

internationalism as a current in the peace movement: a symposium

It is apparent from the literature on the peace movement and diplomatic thought throughout this century that an exploration of the sometimes contradictory use of the word internationalism is in order. Not only has it been used for different purposes by competing factions of the anti-war movement and political leaders, but it has differing connotations for historians. This symposium is a contribution to a discussion of the term. Instead of asking for an abstract formulation, the editors invited several scholars to consider the roles of internationalist ideas in the peace movement in the hope that a functional definition might emerge, one which might stimulate formal analyses and eventuate in a working understanding. By way of opening the discussion, the editors asked Sondra Herman, the author of *Eleven Against War: Studies in American Internationalist Thought, 1898-1921* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1969) to identify some conceptual problems that arise from her analysis.

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From the last decade of the nineteenth century through the first world war of the twentieth, a small but prominent group of American intellectuals and peace advocates argued for a distinctive approach to foreign relations which they called internationalism. They represented a minority of the articulate public, probably a minority of the peace societies. They advanced ideas that were being heard also in Europe, and they debated the forms of international organization for years before President Woodrow Wilson took up their cause. When Wilson did use international ideals in his explanation of American mediation policy, and later of American war aims, he adjusted them considerably to the national interest.

These assumptions which touched so lightly national policy-making are familiar ones; progress toward peace is a real possibility, the inter-

nationalists held, and imperial rivalries intensified by the communications revolution have made international organization a necessity. In spite of the political independence of nations, which is natural, their economic, social and moral interdependence require new forms of political organization. Balance of power diplomacy, the traditional statecraft, cannot prevent wars.

Beyond these beliefs and a general sense of obligation to educate the public to them through concrete plans and models, the internationalists were united by very little. Specifically, the internationalists divided into two groups during the First World War.

One wing, the political internationalists (or institutionalists) advocated the development of legal machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Some proposed a league to compel consideration of international disputes. They conceived of the world as an atomistic polity in which nations pursued their interests competitively. They believed that a world court of a League to Enforce Peace could civilize the natural aggressiveness of men, and that the rivalrous relations of nations could have a peaceful evolution.

The other wing of the movement included community internationalists. Although they did not ignore the possibilities of juridical and political organization, they did assert that such formal arrangements in themselves could never prevent wars. What was needed was the development of a more organic world consciousness, a sense of international community among the peoples of different nations. These community internationalists proposed such economic and social changes as the disallowance of trade advantages, international regulation of the world's food supply, international insurance for natural disasters, international control of the arms industry and of former colonies, and international health and educational programs. They believed that such activity would undermine contentious nationalism which itself was the restraint of collective security; but they did not say how the antagonistic nations could be persuaded to adopt such an approach.

The first question that arises about these two forms of internationalism is: How did the advocates of one type differ from the advocates of the other? I believe that the supporters of the legal-political methods—men such as Nicholas Murray Butler, Elihu Root and leaders of the League to Enforce Peace—had a different world view from that of community internationalists such as Jane Addams, Josiah Royce and Thorstein Veblen. The institutionalists held to conservative Darwinism, the Anglo-American understanding, and belief in American democratic capitalism, while the communalists expressed many doubts about the competitive ethic. The communalists interpreted human nature in more dynamic terms than the institutionalists did, believing that men defined themselves largely through changing relations with others. In brief, forms of internationalism reflected more general social philosophies.

Finally, it appears as though the social position of the communalists differed considerably from that of the institutionalists. The political internationalists either headed large organizations or associated themselves with the government. They thought in terms of making policy affecting many other people. Community internationalists identified themselves with the international community of scholarship or with the disinherited.

Applying this distinction to the history of American internationalism since the turn of the century raises questions such as the following:

1. How was the growth of internationalism just before and during World War I related to the expansion of American power, on the one hand, and the threat of revolution, on the other? For political internationalists the League of Nations became a vehicle of American influence in the world and the "road away from revolution." Was resistance to substantive changes in power relationships among nations, or among classes implicit in political internationalism from the beginning? Was political internationalism fundamentally an elaborate form of *Pax Americana*? Political internationalists believed that the spread of Anglo-American institutions and of capitalism aided the causes of peace in the world. Many internationalists were also enthusiastic expansionists in 1898, and this form of internationalism increased markedly with the growth of American economic influence abroad. On the other hand, there is little evidence that the institutionalists wanted the United States to become the world's policeman. They emphasized *collective* responsibility for peace-keeping.

2. Was internationalism a revolt against the nation-state? In particular, were the communalists seeking unrealizable goals? In some respects the communalists appear realistic. They understand very well the exacerbated nationalism of the war years. Yet they were overly hopeful of transcending national loyalties, if only certain conditions were met. Veblen's plan for a league of neutrals and Royce's plan for international insurance were never tested, but to some extent Jane Addams' proposals have been fulfilled in the work of U.N. specialized agencies. Do people in poorer areas of the world identify more closely with the U.N. under the impact of these agencies than citizens of richer nations do? Is there any evidence to suggest that extensive activity by world organizations on behalf of human welfare weakens fundamental national distinctions?

3. Is there evidence that fundamental positions in relation to foreign policy have social correlates? Is identification with an "inner" group or with the "establishment" important in establishing fundamentally conservative approaches to foreign policy?

4. What beliefs and identifications distinguished the American pacifist from the American internationalist since World War I? This is a difficult question in view of the fact that some members of the peace movement claimed the position of both pacifism and internationalism, but it is important in order to establish the legitimacy of their claims. Some plans

for international organization required the international use of force, and many internationalists willingly went to war in 1917 and 1941, in Korea and even in Vietnam. How exactly does their position differ from that of pacifists who also profess international goals?

5. Why did internationalism have such a limited appeal? Community internationalism hardly seemed to have a public at all, and political internationalism only developed a significant one when the League to Enforce Peace was organized, and more particularly when Wilson lent the cause his eloquent voice, before World War I. Why did internationalists fail to educate the public for the long-range commitment that internationalism requires?

6. How did internationalist movements abroad compare with American movements? Were they stronger by virtue of their association with socialism?

7. Did the Cold War kill American internationalism? Belief in the future of the United Nations appeared, superficially at least, quite strong and popular after World War II. Was this more than an emotional reaction to the war itself? Was it an acceptance of American responsibility in the world or an escape from it? When did this belief in effective U.N. action disappear? Did Americans begin to identify American police action with internationalism around the time of the Korean war? Has internationalism today become equivalent to American intervention, in popular thinking? There is a live peace movement today, of course, but is it characterized by the old-fashioned faith in international organization or international community?

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America's sense of uniqueness and of destiny, coupled with the facts of international life in the nineteenth century, promoted that unilateralism in foreign relations which is generally labelled isolationism. Paradoxically, it also encouraged speculation on the gradual evolution of a "United States of the World," in which nations would join together, democratically and under a system of law, much in the manner of the American colonies in 1776 and with similarly beneficial results. Historians, long fascinated by the isolationist tradition, have recently begun to turn their attention to this "internationalist" component of American thought and are attempting to trace its manifestations.

The results of their investigations, though often only implicit, are clear enough: aside from pacifist visionaries like William Ladd and Elihu Burritt, dabblers in international relations like Andrew Carnegie and Edward Ginn, and theorists like Josiah Royce and Thorstein Veblen whose primary concerns really lay elsewhere, there were virtually no prominent Americans prior to the First World War who can be meaning-

fully described as internationalists, and there was certainly no internationalist movement of any significance.

Benjamin Franklin, to be sure, published Pierre-André Gargaz's scheme for a European union with an approving introduction in the 1780's, and even speculated about an Anglo-French-American compact. Fifty years later, John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun and Daniel Webster, among others, judged the American Peace Society's essay contest on the subject of a Congress of Nations. Charles Sumner championed arbitration as a prelude to international confederation in the 1870's, and Andrew Dickson White and Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan led to the Hague Conference of 1899 an American delegation which carried with it a plan for the establishment of an international court. But all of these men would rank very high on any list of American nationalists, and their "internationalism" must therefore be taken *cum granum salis*.

The fact that they and other prominent and influential Americans lent their names and their efforts to schemes looking toward the formation of international assemblies and tribunals during the nineteenth century is actually neither very surprising nor especially significant. The American experiment, after all, was one of parliamentary democracy under law, and the dynamic of American society was provided by the belief that this experiment could be made to work at home and serve as a model for the rest of the world. Americans, moreover, looked favorably on the peaceful resolution of international disputes because they believed the maintenance of an extensive military establishment to be destructive of democratic government. In the abstract, therefore, the setting up of parliamentary or judicial bodies which might deal with disputes among nations as Congress and the Supreme Court dealt with disputes among the several states had considerable appeal, as did the notion that an international community and a recognized body of international law should be developed.

But Americans during the nineteenth century also had their sights set resolutely inward, and considered the problems of the world only incidentally, when at all. Even within the reform movement, the American Peace Society, the sole group with international overtones, had both a smaller following and a lesser impact than did organizations concerned with more immediately relevant issues such as education, prison reform and the abolition of slavery. The establishment of national consciousness and national unity, the maintenance of these in the face of conflicting sectional interests, particularly with regard to slavery, and the "road to reunion" after the Civil War were the central American concerns. In this context, "internationalism," though philosophically appealing, could be pursued only so long as it appeared to be an extension of, rather than an alternative to, the pervasive nationalism. Speculation about a "parliament of man" was possible, as was the advocacy of arbitration, but only so long as the results, both actual and expected, were seen as serving the national

interest. What was pursued, therefore, was not internationalism at all, but simply a geographically expanded nationalism.

When America turned physically outward near the end of the nineteenth century, the situation did not change. The visible and tangible success of the American experiment, when measured in territory, wealth and power, heightened both national pride and national self-confidence. The United States entered the world arena after the Spanish-American War more convinced than ever that its ideas and institutions, or at least its version of Anglo-Saxon ideals and institutions, were destined to dominate the globe, and more confident than ever that this country could resolve any international problems it might encounter by itself and in its own way.

By expanding its trade and investments abroad and by becoming a factor in the power calculations of other nations, the United States was drawn increasingly into international discussions and contacts. Under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, who revelled in the limelight of the international stage, the United States mediated the Russo-Japanese War, sired the Algeciras Conference, promoted the Open Door in the Pacific, and claimed the role of international policeman in the Caribbean. But none of this should be confused with a turn to internationalism.

The archetypal American "internationalist" of these years, Henry Cabot Lodge, was an expansionist who recognized that American isolation had ended and, therefore, opted for a larger world role for the United States, flirted briefly with the League to Enforce Peace, argued eloquently that "nations must unite as men unite in order to preserve peace and order," and favored this country's "taking a suitable part and bearing a due responsibility in world affairs." But Lodge was primarily an American nationalist who fought the League of Nations because he correctly saw the conflict between the genuine internationalism inherent in the Covenant and his own views regarding national sovereignty and national independence. Indeed, the reservations he proposed were aimed directly at the elimination of those aspects of the League which might have placed international considerations above narrowly national concerns.

Woodrow Wilson and his followers, of course, were in theory prepared to give genuine internationalism a try, though it is doubtful whether even they would have been willing to surrender a significant portion of American sovereignty to the League in actual practice. But it was precisely the internationalist character of the proposed world body, and the threat to the full and unimpeded exercise of national sovereignty which it represented, which made American participation unpalatable to a majority, not only of the Senate, but of the country as well. By contrast, American entry into the war itself, which could be justified in purely nationalistic terms, had won a far greater degree of acceptance.

The United States was prepared by 1919 for a certain amount of inter-

national cooperation, but on its own terms and within very narrow limits. It was willing to discuss matters of international concern with other powers, as it was to do at the Washington Conference of 1921, to participate in much, though by no means all, of the non-political work of the League, as it was to do increasingly during the 1920's, and to take the lead in a movement to outlaw war on moral grounds, so long as no positive action against future "outlaws" was specifically required. But it was not prepared at any time prior to 1940 to make binding commitments which suggested even remotely that this country would yield an iota of its sovereignty and independence to any international body or allow its policies to be directed in any way by the community of nations. As late as 1935, the United States rejected membership in the World Court, not because its sovereignty actually would have been impaired by such a step, but merely because joining might have opened the door, at least a little, to genuine internationalism.

Internationalism, if not actually a revolt against the nation state, involves at the very least a rejection of the idea of absolute national sovereignty. As such it has been basically foreign to American thought. The establishment and maintenance of sovereignty was the keynote of Washington's Farewell Address and the basis for American actions certainly until World War II. Americans paid lip-service to internationalism on occasion, but generally envisaged nothing more than the voluntary cooperation of fully sovereign states, a visionary and unrealistic concept which masks the basic incompatibility of nationalism and internationalism. That a nation which, for nearly two centuries, only grudgingly yielded the alleged sovereignty of the individual states to the power of the national government should be unwilling to yield a portion of national sovereignty to an international organization is natural enough, particularly when no pressing reasons for doing otherwise could be convincingly advanced.

In practice, countries move toward internationalism only when there is either a widespread revulsion against nationalist excesses—as in Germany immediately following World War II, when a substantial number of the younger generation and even some of the political leaders began to see themselves consciously as "Europeans" rather than "Germans"—or when the belief is widely accepted that the nation alone lacks the power and the resources to protect its own interests effectively. Neither of these factors applied to the United States prior to 1940. As a result, the handful of philosophical internationalists could gain no following.

The expansionists, the advocates of a *Pax Americana*, and the believers in the natural spread of Anglo-Saxon institutions did not have to become political internationalists, and did not become so any more than did the "Hawks" of the 1960's. They could be, and largely were, ultra-nationalists profoundly suspicious of potential limitations on American sovereignty which might inhibit the developments they advocated. The

pacifists, for their part, were internationalists only on those occasions when they regarded international commitments as a better guarantee than some form of isolation for the peace, not necessarily of the world, but of the United States. For most of them, these occasions were few and far between. And the great bulk of American leaders, and of the public, saw no need to embark on the troubled seas of internationalism so long as the security of this country was not directly threatened by events elsewhere in the world.

Internationalism on a substantial scale and of a sort that could be translated into policy developed in this country only after the fall of France raised the possibility of a physical threat to the United States which it would be difficult to counter unaided and alone. It was strengthened by the Pearl Harbor attack, the first foreign incursion on American soil since the War of 1812. This combination of events led not merely to entrance into war as in 1917, but, unlike in 1917-1920, to a general commitment to internationalism in some form. "This decision which we have made," Cordell Hull explained in 1944, ". . . was not a decision to make a mere sporadic effort. . . . We cannot move in and out of international cooperation and in and out of participation in the responsibilities of a member of the family of nations." The American commitment to the United Nations and to a long series of other international arrangements followed.

That commitment has survived the Cold War as well as the Viet Nam tragedy. Indeed, a good case can be made that the "Doves" of the 1960's, the men now urging the United States to eschew the role of world policeman, including most of those frequently and erroneously dubbed "neo-isolationists," have a genuine internationalist outlook. They argue, after all, for the subordination of American power to the larger needs of the world community, for the substitution of joint action, within or without the United Nations, for unilateral American intervention, and for the realization that the United States alone—and the "alone" deserves special emphasis—cannot hope to solve all the world's problems. They are aware, moreover, that in the age of ballistic missiles and the hydrogen bomb, the United States can no longer assure its own safety without some international commitments.

The opposite of internationalism in terms of national conduct is unilateralism. The United States remained committed to unilateralism up to the Second World War. It opted for collective security after that, only to discover that the war had destroyed any meaningful "collective" and left this country in a dominant leadership role. Given the enormous power of the United States after 1945, the tendency to interpret internationalism simply as unilateralism on a global scale manifested itself at various times. To that tendency there is now substantial and effective opposition, spawned and sustained in large part by the unhappy consequences of American policy in Viet Nam. The basis for a fruitful and

genuine American internationalism therefore exists to a greater degree than ever before, and the discussion of its implications, in the realm of both theory and policy, is timely and essential.

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I believe that Professor Herman's distinction between political and community internationalists is valid for the period of World War II with which I am most familiar, but that it is of only limited significance. Certainly one can identify

community internationalists for the war years such as Michael Straight, editor of the *New Republic* and author of *Make This the Last War*, Wendell Willkie, whose *One World* preached a popular if fuzzy brand of international cooperation, and Henry Wallace, perhaps the most eloquent preacher of a genuine world community.¹ The dominant element, however, was the political internationalist group—Sumner Welles, Cordell Hull, James T. Shotwell and his Commission to Study the Organization of Peace and John Foster Dulles, who headed up the post-war study effort of the National Council of Churches. Yet this group was split by a cleavage between “realistic” internationalists—those who accepted the necessity for continued national sovereignty and thus advocated only a limited role for a new international organization—and “idealistic” internationalists, who called for various forms of world government. During the war years, the realists clearly won out. The dream of a great association of nations based on the equality of all members in which each surrendered some of its sovereignty gave way to the United Nations Organization, in which control by the great powers (advocated privately by Franklin Roosevelt since 1942) became the central feature.²

My principal objection to Professor Herman's conceptual scheme is its failure to shed light on the actual course of American foreign policy. Important as community internationalists may be for a comprehension of the full range of internationalist thought, they had virtually no impact on public opinion or on the policy-making process. It was the interaction between idealistic and realistic political internationalists that provided the drama and the substance of the movement that led to the creation of the United Nations during World War II.

I find myself in substantial agreement with Professor Herman's characterization of the political internationalists as establishment figures who represented the prevailing configurations of power in twentieth-century America. Virtually without exception, they came from the ranks of Ivy League universities, New York law firms, American corporations and the philanthropic foundations. Realistic political internationalism was an expression of American capitalism, which desired a stable, orderly, non-revolutionary world for the peaceful expansion of American power and influence abroad. Professor Herman's suggestion that political inter-

nationalism was at heart an elaborate form of *Pax Americana* is a particularly penetrating insight. The Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Life-Time publishing empire built by Henry Luce—all worked for the goal of a world dominated by the large industrial nations cooperating together for the exploitation of colonial areas and the preservation of a global status quo.³

An understanding of the essentially conservative nature of political internationalism makes the transformation of the Wilsonian heritage after World War II into a blind defense of the Cold War not only predictable but inevitable. The refusal of the Soviet Union to fit docilely into its assigned role—most evident in the Russian insistence on creating its own security zone in Eastern Europe—undermined the United Nations. Reacting to Soviet intransigence, American political internationalists simply changed the collective security concept from a universal into a regional one. This fundamental alteration of the nature of collective security, foreshadowed as early as 1945 by Arthur Vandenberg's insistence at the San Francisco Conference on a regional loophole in the UN Charter, permitted the political internationalists to disguise the fact that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was an old-fashioned military alliance and instead to portray it to the American public as a variant of collective security in the Wilsonian tradition.⁴ Although some internationalists decried John Foster Dulles's formation of SEATO and CENTO in the 1950's, his proliferation of alliance systems in an effort to encircle Russia was but the logical extension of the new twist internationalists had given to "collective security."

When political internationalism is viewed as American imperialism in disguise, the reason for the lack of debate over the objectives of American foreign policy in the 1940's and 1950's becomes clear. The political internationalists who had supported the creation of the UN—Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, Arthur Vandenberg, Harry S. Truman—now became the advocates of a get tough policy toward the Soviet Union. The few critics of containment—Walter Lippmann, Robert A. Taft, Henry A. Wallace—had all opposed the "realistic" form of political internationalism which had led to the creation of the UN. Lippmann had championed a division of the world into spheres of influence during the war, Taft had warned repeatedly against an adventurous policy of international collaboration, and Wallace had been the foremost community internationalist, advocating a "people's revolution" that would usher in "the century of the common man." All three opposed the policy of containment in 1947 with varying degrees of failure—Lippmann's book, *The Cold War*, went virtually unnoticed until rediscovered by revisionist historians in the 1960's; Republican internationalists used the political popularity of Dwight D. Eisenhower to deny Taft the Presidential nomination so many in his party felt he deserved in 1952; and Truman and the Democratic internationalists smeared Henry Wallace as a communist

dupe in the 1948 election, thereby driving from public life the most outspoken and influential community internationalist.⁵ By silencing these critics, the political internationalists established a Cold War consensus that ended meaningful discussion of American foreign policy for nearly two decades.⁶

In a very real sense, political internationalists transformed the Wilsonian concept of collective security into a justification for military alliances by which the United States assumed the role of world policeman. Historians might well find Professor Herman's insight into the conservative implications of political internationalism of crucial assistance in explaining how the United States came to deny its own ideals in the world after World War II.

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In the search for insight into the development and dilemmas of American internationalists, Sondra Herman's distinctions between "political internationalists" (or "institutionalists") and "community internationalists" are useful. One difference

particularly merits emphasis. "Political internationalists" included prominent members of the American legal, political and corporate life; that is, they had risen successfully within the system by understanding how to control its institutions and make those institutions respond to their personal interest and, a logical extension, from this personal interest to what they perceived to be the national interest. In a real sense they were not internationalists at all, but nationalists who searched for an international arena in which American institutions could expand and prosper.

"Community internationalists," however, moved out of a reform movement that pivoted around the individual or around classes victimized by the American dream, rather than primarily focusing on national institutions. Indeed they sought to bypass such institutions by creating an international consciousness and supranational agencies which could work outside the traditional assumptions of nation-states. Such a bypass might have led to a fruitful journey had they tried to detour around domestic institutions of a third-rate power. Since they belonged to the superpower of the twentieth century, however, the "community internationalists" found themselves, if not in a series of political deadends, then establishing international agencies which scarcely touched the dynamics of the United States foreign policies and those of the other leading nation-states.

Such dilemmas are not new to American reformers. Their ability to repeat mistakes is eloquent testimony to their inability to understand the past. William Lloyd Garrison exemplified the dilemma in 1830 when he proclaimed, "My country is the world; my countrymen are mankind."

His country, of course, was not like the world, and his countrymen, especially in the South and Midwest, were atypical of, for example, the successful British abolitionists. Like many American reformers, Garrison loved an impassioned moral appeal, but it was valueless in terms of finding levers to make changes, for the nation-state was where the power was, and is, located. He was admitting, moreover, that his own nation was not in sympathy with him; Garrison consequently tried the traditional bypass of appealing to a larger world body which, unfortunately for him, had no substance or authority. When change finally occurred, neither Garrison nor the equally irrelevant Emerson or Thoreau played important roles. For good or ill, men such as Lincoln, Rockefeller and Root, who knew how to operate the nation's politico-economic institutions, forced the changes and reordered the society.

By the century's turn most American reformers drifted in the mainstream of the labor movement, Progressivism or anti-imperialist organizations, thereby working in fact within the assumptions established by the "institutionalists." Or else a few followed the course of Eugene Debs. But Debs does not fall into the category of either "political internationalist" or "community internationalist." He is of little consequence to the development of American internationalism, which may be one reason why he should be studied. While internationalists of various persuasions were assuming (or, more accurately, hoping) their country was the world, Debs set to work on the mundane but more useful task of analyzing and attempting to modify fundamentally the institutions of his home country. He apparently understood what few American reformers have comprehended: internationalism is the final, not the first step of reform; and internationalism, in the sense that reformers from Garrison through the 1960's student movements used the term, is irrelevant to the more fundamental need of altering, which means initially understanding, domestic institutions. With a few exceptions such as Debs, American reformers have successfully avoided the difficult problem of institutional change by emphasizing the individual (as Garrison, Emerson, Thoreau), attempting to alter the society by laboring outside its key institutions (as the Social Gospelers), or trying to leap over the problem to work on the supposedly more exalted level of international institutions.

The "political internationalists," or "institutionalists" (domestic as well as international) have not made such errors. Moving up within the domestic system, they understood that this arena's instruments of politics, finance, religion and education formed part of a larger theater whose stability and prosperity was necessary for their own and their nation's wellbeing. They therefore carefully defined their relationships to the larger theater. At first the "institutionalists" focused on the Western Hemisphere and the working out of profitable economic ties rather than entangling political alliances. Root's highly-publicized tour of Latin America while he was Secretary of State exemplified this initial step. The

Mexican Revolution, World War I and the Russian Revolution forced an expansion of the policy until it became global in 1919. Again the dynamic was to be economic power, not politics, and when after the Paris Conference the League of Nations structure shakingly rested on a Franco-American Security Pact, and an Article X which some internationalists feared would commit the United States to fighting colonial wars for the British and French, many "political internationalists" belied their label and helped kill the treaty.

Between the wars Henry Stimson, who in many ways inherited the power and world view of Root, sought desperately for a makeshift series of alliances outside the League. This search finally collapsed during the critical months of the Manchurian Crisis in 1931-1932 when the British Foreign Office refused to cooperate in threatening the Japanese. As the League disintegrated, many "political internationalists" concentrated on restoring once again their domestic institutions within the larger framework of global stability. Historians persist in terming the interwar American policy one of isolationism. The results of such labeling have been interesting, particularly in the scholarly emphasis upon superficial political arrangements (while the economic and social substructures have been relatively neglected); and also in the picking up of the "isolationist" term by Presidents Johnson and Nixon to rationalize their own internationalism. These Presidents have taken the word out of its proper 1930's context, but they are not to blame, for historians' simplistic use of the word allows a larger political misuse. (It seems particularly unfortunate that this traditional understanding of "isolationism," moreover, has prevented scholars from gaining sufficient insight into the impact which the American economic dilemmas of the 1920's and 1930's had on other societies. Such information would perhaps be helpful in comprehending the effect the United States is having in the world-wide Revolution of Autonomy which has especially shaken the former colonial areas of Africa and Asia during the 1960's.)

When the world again needed reordering in 1945 the opportunity was more propitious than any American internationalist had ever dared dream. With a monopoly of atomic power, unchallenged economic superiority, and two industrial heartlands of Japan and Western Europe dependent upon American beneficence, the Truman Administration, led in the foreign policy realm by Dean Acheson, had the golden chance of making the world safe for the United States institutional system. Acheson's internationalism, however, reached only as far as American economic and military power allowed him to influence policy. This essentially meant that it reached to Japan and Western and Central Europe but not to the other areas represented in the United Nations. Acheson correctly understood that the international organization could contain neither the dynamic of American superiority nor the ensuing Soviet-American struggle. He consequently had few compunctions in cooper-

ating with a crucial policy change in 1945 which removed postwar relief from the international agency of UNRRA and channeled it into bilateral agencies controlled by the United States; or in undermining the international organization with the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan that worked outside UN auspices; or in resisting Communist aggression in Korea, a three-year struggle in which the United Nations acted as an American surrogate; or, finally, in pushing through the Uniting for Peace Resolution of 1950 which created the fiction that the General Assembly (where Costa Rica, Albania, etc., voted equally with the two big powers) had by grace of the Resolution taken power from the Security Council where the world powers exercised a veto. The irony of this last event for the development of American internationalism might be greater than historians suspect, for it would be useful to see which American internationalist groups, if any, protested this veiling of reality and undermining of U.N. power. Since the Resolution rested on supposed democratic voting processes, and as it clearly was in American interest to be able to bypass the Soviet veto in the Security Council, one can guess that very few internationalist groups in the United States understood, let alone protested, what Acheson did.

The pretension of working through the United Nations while actually weakening it could continue only until American unilateral power was blocked within and without the organization. This in fact developed during the 1960's in the battlefields of Vietnam, the council rooms of NATO, and the voting on the American resolution of whether both mainland China and Taiwan should be in the United Nations. This disciplining of American unilateralism, it must be noted, did not come primarily from American reformers and/or internationalists, but was imposed by other peoples in the world who used their own institutions to counter American power. With these defeats, which placed the United States in a world position closer to that of 1921 than 1947, the Johnson and Nixon administrations reverted to policies reminiscent of the inter-war era when, as at the Washington Conference of 1921 and the 1924 Dawes economic discussions, the major powers gathered outside supranational or truly global organizations and privately adjusted relationships of their domestic institutions to those of the few other major powers.

During the twentieth century the internationalist concepts initiated by Root had been unsuccessfully adjusted by Stimson, dazzlingly transformed by Acheson, and then narrowed and carried to one logical conclusion of unilateralism by John Foster Dulles and Henry Kissinger. Although several of these men, particularly Root and Dulles, believed at one time in the possibilities of international legal machinery, they either modified or dropped this faith when they perceived that such machinery might severely restrict American self-interest or, as between 1945 and the mid-1960's, the United States could go-it-alone without needing the machinery.

One constant throughout this drama of the “political internationalists” was their commitment to the primacy of American domestic institutions. International organizations, in their view, were either to replicate or serve those institutions. Other nations in the world have refused to play the game according to such ground-rules. Unfortunately, American reformers have been in no position to be of much help in creating a more equitable international system. We now know enough about Jane Adams to suggest that Eugene Debs is preferable as a historical example; for that matter, so is Henry Adams. Neither Debs nor Adams confused the priorities. And neither have the peoples in Southeast Asia, Western Europe and Latin America who have blunted American power. These peoples have agreed with the “political internationalists” such as Root that an equitable international system begins at home. After this point, unfortunately for the United States, their paths have sharply diverged.

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Did the Cold War kill American internationalism? Was belief in the future of the United Nations, which appeared quite strong and popular after World War II, anything more than an emotional reaction to the War itself? Was it an acceptance of responsibility in the world, or an escape

from it? When did this belief in effective United Nations action disappear? Did Americans begin to identify American police action with internationalism around the time of the Korean War?

Sondra Herman’s interrogations about American internationalism in the formative period of the Cold War are thoughtful and point to important issues. However, questions that emphasize the centrality of the United Nations are not wholly satisfactory, for they ignore a significant dimension of internationalist thought in this period. Commitment to the United Nations was, perhaps, the litmus test of America’s conversion from isolation; but it did not reflect any serious interest in sacrificing national sovereignty to some larger concept of human loyalty or in supranational approaches to political realities. Whatever faith in institutional internationalism American leaders possessed, the small group of visionaries who sat on the Department of State’s planning committees, the political leaders who claimed responsibility for the nation’s welfare and who had to explain their actions to the public hedged their loyalties from the beginning. For example, one month before the delegations assembled in San Francisco, the United States engineered a meeting in Mexico with Latin American nations for the purpose of developing much narrower schemes of regional cooperation. The obvious explanation is that Presidents Roosevelt and Truman’s advisers lacked faith in the United Nations and viewed regional agreements as necessary insurance policies in the likely event that the United Nations failed.

The guardians of American national interests, of course, did not completely despair of working for peace through the United Nations. They viewed it as a valuable tool, as a useful, even necessary, forum for the reduction of tensions and promotion of understanding among the world's peoples. The United Nations was *one* means by which peace (some would add justice) would be gained; it was not an end in itself. Business spokesmen, many Congressmen, leaders of philanthropic and religious organizations, and "professional internationalists" shared this assessment of the United Nations' role. The Federal Council of Churches' Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, for example, urged in 1947 "greater use of the United Nations . . . as a place where the conduct of nations can be submitted to the moral judgment of world opinion."¹ For the Commission and others, the United Nations was not the "universal solvent" for which internationalists supposedly were forever searching. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, a staunch supporter of American participation in the U.N., never believed the organization was "created or equipped" to handle all or even most conflicts between nations. When Greece was torn by political and economic chaos in early 1947, Vandenberg said: "I am frank to say that I think Greece could collapse fifty times before the UN itself could ever hope to handle a situation of this nature."² A year later John Foster Dulles, the architect of that internationalist, bipartisan Republican foreign policy that Vandenberg executed, wrote in a draft of the party platform: "We support the United Nations and will not by-pass it *in matters within its competence*."³ It was not that Vandenberg, Dulles and the multitude of others who considered themselves internationalists were acquiescing fatalistically in the demise of earlier dreams; rather, the blow was not mortal, because the United Nations had never been the principal repository of their hopes for just and lasting peace.

Many, perhaps most, American leaders and spokesmen for the "important public" between 1943 and 1948 shared a view of the world—as naively emotional, utopian and obscurantist as the Wilsonian vision at its most extreme—best termed "economic internationalism." This group shared above all an aggressively nationalistic approach to international affairs, often consciously defining the needs of the world community in terms of United States interests and needs. This chauvinistic attitude was in large part the result of the Second World War, especially the global involvement thrust upon America by the war. Arthur Ekirch, Jr. has observed with enviable perspicacity that by 1945 Americans had become "supremely confident" of the nation's strength and were "ill-prepared to accept any . . . challenge to United States world leadership. . . . In the fervor of their recent conversion from isolationism to internationalism, the American public was all too frequently blind to the fact that their own new views often only projected older nationalistic prejudices upon a world stage."⁴ The productive capacity generated during the war had

transformed the United States into a superpower, and American leaders, supremely conscious of America's economic preeminence, determined to use it to bring about universal peace and prosperity.

For a time, American leaders believed lasting peace was to be obtained by an all-out, aggressive effort led by the United States. "We must wage peace just as we have waged total war," President Truman told his friend Fred Vinson in the last months of 1945.⁵ How did one "wage" peace, which Americans traditionally had negatively defined, as "the absence or cessation of war, strife, or discord?" It appears that what the President and his advisers intended when they spoke of "waging peace" was the implementation of an economic foreign policy designed to create and maintain a stable and prosperous environment in which universal peace would flourish.

The chief influences upon American internationalism were what happened to the great power consensus and the open economic arrangements which were to undergird the United Nations. The importance of the collapse of the Allied wartime coalition is obvious. Since it was grounded upon the assumption of mutual trust, the United Nations' success, as Senator Vandenberg stated, depended upon "the temperature of Soviet-American relationships."⁶ Antagonism born of the frigid breath of misunderstanding and political hostility combined with a second source of frustration: the inability of the United States to bring into existence a world economic order. This combination produced, during the critical formative years of the postwar era, a self-righteous and uncritical identification of international peace and harmony with perceived American interests.

An effort to realize an open economic world had been presaged by views about the causes of international strife developed during the long tenure of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Secretary of State Cordell Hull for many years had advocated a policy of international economic cooperation. Persuaded that conflicts of economic interests were the base cause of almost all international difficulties, Hull gathered around him a group of kindred spirits to draw up a blueprint for a stable, prosperous world order. Hull and his colleagues, and likeminded men throughout the government, possessed an economic vision of the postwar world.

It was believed a system of unrestricted international trade would ensure more efficient production of goods, higher living standards throughout the world, and thus bring about world peace, because every nation would have a stake in the economic well-being of every other nation. As Harry Dexter White stated some years later:

The people of the United States and the United Nations have agreed on a program in which countries cooperate to maintain peace and prosperity. . . . This program recognizes that it is not enough to get countries to agree on political cooperation. That is important, of course. But we must

do more than that. We must support all our efforts for peace by providing an environment of stability and order in international economic relations. We must remove the economic causes of conflict. In such an environment, peace can flourish.⁷

When American planners talked of waging peace, they were referring to the task of creating a system of international trade which returned the world to that “golden age” before state trading arrangements and preferential tariffs.

Theoreticians at every level of government were agreed that the United States must take the initiative. They also were agreed in not foreseeing great problems of implementation. The problems the world would face after the war, these men assumed, would be primarily financial. Voicing the general opinion, Under-Secretary of State Will L. Clayton did not believe that the earth’s resources were too meager nor available production facilities too devastated or worn down to permit rapid reconstruction and resumption of normal patterns of commerce. What was envisioned was a short period of rebuilding—two years at the most—followed by a return to a high level of commercial activity and universal prosperity. This would be good for America and good for the world, since prosperous nations were unlikely to disturb the peace. If such ideas appear hopelessly utopian in light of the economic shambles resulting from the war, it is not difficult to demonstrate that they permeated the administration Truman inherited in April, 1945.

No important bureaucrat opposed American participation in the United Nations or preached the virtues of tariff walls and economic isolation. Donald M. Nelson, FDR’s War Production Board chief, believed that the interdependency of the United States with the rest of the world had come to be “a universally accepted premise.” Nelson advised President Truman that returning soldiers would find jobs only if new markets could be found for American products; these markets could “only be found in countries whose purchasing power is growing, as a result of their economic development.”⁸ Another official stated bluntly that the United States would be turning out twice the volume of goods produced in 1939 and would “need to look to outlets for our products on a scale vastly larger than ever before.” He concluded: “Closed factories, rusty plows, idle capital, and widespread unemployment breed war and revolution as well as depression.”⁹

Awareness of these pressures did not in itself ensure that solutions would be forthcoming. American planners were confident that they had the key; unfortunately, neither they nor the political leaders who approved their program for waging—and winning—the peace realized, until it was too late, that the tasks of clearing away the debris of war and of reviving world trade overreached the capacity of the instruments Americans had constructed for these jobs. As well, U.S. planners failed to grasp

that the creation of international financial institutions was only a partial response to problems that transcended temporary monetary maladjustments, problems that were political, psychological, even ethical in nature! The United States championed the creation of two institutions with limited powers, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund. It was assumed that these agencies would be able to satisfy necessary requirements for readjustment to peacetime patterns of trade and essential economic development. It was recognized that relief for the victims of the war would for a time require substantial outlays by the United States. American leaders decided, therefore, that minimum relief would be dispensed through UNRRA, to be phased out when short-term reconstruction loans and the forces generated by the IBRD and the IMF to rationalize world trade brought full recovery. Had the anticipated postwar cooperation of the wartime Allies continued, had Congress been as generous as during the war, and, perhaps most significant, had that "golden age" of free and expanding trade that American planners sought to restore ever existed in fact, these policies might have worked.

That they failed was explained in part by the inability of Americans to understand that economic actions may have (or may be perceived by others as having) political motivations. American statesmen were entirely sincere when they stated that multilateral liberalization of trade would bring peace and prosperity to all the world. However, a policy to promote the free flow of goods and capital and to expand production, viewed from London, Moscow and elsewhere, would first benefit the United States. What country emerged from the war with unimpaired productive facilities? The United States. What nation possessed surplus capacity in almost every economic sector? The United States. Americans might claim reassuringly that the lead enjoyed by the U.S. was a temporary phenomenon and would disappear as the supply-demand cycle came into operation. But efforts to obtain an "open door" everywhere *before* reconstruction was accomplished were hardly reassuring, and the inability of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations to grasp this fact heightened the tension between America and its erstwhile allies.

Even in late 1946 the Truman administration was refusing to abandon the vision of a prosperous, peaceful world, believing that if "moral stamina" would suffice, the vision could be attained. Of course, it was not that simple. Victory over the Axis had created a new mood in Washington and in Moscow, and domestic priorities and interests forced American leaders to chart a new course. The American public longed to return to what was thought of as "normal" life; for many a prerequisite of "normalcy" was to have their wartime allies and enemies "get off the U.S. taxpayer's back." American leaders watched helplessly and in genuine puzzlement as domestic apathy and the deepening rift with the Russians upset their program for a peaceful, prosperous world. Plans in progress

bogged down. It took Congress six months to authorize the British loan. When it did pass, the reasons were less that Britain needed the money and that aid would serve the economic aims of the United States than that the money would enable Britain to continue its stand against Soviet pressure in the Mediterranean and Middle East. The uncertainties of power politics delayed the opening of the IBRD until May, 1947, and U.S. support for the International Trade Organization faltered. By 1947 the nations of Western Europe were still in desperate trouble, spending a large part of their resources on relief instead of trade-generating reconstruction. Economic forecasters in the U.S. were saying that the reconversion of the American economy was complete, and that most of the savings of the war years had been released. In this atmosphere of crisis the Marshall Plan emerged from the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department. Its creators proceeded from radically different assumptions than existed during and immediately after the war. The Marshall Plan was, in one sense, a device to provide the assistance for Western Europe's reconstruction that should have been given—and Americans had thought they were giving—in 1943-1946. But the rationale for the Marshall Plan was political (anti-communist), not economic. When the nations of Western Europe institutionalized their partnership with the United States by forming the Organization for European Economic Cooperation in 1948, the economic internationalists' vision of one world—prosperous and at peace—disappeared.

One result was a significant change in the approach of Americans to the solution of international conflict. Except for "purists" in the Treasury Department and some few others, American internationalists accepted the division of the world into two spheres and proceeded to erect new strategies upon that fact. Reflecting the change in attitude, a Treasury official wrote in August, 1947:

The whole is the peace of the world which America is obliged to undertake. But it must be a peace in which the security of America is above all and in which we shall be able insofar as possible to help the rest of the world approach our standards of living, economic and spiritual. It is not our desire to change the political systems of others, but to retain our own which we hope others will approach and copy. . . . Therefore, we must always have in mind the strategic position of the United States in this power struggle between two great systems in order that we shall retain our supremacy and thus be enabled to weld together all of the world on some common ground.¹⁰

Emphasis was placed on Europe as a battleground between two competing economic and political systems. Economic internationalists were persuaded to abandon the dream of an open economic world in favor of an attempt to create a similar "environment" in that portion of the globe which was "free," i.e., non-communist. Their emotional faith in the

superiority of American institutions was transferred to a smaller stage, Europe.

It may be that the reduction in scope produced an intensification of the implicit self-righteousness and aggressiveness underlying United States policy, and that when events again forced Americans to think "globally," they automatically equated United States intervention anywhere in the world with the larger aims of internationalism. If so, the road to that assumption ran from the commitment to economic internationalism, to the idea of waging peace, which was so important in the years 1943-1948.

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footnotes

1. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York, 1970), 360; Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II* (New York, 1967), 62-66. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., falsely labels Wallace a sphere of influence advocate on the basis of his postwar urging that Russia be permitted to control Eastern Europe. During World War II, Wallace proposed a broad internationalist program with no mention of spheres of influence. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Origins of the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, XLVI (October, 1967), 29; Henry A. Wallace, *The Price of Free World Victory* (New York, 1942).

2. Robert A. Divine, *Roosevelt and World War II* (Baltimore, 1969), 49-71.

3. For a suggestive analysis of the origins of the "corporatist" concept of cooperation among the industrial nations, see William A. Williams, "The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920's," *Science and Society*, XVIII (Winter, 1954), 11-20.

4. Roland N. Stromberg, *Collective Security and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1963), 193-197.

5. Barton J. Bernstein, "Walter Lippmann and the Early Cold War," Ronald Radosh and Leonard P. Ligio, "Henry A. Wallace and the Open Door," and Henry W. Berger, "Senator Robert A. Taft Dissents from Military Escalation," in Thomas G. Paterson, *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years* (Chicago, 1971).

6. For a provocative description of the failure of American intellectuals to criticize the Cold War, see Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past* (New York, 1968), 322-359.

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footnotes

1. John Foster Dulles to Harry S. Truman, July 2, 1947, Box 1060, Official File 713, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library (HSTL).

2. Arthur H. Vandenberg to John B. Bennet, March 5, 1947, Arthur H. Vandenberg Papers, William Clements Library, University of Michigan.

3. Emphasis added. John Foster Dulles, "Confidential Draft of Republican Platform," June 6, 1948, John Foster Dulles Papers, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

4. Arthur Ekirch, Jr., *Ideas, Ideals, and American Diplomacy* (New York, 1966), 171-172.

5. Harry S. Truman to Fred Vinson, November 18, 1945, Box 68, Official File 20, Truman Papers, HSTL.

6. Arthur H. Vandenberg to Hamilton Fish Armstrong, April 2, 1946, Vandenberg Papers.

7. Speech by Harry Dexter White, "The Anglo-American Financial Agreement," Harry Dexter White Papers, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

8. Donald M. Nelson to Harry S. Truman, May 12, 1945, Box 52, Record Group 250 (Records of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

9. Oscar Cox, "On Putting First Things First," n.d., Box 82, Cox Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

10. "Memorandum for Secretary of Treasury," August 21, 1947, IBRD #3 folder, Box 56, John W. Snyder Papers, HSTL.