distance)’.

Politically interesting collocates picked from result lists that ranked the closeness of the collocations on the basis of their score were grouped into collocation networks and their relative importance in both Houses discussed. While collocations are usually considered statistically significant when they appear in the corpus at least twice, individual combinations of words also deserve attention as politically potentially meaningful innovative speech acts. The next analysis is primarily based on distant reading, though some general context is introduced to support interpretation. A close reading of some findings will follow.

‘Internationalism’ in the UK Parliament, 1803–2005

As the Hansard Corpus is so extensive and as the use of ‘international’ is often technical rather than ideological (referring to aviation, for instance), our distant reading focused on collocations of ‘internationalism’. The total number of co-occurrences of ‘internationalism’ in the Hansard Corpus with a nine-word collocation window is 1,542, with an emphasis on the 20th century and especially in the interwar period and the 1970s and 1960s. This leads to a manageable amount of results, even if ones that focus on the ‘extreme’ forms of international thinking that are expressed as an ‘ism’ word.

The noun collocates of ‘internationalism’ that were considered politically meaningful were divided into 13 loose semantic fields (groups of related terms, topical sub-categories or collocation networks), namely nationalism, party, socialism/labour, spirit, peace, democracy, imperialism, cosmopolitanism, globalism, collaboration, institutions, supra-nationalism and capitalism. The diachronic frequencies of the six most important of these semantic fields are visualised in Figure 12.1. The grouping of the terms was intuitive, building on previous empirical analyses of discourses on internationalism. Bringing in the historian’s subjective mind in this way helped in discerning relevant topics among diversified discourses.

The diachronic frequencies point at the centrality of discourses on patriotism and nationalism for conceptualisations of internationalism. As Clavin and

Table 12.1: The number of collocations of ‘internationalism’ in UK parliamentary debates according to the Hansard Corpus.

1870s	4
1880s	8
1890s	0
1900s	8
1910s	38
1920s	132
1930s	188
1940s	202
1950s	129
1960s	99
1970s	317
1980s	204
1990s	130
2000–2005	83

Source: Author.

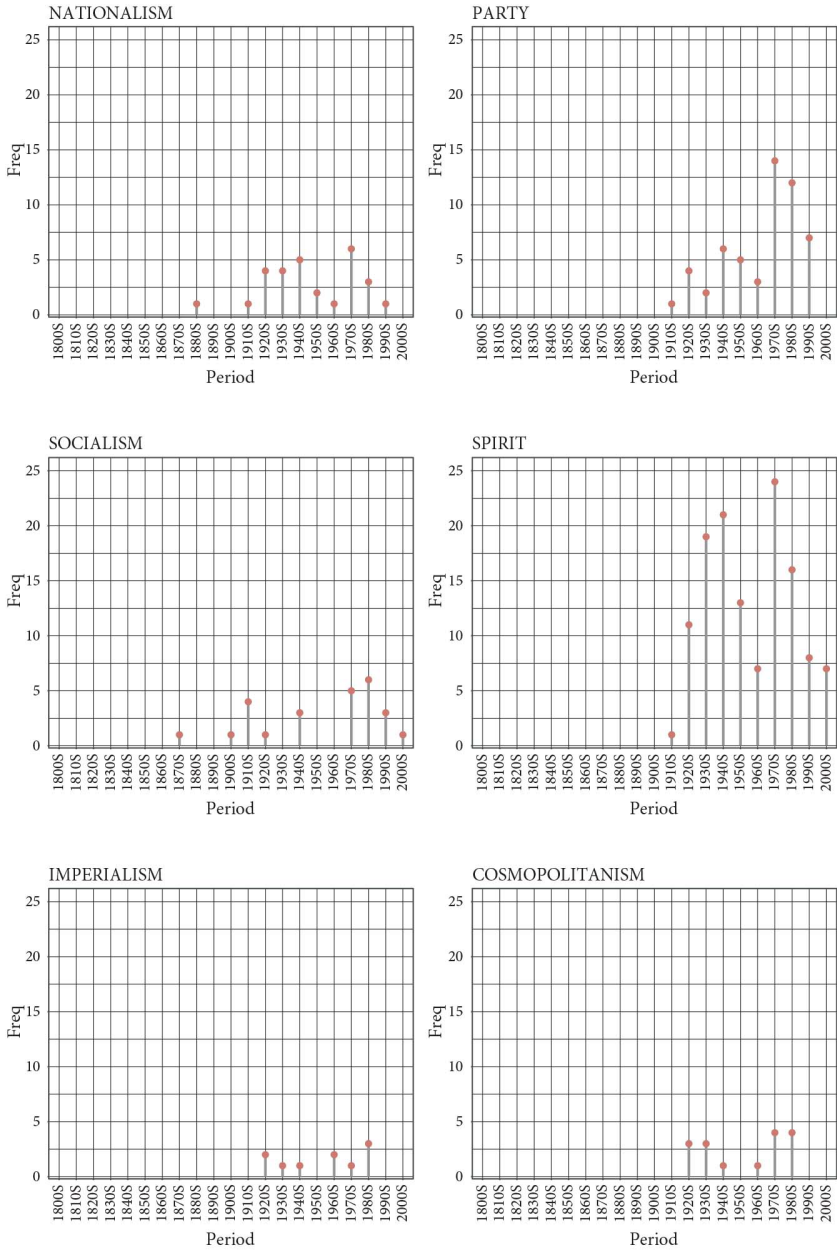


Figure 12.1: Politically significant collocate groups of ‘internationalism’ in the Hansard Corpus: nationalism, party, socialism (including the vocabulary of labour), spirit, imperialism, and cosmopolitanism. The visualisations were made by Kimmo Elo. Source: Author.

Sluga have argued, for much of the 20th century, internationalism was unthinkable without nationalism; nationalism was the basic premise, not a mere counter-concept of internationalism.¹⁷ The vocabulary of patriotism contrasted with socialist internationalism in the British parliament already in 1882 as P. J. Smyth (Home Rule Party) criticised Irish agitation of ‘the substitution of a vague, sickly, and godless internationalism for the manly patriotism’ (*HC Deb. 9 March 1882 vol. 267 c524*; the references from now on are to volume and column numbers (c) in accordance with the conventions of British parliamentary debates). Patriotism or nationalism and internationalism (59 collocations) became increasingly associated after the First World War as the promoters of the League of Nations tried to reconcile these ways of thinking. Yet, J. D. Rees (Conservatives), a former colonial administrator, pointed at tensions between patriotism or nationalism and (socialist) internationalism, concluding that ‘[i]nternationalism means the negation of patriotism and the abnegation of everything of which we should be proud. Instead of extending internationalism I long myself to see it abolished completely off the face of the earth’ (*HC Deb. 1 November 1920 vol. 134 c106*). Internationalism could only be based on nationalism, as Goronwy Owen (Liberals) put it: ‘I have no sympathy at all with the people who preach internationalism as such ... The basis of a proper internationalism is a good nationalism ...’ (*HC Deb. 27 April 1928 vol. 216 c1285*). Morgan Jones (Labour), a pacifist, agreed in the early 1930s as every European state was developing ‘not towards a growing internationalism but towards essential nationalism’ (*HC Deb. 10 May 1932 vol. 265 c1837*). Doubts about internationalism continued after the Second World War, especially among non-socialists: Ralph Rayner (Conservatives) was ironical when pointing out that ‘Russia is still internationalist in so far as internationalism will serve her nationalism’ (*HC Deb. 20 February 1946 vol. 419 c1192*).

Only from the mid-1950s can we find Conservatives conceptualising internationalism in more positive terms. Peter Smithers, a British delegate for the Council of Europe, believed that ‘[a] nationalist war today is a physical impossibility; and economically and socially the temptations of the benefits of internationalism are so great that nationalism in itself is no longer a very attractive proposition’ (*HC Deb. 27 July 1955 vol. 544 c1288*). More radical challenging of nationalism dated from the time of the EEC membership as the young David Owen (Labour) declared: ‘When I talk about European unity, I am talking in part about our concept of nationalism and internationalism. I find that one of the most dangerous facets of modern life and, indeed, of our history over the last 50 years is the scar of nationalism. I believe in internationalism as an article of faith’ (*HC Deb. 26 October 1971 vol. 823 c1634*). By 1981, even the former Conservative MEP Hugh Dykes argued that ‘Britain has always been internationalist in its nature. We changed the orientation of our internationalism by entering the Community in 1973. I wish that new, modern internationalism and Europeanism to continue, for the benefit of future generations’ (*HC Deb. 8 April 1981 vol. 2 c1000*). Such positive associations between integration and

internationalism, though interesting with hindsight, were not mainstream in the 1970s and 1980s either.

Conservative and liberal suspicions about internationalism had traditionally risen from its associations with socialism, as is revealed by 52 collocations of party vocabulary and internationalism, especially in the 1910s and 1920s, but still in the 1970s and 1980s as well. Party perspectives include associations between internationalism and socialism/socialist(s) (20), workers (10), labour (7), revolution (1), Marxism (1), bolshevism (1) and communism/communist(s) (2). Socialist or labour internationalism had emerged in the mid-19th century with the First International,¹⁸ came up in the British parliament in the 1870s and was welcomed by 1911 as Josiah Wedgwood (Liberals) observed how '[i]nternationalism is spreading rapidly, not only the internationalism of capital but the internationalism of labour' (*HC Deb. 14 December 1911 vol. 32 c2625*). The founding of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919 activated this discourse, although typically the political rivals attacked the internationalist background of the Labour Party. By 1950, Joseph Kenworthy, a Labour peer, nevertheless declared that 'the future of mankind lies in internationalism: That word "internationalism" is a word we do not hear nearly often enough to-day: Real internationalism properly applied would have avoided the terrible catastrophes of the world wars of this century and have raised the standard of life of the whole of humanity' (*HL Deb. 28 June 1950 vol. 167 c1186*). Philip Russell Rea, a Liberal peer, also came up with ideas about 'more internationalism, some relinquishment of national sovereignty' as 'necessary in the modern world' (*HL Deb. 2 November 1960 vol. 226 c52*). Ronald Leighton, too, believed in internationalism, but added in line with the interwar prioritisation of nation states: 'The word "inter" means between: Instead of supra-nationalism, I want to see a group of independent, self-governing countries co-operating together' (*HC Deb. 21 May 1984 vol. 60 cc730-731*).

The spirit of internationalism (the fourth most common collocate of internationalism) had been discussed before the First World War as Philip Snowden (Labour), an anti-capitalist trade unionist, declared that 'we believe in the spread of a spirit of internationalism' and urged Britain to lead 'a great international league of peace' (*HC Deb. 15 March 1910 vol. 15 c308*). The vocabulary of this discourse included collocations with spirit (24), principle(s) (22), idea(s) (17), sense (10), ideal(ism) (10), word(s) (13), belief/believer (12), concept (11) and values (7), as well as thought, thinking, theories, enthusiasm, vocabulary and term. There would seem to have been a slight rise in the 'idea' of internationalism between the 1920s and 1940s and again in the 1970s and 1980s, as in the general intensity of internationalism discourse. The 'spirit' of internationalism peaked from the 1930s to the 1950s, 'principles' peaked in the 1950s. Critique against the 'idealism' of internationalism appeared between the 1920s and the 1950s and again in the 1970s, in the same period as 'values' were discussed. 'Sense' and internationalism were co-textualised a few times from the 1920s to 1940s and again since the 1970s, but with diminishing frequencies.

Explicit references to the spirit of internationalism were not so many as could be expected on the basis of Britain's role as a herald of liberal internationalism. In the aftermath of Hitler's accession to power, James Henderson Stewart (National Liberals), a supporter of Anglo-American cooperation, nevertheless assured that the British government had done more than any other 'to establish the spirit of internationalism' (*HC Deb. 27 April 1933 vol. 277 c366*). After the Second World War, the British spirit of internationalism was emphasised every now and then. In 1956, Lord Rea demanded that 'international questions must be handled with international, and not with national, mentality' and that 'we must recognise this spirit of internationalism much more than we have done in the past' by joining European organisations (*HL Deb. 15 March 1956 vol. 196, cc461–462*). Reginald Prentice (Labour) welcomed development aid as a way of 'building up a spirit of internationalism which can be a factor towards world peace' (*HC Deb. 25 April 1961 vol. 639, c303*).

Internationalism has customarily been associated with peace. This discourse emerged with the League of Nations and peaked in the 1930s. Dennistoun Burney (Conservatives), an aviation expert, summarised the logic of internationalism from the point of view of national, European and imperial security: '... if you are to have peace you must have internationalism, and if you are to have internationalism, you can only have it by abrogating to some extent the sovereign rights of each nation and at the same time restricting the freedom of the elective assembly of each national Government' (*HC Deb. 7 March 1929 vol. 226, c670*). By the 1930s, the problem was, according to Seymour Cocks (Labour), that Germany 'removed pacifism and internationalism from her vocabulary' (*HC Deb. 13 November 1933 vol. 281, c665*) so that, for Ralph Rayner (Conservatives), it already appeared as 'extremely dangerous to teach pacifism, internationalism, and the brotherhood of man' (*HC Deb. 14 June 1937 vol. 325, cc112–113*). Discourse on the spirit of internationalism nevertheless emerged in the interwar era, peaked with the creation of the United Nations and became again rarer in the 1950s and 1960s. After EEC membership, the UK Parliament appeared quantitatively at its most 'internationalist'; thereafter, collocations between spirit and internationalism have declined. Democracy was associated with internationalism in the parliamentary context mainly in the 1930s and 1940s, although Francis Pym (Conservatives), a former foreign secretary who opposed Thatcherism, argued boldly in 1987 that '[t]he world is interdependent, and internationalism must be nurtured in every democracy' (*HC Deb. 7 April 1987 vol. 114, c196*).

International issues could be conceptualised in further alternative ways. The British parliamentary elite had seen the League of Nations as supportive of the interests of the Empire.¹⁹ They often discussed imperialism/imperialist(s) (commonwealth, empire, colonialism) and internationalism in the same context, with a break in the 1950s when decolonisation had started, reflected on the topic occasionally from the 1960s to the 1980s, and then dropped it from their vocabulary. Cosmopolitan ideals of internationalism—consisting of a variety

of notions ranging from brotherhood, altruism, solidarity, humanitarian issues, aid and assistance to friendship, neighbourliness, fellowship and reciprocity—were also defended between the 1920s and 1940s. After the Second World War, this discourse became marginal, only to peak in the 1970s and 1980s in a rising internationalist atmosphere supportive of development and humanitarian aid, and losing popularity from the 1990s onwards. This period saw the emergence of a normative discourse on cosmopolitan democracy in political science, but such theories did not find their way to Parliament. The 1990s did see the emergence of the alternative discourse on globalisation, but only in three collocations with internationalism.

A discourse on collaboration (1) or cooperation (1) as internationalism surfaced by the end of the century, but as the low frequencies show, remained surprisingly marginal. Conventions on human rights, including that of the Council of Europe, appeared to Oliver McGregor, an economic historian, as ‘the most remarkable features of recent history, a triumph for reason, co-operation and internationalism’ over nationalism (*HL Deb. 16 December 1987 vol. 491, c729*). EEC membership supported discourse on systems, organisations, institutions and associations on the one hand and internationalism on the other. Yet, such debate withered away by the early 2000s, which may be reflective of the lack of commitment to the institutions of the community. The membership gave rise to entirely new debates on the relationship between integration (3), union (6), community/ies (11), Europeanism (3), supra-nationalism (4) and internationalism as well, but not to any great extent. In the meantime, the membership does not seem to have made such a great difference in associations between internationalism and markets (including trade(s)/trading, capital/capitalism/capitalist(s), economy, finance, growth and competition), a discourse that had existed before the First World War and been on a higher level in the interwar era. The global free trade visions of British politicians do not seem to have changed much with the post-Second World War economic integration: the EEC, too, was mainly conceptualised as a question of markets.

Debates on Membership in International Organisations

Next, we shall complement the above distant reading of trends in discourse on internationalism with analyses of collocates of the ‘international’ in entire parliamentary debates that concerned the British membership in international organisations—as key moments of discourse on the ‘international’. The collocation analyses enabled a type of ‘topic modelling’ of the contents of the debates so that the results were not determined by previously selected search terms such as ‘internationalism’ only.

The selected membership debates concerned the League of Nations (LoN, in the Commons on 21 July 1919, in the Lords on 24 July 1919), the United Nations (UN, in both Houses on 22 August 1945), the Council of Europe (CoE,

debated only in the Commons on 13 November 1950), the European Economic Community (EEC, several days in February 1972 in the Commons and in July 1972 in the Lords) and the European Union (EU, a couple of plenaries in September 2017 in the Commons and in January 2018 in the Lords). A further possibility might have been membership in NATO, but the defence alliance differed in its character from the other more general forms of international cooperation. It is also debatable whether these are the most representative occasions and whether the EU should be seen as a mere 'international organisation' or rather as a project of transnational integration. Debates on the EEC/EU in particular had several stages, and in principle all of these could have been analysed, but for the sake of consistency only *the second readings* of the related bills were considered. The second reading is typically the stage of deliberative decision-making when most extensive ideological contributions to the debate are made and competing arguments presented, reflecting much of what had come up in other parliamentary discussions and the public debate.

The Commons debates on the LoN membership on 21 July 1919 was a key moment in the history of British internationalism.²⁰ It took place in the aftermath of the signing of the treaty of Versailles that not only concluded the First World War with tough peace terms on Germany, but also introduced the League Covenant. The collocation analysis suggests that internationalism surrounding the League was conceptualised by the MPs to a great extent through the general concept of 'international law', as could be expected on the basis of the British role in drafting the Covenant and the inclusion of the International Court in it. The 'international' in the context of the League was about 'court' (4/-1184/2.75), 'legislation' (2/-1238/2.0), 'regulation' (1/-1238/1.0), 'justice' (4/-1271/2.75) and 'law' (1/-1571/1.0). Yet, for a trading nation, the 'international' also stood for finances, as reflected by nine close collocations of 'international' and 'finance' (9/-1029/1.0) and two more with 'financiers' (1/-1338/1.0) and 'financial' (1/-1655/1.0). 'Labour' had numerous close collocates with 'international' (10/-1220/2.2) due to the connected founding of the ILO, aimed at appeasing revisionist Western socialists under the alternative of the Communist International.²¹ As an entirely new international organisation was being constructed, its institutions were discussed with terms such as 'bureau' (1/-1238/2.0) and 'machinery' (3/-1312/1.0). Discourses on 'experiment' (2/-1355/5.0), 'opportunity' (3/-1367/5.3) or 'cooperation' (1/-1397/3.0) and 'international' surfaced, but only rarely. Out of these findings, 'opportunity' will be analysed in more detail below.

The Lords paid plenty of attention to the moral aspects of the League, associating 'morality' (6/-800/1.0) tightly with 'international' and connecting 'morals' (1/-1059/3.0) and 'sanctity' (1/-1059/4.0) with it as well. The League was about 'treaties' (2/-1059/6.0), 'jurisprudence' (1/-1159/1.0), 'court' (2/-1178/1.0), 'sanction' (1/-1217/1.0), 'justice' (2/-1259/1.0), 'code' (1/-1259/1.0), 'rules' (1/-1259/6.0), 'law' (1/-1391/1.0) and 'treaty' (1/-1611/5.0), the total number of legal collocates rising to 13. Reflective of the more value- than interest-directed

discourse (different from the down-to-earth approach of the Commons) is talk about 'international spirit' (2/-1117/1.5), which was reinforced by synonymous collocates such as 'friendship' (1/-1059/7.0) and 'reconciliation' (1/-1159/4.0). A major difference was the lack of debate on 'finances' and 'labour', which shows how economic and social issues were left for the lower house to deal with, appearing as less relevant in the social context of the peers.

The League was generally regarded as a drastic failure after the Second World War, and the British government then agreed with the United States and the Soviet Union on the founding of a new international organisation.²² The Commons debated the UN membership in August 1945, in the aftermath of a victory over Nazi Germany and in the shadow of the first military use of the atomic bomb in Japan. Despite dissatisfaction with the League, British understandings of the 'international' had not changed much since 1919: the UN was likewise conceptualised through law, labour and institution. Next-door collocations of 'international' and 'court' (5/-1076/1.0), 'justice' (6/-1097/2.7), 'law' (4/-1228/1.0) and 'lawyers' (1/-1382/1.0) dominated, and collocations with 'conventions' (2/-1182/2.0) can be added to this discourse on international law. Associations with 'labour' (9/-1080/1.7) and 'workers' (1/-1582/7.0) continued to feature, which shows not only that the interests of the working class were central to the current Labour government, but also highlights a reaction to the strengthened international status of the Soviet Union and the connected need to appease the working classes of the West. Discourse on the institution focused in 1945 distinctly on 'control' (10/-1126/2.6), 'security' (5/-1476/3.2), 'machinery' (2/-1490/1.0) and 'peace' (4/-1544/1.0). 'Economic' (3/-1500/5.0) had rather loose connections with 'international' in comparison with the post-First World War situation. Collocates deserving further exploration include 'collective' and 'security'.

The Lords viewed the UN much like the Commons, emphasising law and justice on the one hand and the functioning of the institution aimed at collective security on the other. The peers associated 'international' and 'justice' (3/-1156/1.0), 'treaties' (1/-1292/5.0) or 'law' (1/-1509/1.0) and produced collocations of 'international' with 'supervision' (2/-1192/-1292/1.0), 'guards' (1/-1192/3.0), 'operation' (2/-1292/3.0), 'security' (5/-1341/3.6), 'peace' (4/-1386/1.0) and 'machinery' (1/-1573/1.0). Noteworthy are close associations between 'international' and 'collaboration' (2/-1151/1.0). Comments on 'patriotism' (1/-1292/9.0) and the 'commonwealth' (1/-1473/3.0) were also made.

Also at the formation of the CoE in 1950, the Commons drew predominantly from conceptualisations of the international law. 'Tribunal' (1/-1170/1.0) and 'court' (4/-1202/1.0) had several close collocations with 'international', and collocations with 'justice' (3/-1085/2.3) and 'jurists' (1/-1170/9.0) appeared. Associations between 'labour' (4/-1228/3.25) or 'workers' (1/-1370/2.0) and 'international' remained part of the discourse. Loose associations between 'international' and 'continental' (1/-1540/4.0), 'Brussels' (1/-1540/7.0) and 'federal' (1/-1634/4.0) were emerging, which may be indicative of a tendency to

locate the ‘international’ out there in Europe. Economy or trade (1/-1578/9.0) had a marginal role in the CoE debates, nor do democracy or human rights feature,²³ which is surprising given the later role of the organisation, and associations between ‘peace’ (1/-1609/6.0) and ‘international’ were weak as well. The CoE appeared as a further body applying international law. Yet, it might have powerful tools of ‘international pressure’ (2/-1070/1.0, the strongest discovered association) in its possession, to which we shall return below.

The EEC, by contrast, was conceptualised in 1972 much less through law than economy. For the Commons, the EEC was about markets, trade, business and companies—not about law—which suggests a lack of dedication to common legislation as an aspect of the European integration. Associations between ‘international’ and ‘companies’ were exceptionally strong (7/-1022/1.0), but the ‘international’ was also associated with ‘monetary’ issues (6/-1171/2.0), ‘trade’ (5/-1345/2.6), ‘fund’ (3/-1362/2.0), ‘trading’ (2/-1442/1.0), ‘firm’ (1/-1515/9.0), ‘business’ (1/-1553/1.0) and ‘growth’ (1/-1659/5.0). An association between ‘international’ and ‘continent’ (1/-1529/4.0) can be found, but interesting is the remaining considerable semantic distance between ‘international’ and ‘Europe’ (2/-1781/6.5) or ‘European’ (1/-1971/5.0), ‘community’ (2/-1903/5.0) or even ‘British’ (1/-1933/3.0). The integration was not that much about partnership, with ‘partners’ only passingly associated with ‘international’ (1/-1383/9.0). Some associations with ‘scientific’ (2/-1215/6.0) aspects of integration appeared, while the defence aspect of the EEC was mentioned only in passing (1/-1622/2.0). At first sight, some concern on being located in an ‘international periphery’ (1/-1283/1.0) would seem to have been expressed, but close reading will lead to opposite conclusions.

The Lords talked much less about law than in connection with previous memberships. While ‘international law’ (1/-1732/1.0) was mentioned, ‘rights’ (1/-1505/4.0) and ‘rules’ (1/-1543/8.0) had few and relatively weak associations with ‘international’. The economic aspect was less distinct than in the Commons—associations with ‘companies’ (1/-1432/7.0), ‘capital’ (1/-1443/2.0), ‘monetary’ (1/-1512/1.0) and ‘trade’ (1/-1704/1.0) appearing, but those with ‘economic’ (1/-1727/5.0) and ‘market’ (1/-1799/9.0) being much weaker. Associations with ‘mobile’ (1/-1073/1.0), ‘cohesion’ (1/-1173/3.0) and ‘standards’ (1/-1454/1.0) reflect an understanding of the ideas of the economic community, although a need for ‘protecting’ (1/-1073/2.0) would suggest the opposite view. ‘International partnership’ (1/-1419/1.0) as an expression made an appearance. The semantic distance between both ‘British’ (1/-1779/6.0) or ‘community’ (1/-1926/2.0) and ‘international’ is observable, just as in the Commons. Worth close reading is an occasional association between ‘European’ and ‘internationalist’ (1/-1638/3.0), for instance.

Debates since the Brexit referendum of June 2016 have been complex and are far from completed at the time of writing (August 2018/2019), which means that the following remarks necessarily remain provisional. The early Commons debates reflected a considerable concern about ‘development’ (4/-990/2.25) in

the field of international questions and addressed international ‘obligations’ (4/-1042/1.5) to an exceptional degree. The latter way of speaking can be seen as an aspect of the traditional legal discourse on ‘treaties’ (3/-1209/1.0) and law (3/-1657/1.0), which seems stronger at the time of a prospective exit from the EU than during entrance negotiations. Yet, the Commons continued to understand the EU overwhelmingly through ‘trade’ (9/-1144/1.7, though this result is overemphasised by the title ‘International Trade Secretary’), and the prospective withdrawal gave rise to questions about ‘tax’ (1/-1368/1.0), ‘taxation’ (1/-1442/4.0) and ‘customs’ (1/-1690/8.0). ‘United Kingdom’ (2/-1518/5.5), ‘nation’ (1/-1534/5.0) and ‘UK’ (2/-1712/4.5) were viewed as only slightly more ‘international’ than in the 1970s, and ‘union’ (2/-1750/8.0) and ‘European’ (2/-1988/5.5) continued to be dissociated from ‘international’. The British MP refrained from conceptualising the EU which they were about to leave as ‘international’.

The Lords, known for their more pro-integration stands, were likewise dedicated to ‘international obligations’ (3/-1243/1.0) and ‘international treaty/treaties’ (4/-1371/-1482/1.0), but also to the ‘international reputation’ of Britain (2/-1371/1.0). Like the Commons, they felt some concern about international ‘development’ (2/-1440/3.0). Discourses on international addressed economic issues with ‘monetary’ (1/-1301/1.0), ‘trade’ (6/-1432/2.3), ‘fund’ (1/-1460/2.0), ‘manufacturing’ (1/-1571/1.0), ‘bank’ (1/-1591/9.0) and ‘financial’ (1/-1794/1.0), but this was by no means the dominant discourse. Legal discourse played a more diversified role than at the time of joining the EEC, seen in association with ‘divorces’ (2/-1101/1.0), ‘crime(s)’ (2/-1360/-1518/1.0 -4.0), ‘law’ (7/-1516/3.6), ‘rules’ (2/-1582/6.5), ‘court’ (2/-1644/1.0), ‘standards’ (1/-1718/1.0), ‘regulatory’ (1/-1760/1.0), ‘justice’ (1/-1763/3.0) and ‘rights’ (1/-2060/2.0). Noteworthy is the use of the metaphor ‘divorce’ to describe Brexit, with an emotional connotation side by side with concrete legal discourse. An exceptional intervention addressing ‘internationalist heritage’ (1/-833/1.0) has been chosen for closer reflection below. ‘National’ (2/-1597/2.0), ‘nation’ (1/-1763/6.0) or ‘UK’ (2/-1877/8.0) had not become any more ‘international’ than in the membership debates, and there was really not anything ‘European’ that would appear as ‘international’ either (2/-1916/5.5). In the context of Russian interventions in Western elections in general and the British referendum in particular, ‘international’ found an association in ‘cyberattacks’ (1/-1201/3.0) as well. Otherwise, the British debates on Brexit show considerable trajectories in the prioritisation of economy and the rise of legal discourse as a consequence of the membership.

Individual Speech Acts Surrounding the ‘International’

The third and final step of our analysis proceeded as close and contextualising reading of some discovered collocations. Potentially interesting collocates were

pointed at in the above debate analysis. They were now located in their textual context in the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers database (Hansard 1803–2005 and, for the EU case, Hansard Online of the UK Parliament). This phase allowed some checking of the functioning of the collocation analysis programme and our preliminary conclusions. The quotations were analysed as individual speeches in which politicians defined the ‘international’ by the active use of language in political action in particular contexts. These could only be reconstructed on an exemplary basis in the confines of this report. While general trends of thought on internationalism (such as the centrality of law and economy) become obvious on the basis the macro-level collocation analysis and need no extensive discussion here, some peculiar points deserve attention as they demonstrate the importance of context in determining what exactly was done politically in Parliament, also revealing shortcomings in mere distant reading.

As the Commons debated the League Covenant, two Labour MPs came up with ‘opportunities’ opened up by it: for international relations in the spirit of the optimistic expectations of British internationalists, and for social reform central for the Labour Party. J. R. Clynes, a leading trade unionist and the deputy chairman of the Labour Party, welcomed the League ‘[a]s an instrument for providing, through the medium of International Courts and international action, an opportunity for considering differences as they arise’ (*HC Deb. 21 July 1919 vol. 118, c961*). George Barnes, a former Labour leader who represented in 1919 the pro-coalition National Democratic and Labour Party and had been one of the British negotiators in Paris, encouraged social reform in the spirit of labour internationalism by pointing that ‘for the first time Governments have put a chapter of Labour into an international Treaty [ILO] and made labour conditions a matter of international agreement’, which constituted an ‘opportunity’ for workers worldwide (*HC Deb. 21 July 1919 vol. 118, c976*). These quotes exemplify the high leftist expectations for international cooperation during the post-First World War reconstruction.

Liberal and Conservative internationalists in the Lords were, in the name of the government, also predominantly optimistic. James Bryce, a respected constitutional lawyer, member of the International Court at The Hague and Liberal politician, viewed the League as based on ‘the feeling that the world has now become one one in a new sense never dreamed of before’ surrounding ‘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 Deb. 24 July 1919 vol. 118, c1019*). George Curzon (Conservatives), a major imperialist (as former Viceroy of India) and acting Foreign Secretary, echoed this belief in rising internationalism, stating, ‘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 Deb. 24 July 1919 vol. 35,*

c1029). The League was basically welcomed by all political groups in the British parliament, even if questioning its effectivity was also widespread.

Doubts about weaknesses in organisation were equally present as the UN was formed in 1945. Prime Minister Clement Attlee, the leader of a Labour majority government, then forcefully advocated the concept of 'collective security' as the foundation of the UN Security Council 'where the policies of the States ... could be discussed and reconsidered ... especially when they showed signs of such divergences as to threaten the harmony of international relations. Collective security ... is active co-operation to prevent emergencies occurring' (*HC Deb. 22 August 1945 vol. 413, c665*). Captain David Gammans (Conservatives), a former diplomat, was one of several MPs to question the definition of the UN as a provider of 'collective security', suggesting that such a concept should not be used at all (*HC Deb. 22 August 1945 vol. 413, c734*). The required unanimity of the permanent members, after all, would constitute a major limitation to the functionality of the world organisation. In the Lords, Robert Cecil, the key planner of the League, a leader of the League of Nations Union and a Nobel Peace Prize winner (1937), consistently assured that 'every attempt ought to be made, and must be made, to secure peace by international collaboration' (*HL Deb. 22 August 1945 vol. 413, c133*), bridging two major projects of British internationalism.

The debate on the CoE in 1950 provides a good reminder of the need for close reading and contextualisation. While a swift reading of the collocation results might suggest that 'international pressure' by the CoE was welcome, a closer analysis shows that the contrary was the case. Major Harry Legge-Bourke (Conservatives) was opposing restrictions to national or parliamentary sovereignty when arguing: 'I am in favour of the Council of Europe, but I am in favour of it only on one set of terms, and that is that it remains as a council and does not become an international pressure group. There seems to be very real danger of it becoming an international pressure group.' What particularly worried Legge-Bourke was a 'desire for the institution of a European Political Authority' (*HC Deb. 13 November 1950 vol. 480, c1479*).

Caution with far-reaching conclusions based on collocations is needed also in the case of the EEC membership. The MP who referred to 'international periphery' did not imply that Britain would become somehow peripheral outside the Community, but was concerned about the potential loss of sovereignty. Ronald King Murray (Labour), a leading Scottish lawyer, reacted to a suggestion that membership in the UN and NATO already implied a loss of national sovereignty and relativised the radicality of an EEC membership by pointing out that:

... it was sovereignty in a peripheral sphere, the international periphery of our being which did not involve the heart of our domestic constitutional being as the Bill unquestionably does. We are surrendering a portion of the inner core of our sovereignty because we are dealing

with two aspects of the constitution, first with an economic aspect and secondly with one which is more properly constitutional. (*HC Deb. 15 February 1972 vol. 831, c363*)

While general international or defence cooperation did not challenge national sovereignty, the economic and political aspects of the EEC did—a conclusion that has dominated much of the British press discourse ever since. Arguments in favour of membership won in 1972, although hardly in the extreme form presented by Frank Beswick (Labour), a former voluntary in the Spanish Civil War and a current party whip: ‘My own approach to this Bill is that of an internationalist. I have always been ready to surrender sovereignty in those areas where individual and national dignity and wellbeing are not impaired’ (*HL Deb. 26 July 1972 vol. 333, c1368*). Confrontations were even tougher in the Brexit debates. The supporters of ‘leave’, emphasising British national identity as distinct from the Continent, considered the vocabulary of the ‘international’ useless. ‘International’ was an attribute of the ‘remain’ side and often of backbenchers with limited political influence. An exceptional association between ‘international’ and ‘European’ was made by Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru), who emphasised the significance of the EU for British foreign relations as a whole: ‘Beyond the single market and customs union, there are upward of 40 pan-European agencies that form the basis of our international relations across a range of policy areas’ (*HC Deb. 7 September 2017, c422*). A suggestion that the government was acting against national values was heard in Helen Hayes’ (Labour) declaration that Brexit impacted negatively ‘our British values of tolerance, diversity and internationalism’ (*HC Deb. 11 September 2017, c574*). Roger Liddle, a former researcher, adviser of Prime Minister Tony Blair and of the President of the European Commission and a think-tank chairperson, contributed to an intra-Labour dispute on Brexit. He appealed both to the trajectory of British internationalism and to the tradition of labour internationalism to persuade his party fellows to oppose Brexit: ‘Europe is in a category of its own in terms of its impact on future generations ... I want our party to lead, to seize this opportunity to demonstrate that, in contrast to this wretched Government, we can live up to our national responsibilities and our internationalist heritage’ (*HL Deb. 31 January 2018, c1534*). Not only the Brexiteers but also their opponents were on the move, fighting on definitions of internationalism also with history-political arguments.

Results and the Added Value of Digital Methods for Conceptual History

This computer-assisted analysis combining the collocation tool of the Hansard Corpus, the collocation analysis of membership debates and a contextual analysis of instances of political speaking has provided us with an overview

of the evolving discourse on internationalism in the UK Parliament, while also revealing innovative speech acts of potential political significance. Both expected and more surprising general trends were demonstrated, specificities of associations of the 'international' in the context of decisions on membership in international organisations pointed out and some peculiar arguments by individual MPs reconstructed.

The concrete findings include the dominance of discourses on international law in the founding of international organisations other than the EU. Parliamentary discourse, rather than contributing much to the creation of its first major international institution, turned more internationalist as a consequence of the founding of the League of Nations. The first, rather weak, wave of British internationalism lasted from 1919 to the founding of the UN in 1945. Internationalism remained relatively weak during the Cold War, with the exception of a few internationally oriented politicians, advocates of the EEC membership and expressers of global solidarity in the 1970s, when the second wave of British internationalism peaked. Once the EEC membership had become a reality, the parliamentary elite lost its enthusiasm about internationalism, especially with reference to European cooperation, and anti-European rhetoric rose during Thatcher's governments. Economic debate dominated and the legal discourse was set aside as Britain joined the EEC, only to be restored with Brexit when especially the trajectory of discourse on national sovereignty versus internationalism resurfaced. Early 20th-century discourses on labour internationalism have mostly withered away with the rise of non-socialist internationalism, with some revival in the 1970s and 1980s and during the Brexit crisis. Several factors indicate that internationalism was in decline well before Brexit, starting in the 1980s, and that trends in public discourse had implications for followed policies. Our conclusions correspond with Glenda Sluga's suggestion that the 'global seventies' of new international society and international public sphere were followed by the 'post-international' 1990s,²⁴ but the British turn to post-international discourse clearly deserves more attention.

Computer-assisted collocation analyses can contribute to conceptual history in at least two ways:²⁵ First, the analysis produces quantitative data on associations between political concepts that enable us to estimate trends in political attitudes the reconstruction of which with traditional methods would not be possible. Second, distant reading reveals original political points that would have gone unnoticed in close reading or in full-text keyword searches. Such arguments must be subjected to close reading and contextual analysis so that premature conclusions based on distant reading can be corrected. Revealed peculiarities in argumentation frequently turn out to originate from leading politicians attempting to influence the course of policy, which warns against low frequency thresholds.²⁶ All in all, the collocation analysis of discourse on internationalism in Parliament works well, enabling a more efficient locating of meaningful speech acts, although their meanings can only be properly understood with close reading and appropriate contextualisation.

The collocation analysis could be extended on many levels: In distant reading, it would be important to proceed beyond the ‘extreme’ concept of ‘internationalism’, with its inherited associations of socialism and pacifism, and to include concepts such as the world, humanity, universal, global, Empire, Commonwealth, cosmopolitan, supranational, multinational, transnational, Europeanism and trans-Atlantic, for instance. The global (imperial) dimension has remained central for Britons also in the days of European integration, and the joint natural language with the United States has supported discourses of isolationism against internationalism. At the level of membership debates, synonyms and counter-concepts of the ‘international’ (foreign, abroad, domestic, national, etc.) could be considered. At the level of individual speech acts, the dynamics between political parties in arguing about internationalism would deserve more attention. A more extensive reconstruction of the temporal contexts of the arguments on the basis of digitised newspapers and other forums of political debate would be helpful then. Furthermore, now that the sub-themes of the discourse on internationalism in the UK Parliament have been identified, the analysis of the dynamics between nationalisms and internationalisms in other parliaments and transnational interconnections between these debates could be explored.

Notes

- ¹ Pasi Ihalainen was alone responsible for the planning of the research setting, analysis and the written report. Digital analysis method specialist Alekski Sahala created the program script that enabled the distant reading of particular membership debates. Kimmo Elo produced the visualisations of the results of digital distant reading.
- ² Yearwood 2009; Laqua 2011; Mazower 2012; McCarthy 2012; Sluga 2013; Clavin & Sluga 2017.
- ³ Ihalainen & Palonen 2009; Ihalainen & Matikainen 2016; Ihalainen 2017; Holmila & Ihalainen 2018; Ihalainen 2018.
- ⁴ Edelstein 2016.
- ⁵ Baker et al. 2008.
- ⁶ Baker, Brezina & McEnery 2017: 105.
- ⁷ Gabrielatos & Baker 2008: 11.
- ⁸ Baker, Brezina & McEnery 2017.
- ⁹ Willis 2017.
- ¹⁰ Foxlee 2018: 77, 80.
- ¹¹ Guldi 2019.
- ¹² Lähdesmäki & Wagenaar 2015: 16.
- ¹³ Ihalainen 2006; Halonen, Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015; Steinmetz & Freedon 2017; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2019.
- ¹⁴ Daille 1994.

- ¹⁵ Church & Hanks 1990.
- ¹⁶ The technical description of the analysis program has been written by Aleksis Sahala. See <https://github.com/asahala/Collocations>.
- ¹⁷ Clavin & Sluga 2017: 5–6; Sluga 2013, 3, 5.
- ¹⁸ Sluga 2013: 4.
- ¹⁹ Holmila & Ihalainen 2018.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Cf. Häkkinen 2018.
- ²⁴ Sluga 2013: 6–7, 9.
- ²⁵ Cf. Steinmetz & Freedon 2017: 32, who are uncertain as to how to interpret semantic data rising from digital humanities.
- ²⁶ See also Kim 2014: 233.

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