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## Dissenting Voices: The Secretariat of the League of Nations and the Drafting of Mandates, 1919–1923

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### ABSTRACT

This analysis explores the criticism about the creation of mandates in the League of Nations, particularly in the Secretariat; there, a number of officials questioned the organisation's stance on this matter. Their critical views showed the crucial importance of the early debates in shaping the League's nature and revealed the existence of a core group of eminent Secretariat members whose beliefs objected to the principles underlying the draft mandate provisions and the League's tacit assent in their approval. These opinions highlighted administrative shortcomings in the League's structure, particularly the Secretariat's role and the ambiguous attitude of the secretary general, and foresaw the detrimental consequences that the mandates system would have for the League's reputation. Some Secretariat members, who envisaged a more assertive role for the institution, vigorously challenged views on the League's helplessness in the international post-war context that have come to predominate in current scholarship.

Historians have devoted considerable attention to the League of Nations mandates system – 1919–1946; traditionally, they consider regional cases presented individually or comparatively whose administrative experiences have helped illustrate the system's strengths and shortcomings.<sup>1</sup> Other studies in international law have addressed the implications of this new form of trusteeship, 'the first manifestation of the ultimate goal to abrogate the colonial system', and a harbinger of a new era of internationalism.<sup>2</sup> Less frequent, however, has been an attempt to consider mandates from the League's perspective and Geneva's difficulties in handling such a distinctive break with pre-First World War imperial thinking. Lately, the supervisory role of the Permanent Mandates Commission [PMC] has received praise, whilst a more realistic appraisal of League powers and capabilities has also emerged.<sup>3</sup>

This analysis focuses on the period of drafting the mandate provisions between 1919 and 1923, a subject where previous revisionist approaches have shown limited interest.<sup>4</sup> The early debates proved crucial in shaping the nature of the League and revealed the existence of a core group of eminent

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individuals in the Secretariat who questioned the system of mandates, considered it essentially flawed, and warned that it would jeopardise the League's tenuous authority. Their opinions called attention to the League's administrative shortcomings, particularly the limited role of the Secretariat and the ambiguous attitude of the secretary general, the British diplomat Sir Eric Drummond. Finally, Secretariat members foresaw the detrimental consequences that the system of mandates would have for the League's prestige in the eyes of international opinion. Their general questioning of the mandates doctrine also identified crucial deficiencies in the League's structure, still relevant today.

The most recent scholarship has emphasised the limited role that the League could play in post-war international politics and the severe checks and overwhelming influence on its initiatives exerted by the victorious Powers. Historians need warning against being oblivious to the complexities of the international system and unaware of the byzantine practices in modern diplomacy. This seems particularly applicable to the mandates. The argument exists that the system simply aimed at legitimising and prolonging imperial rule and the League could do little to oppose the process.<sup>5</sup> Others conclude that, given the circumstances, League achievements were quietly revolutionary.<sup>6</sup>

Measuring League initiatives against the backdrop of Western post-war *Realpolitik*, however, may result in a restricted assessment of its functions and under-estimation of the influence of Wilsonian ideals in the colonial world.<sup>7</sup> After all, if the League had significant support within international public opinion, it was precisely because after four years of fighting, it represented an aspiration, as far-fetched and idealistic as it might have appeared, for conducting international politics on different grounds in which ethical values would take precedence over narrow national interests. The post-war mandates probably embodied this commitment more than any other League initiative.<sup>8</sup> Disregarding the initial debates on their meaning and functions risks overlooking not only the mandates foundational beliefs but also the profound disappointment experienced by those who felt the League ultimately betrayed these ideals. Evaluating the mandates primarily on the practicalities of their administration or the PMC's supervisory role<sup>9</sup> runs the chance of diminishing the legal and ethical issues involved in their conception and drafting and, in doing so, it may miss some crucial conditions that explained their evolution.<sup>10</sup> By focusing on whether mandates 'worked or not', recent scholarship seems to have adopted an allegedly realistic and pragmatic view, emphasising what was and was not possible at the time and the intrinsic benefits of such designs, particularly as alternatives to imperial rule, concluding after all that the mandates were more progressive than traditionally considered. This interpretation appears to concur with a reasonable assessment of the League's initiatives – unfairly treated by historians – and with a positive evaluation of interwar internationalism.<sup>11</sup> However, this approach minimises the League's

dramatic shortcomings, all too evident in the 1930s, and the views of the populations who lived under mandate administration and, in many cases, judged the mandates based on the League Covenant.<sup>12</sup> Some key Secretariat members felt such concerns and made a point of defending the terms of the Covenant against the ambitions of the victorious Powers.

The initial debates on the nature of the League in the early 1920s proved that it remained a tentative project, and many believed it would not survive. In this inevitable process of determining the new institution's boundaries, meaning, legitimacy, and authority, mandates had a crucial role, partly because they coincided with the foundational stages of the League, and partly because of perceptions that they constituted one of the League's key international assignments, one that created high expectations in international public opinion.<sup>13</sup>

Early debates soon identified the dominant tensions at the heart of the new institution: on one hand, the League was supposed to embody Wilsonian aspirations of internationalist opinion and inaugurate a new age of diplomacy based on transparency, pacifism, and humanitarianism. On the other, the League had to act in the realm of international *Realpolitik* and find a way to survive and adapt to post-war conditions imposed by the victorious Allied Powers. The fundamental issue of mandates involved a central concern: League sovereignty and authority and their application to the involved territories. In other words, did the League have authority over these territories or was it to hand them over to the victorious Powers?

Unsurprisingly, the question of sovereignty over mandated territories has been discussed at length and remains today one of those elusive matters 'whose confusion has never really been solved'.<sup>14</sup> Recent scholarship – perhaps discouraged by such long-lasting controversy – has tended to adopt a rather sceptical view on the question, often representing it as an academic debate rarely related to political practice.<sup>15</sup> Such a pragmatic approach, however, appears to overlook the centrality of the issue, which William Rappard, the once head of the PMC, referred to as 'la grande lutte pour l'âme de la Société des Nations'.<sup>16</sup> Opinions on mandates' sovereignty – vested with the Allied and Associated Powers as victors in the war or the League as the institution entrusted to safeguard them – found basis on a classic controversy. This involved the mismatch between Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles, whereby Germany ceded its African colonies to its enemies, and Article 22 of the Covenant, which confirmed that the League was ultimately responsible for these territories.

Predictably, most League Council members – all victorious Great Powers – favoured the notion that Article 119 of Versailles effectively recognised the transfer of former German colonies in Africa to them. They were to decide the arrangements under which these territories would be administered and submit these conditions to the newly created League for approval. For others, including some members of the Secretariat, Article 22 of the Covenant had effectively

brought these territories under League authority in a form of trusteeship. The League was, therefore, responsible for the wellbeing of the local populations and had the duty of drafting the conditions for administering these territories before allocating this responsibility to a mandatory Power.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, arrangements between the Allied and Associated Powers were already in place by the time the League came into existence. By August 1919, the inter-Allied Milner Commission had duly delineated Class A, B, and C mandates, and the Allies had agreed their distribution. Mandates were classified from better to less developed: Class A from the Ottomans: Palestine and Mesopotamia (Britain); Syria and Lebanon (France); Class B from Germany: Tanganyika (Britain), Ruanda-Urundi (Belgium), Cameroon and Togoland (Britain and France); Class C from Germany: German New Guinea (Australia and Britain), Nauru (Australia, New Zealand, and Britain), German Samoa (New Zealand and Britain), the South Pacific mandate (Japan), and German Southwest Africa (South Africa and Britain).

The set-up was already in place when the Secretariat opened its doors in Geneva in January 1920, giving credence to the oft-cited assertion by Sir Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, that ‘mandates were not the creation of the League and they could not in substance be altered by the League’.<sup>18</sup> The victorious Powers, therefore, did not even contemplate the prospect that the League could question, let alone oppose, their prevailing agreements and firmly referred to Article 119 as the sole legal framework for the issue.<sup>19</sup> This position found a favourable reception in many League quarters, even from Drummond, who made clear that both legal and practical reasons existed to support this position. In notes to Secretariat members, Drummond confirmed that Article 119 had transferred ‘all rights possessed previously by Germany over the territories placed outside Europe’ to the Allied and Associated Powers and that the League’s role was simply to ensure that mandates drafted by these Powers conformed to the Covenant.<sup>20</sup> Drummond also accepted that the drawing of borders and allocation of administrative conditions in such territories were the exclusive preserve of the victors, the League’s only remit to approve such drafts once confirming compliance with Article 22 of the Covenant.

Like some scholars today,<sup>21</sup> other Secretariat members held a different opinion. Without conceding any right of sovereignty to the peoples enclosed within the mandates – it was generally agreed at the time that inhabitants of former German colonies were too backward to exercise any such rights – some of these officials argued that Germany’s yielding of colonies only implied that the Allied Powers could dispose of them ‘as usufructuaries’. This assertion meant that those territories resided ‘in the general (sacred) trust of the League of Nations’. The Dutch jurist, Joost van Hamel, head of the Secretariat’s Legal Section, argued that the League and not the victorious Powers had

responsibility of allocating the mandates. He did not ignore that the Allies fixed the boundaries of the African mandates and that it would be hardly possible for the League to redraw or alter them in any way. However, he was adamant that the legal right of appointing a mandatory Power remained vested in the League and the League only. Crucially, van Hamel also reckoned that the initiative of determining the mandates belonged to the League regardless of the 'model mandates' elaborated by the Milner Commission. In his view, the League had ample legal expertise to do so, the Mandates Section being the obvious candidate for this task.<sup>22</sup> Other Secretariat members agreed. Philip Noel-Baker, Drummond's assistant and head of the Mandates Section until October 1920, concurred that the responsibility to draft mandate protocols belonged to the League, arguing that the Great Powers knew 'remarkably little about Mandates' and were 'liable to make decisions' that could have 'an effect which they did not realise'.<sup>23</sup> Even some national representatives admitted the validity of the argument, amongst them Belgium's representative at the Assembly, Octave Louwers, who conceded that 'taking article 22 literally, the League of Nations is the main mandatory, and it is to her that belongs the right to nominate the mandatories and draft the clauses of mandates'.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the crux of the matter, as some scholars have long contended, was the relatively ambiguous wording of Article 22, which left League responsibilities open to interpretation.<sup>25</sup> That lack of clarity was far from accidental, according to the Belgian jurist Henri Rolin, one of the main legal figures in the creation of the League; he argued that the victorious Powers intentionally left Article 22 obscure to use it for their own benefit. It was not in the interests of mandatory Powers, therefore, to resolve this ambiguity, since it afforded them more room for manoeuvre.<sup>26</sup> Such views, however, were unacceptable to other League representatives. Rejecting claims of calculated ambiguity, an American delegate at the Paris Peace Conference, the historian George Louis Beer, made clear to Drummond that 'the function of the League of Nations was to define the terms of these Mandates, and then, to secure their execution'.<sup>27</sup> Other national representatives shared his opinion, including Lord Asquith, the former British prime minister.<sup>28</sup>

In the event, however, the prevailing interpretation was that defended by Drummond before the Council in July 1920 and approved a month later. Whilst some Secretariat members would claim that this resolution was an unacceptable 'imposition on the League',<sup>29</sup> others like Rappard would realise that the best for which the League could hope in such circumstances was a sort of compromise that 'like all compromises, fully satisfied no one and dissatisfied many'.<sup>30</sup> Beyond this confrontation between realist and idealist views, the debate on mandates revealed that some Secretariat members held a distinctive vision and concept of what the League was supposed to be. For them, the question of mandates related to League sovereignty and authority, and the resolution of that question would not only shape the eventual form of the mandates system but also determine the

institution's future: would the League defend the Wilsonian ideals that lay at its base or simply endorse a return to secret diplomacy.<sup>31</sup> Such controversy also reflected wider international opinion and laid the basis for the extent of the disappointment felt by many in what they considered a later betrayal of ideals.

As noted above, the debate on mandates revealed the existence of a key group within the Secretariat who pointed to a general questioning of the mandates system and an underlying criticism of its principles and practices. Such 'dissenting voices' also included some other commentators, politicians and officials consulted with or participating at different stages in the framing of mandates. Historians frequently mention the most notable examples: Fridtjof Nansen, Rappard, Noel-Baker, Lord Robert Cecil, William Ormsby-Gore, and Beer. Other figures less known are van Hamel and Rolin.<sup>32</sup> Except for Beer, all these individuals were European – Rappard, Swiss; Nansen, Norwegian; and Noel-Baker, Ormsby-Gore, and Cecil, British. Their backgrounds, however, varied. Rappard, van Hamel, and Cecil had legal training; Beer and Noel-Baker were scholars; and Ormsby-Gore pursued a military career before serving as a Cabinet assistant secretary late in the war. Nansen, on the other hand, was a scientist, humanitarian, and world-famous explorer. Their degree of involvement on mandates also differed. Some participated in the Peace Conference in 1919. Noel-Baker was Cecil's assistant in the British Delegation, of which Ormsby-Gore was also a member; Rappard was a Swiss representative; and Beer an American one. They then went on to hold important posts in the League. Rappard became head of the Mandates Section in October 1920 and president of the PMC, whilst Noel-Baker assumed the post of assistant to Drummond. Van Hamel, also present in Paris in 1919, was appointed head of the Secretariat's Legal Section; and Ormsby-Gore became a well-known member of the PMC. The connexion of other representatives, however, was more tenuous. Initially appointed director of the Mandatory Section of the League, Beer saw his contribution cut short by the isolationist turn of the American foreign policy after 1919 and his premature death the next year. Nansen briefly headed the Sub-Commission on Mandates before embarking on other humanitarian projects. Cecil, however, remained a leading figure of Britain's League of Nations Union, an organisation formed to promote the ideals of the League from 1918 until 1945, and a British Cabinet minister until 1927.<sup>33</sup>

Noel-Baker was perhaps most representative of these officials. As Drummond's assistant, he followed closely the debate on mandates and the different stages of their drafting and approval. Courteous, meticulous, and determined, he sent numerous communications to Drummond in which he expressed disagreement on a number of issues ranging from the contradictions of the mandate's doctrine to Council passivity in their drafting. His earnestness in defending the Covenant and independence of mind made him the main critical voice in the Secretariat and the official to whom Drummond felt



obliged to respond most frequently and in more detail. Many of his views appear in his personal correspondence with Cecil.

Although less directly involved in the intricacies of the discussion on mandates, Cecil was a more visible and distinguished figure whose initiatives to mobilise public opinion in favour of the League were well known. Like Noel-Baker, he wrote long admonitory notes to Drummond, particularly regarding the League's lack of scrutiny over mandates. As a delegate in the Assembly, however, he was more inclined to make public declarations and speeches in which he resolutely supported League rights against the views of mandatory Power representatives.<sup>34</sup> He was briefly involved in the work of the Sub-Committee of Mandates in December 1920 and became prominent in the 1920 and 1921 Assemblies, where he represented South Africa. The Council, although supported by several delegates, rejected his proposals to have the Assembly examine the draft mandates.

As head of the PMC, Rappard was chiefly concerned with the powers of scrutiny exerted by this body. He tried to expedite the formation of the Commission and confirm its supervisory authority, a matter of serious debate between December 1920, the date of its official creation, and October 1921, when its first meetings took place. Such concerns formed a *leitmotif* in his several communications to Drummond, in which he claimed the PMC's right to both have information about the mandate drafts submitted to the Council and advise the victorious Powers. Drummond dismissed both recommendations.<sup>35</sup> Rappard was also adamant about the open nature of PMC meetings, which became another point of friction with the secretary general.<sup>36</sup> Ormsby-Gore, one of the most enlightened and progressive personalities of the PMC, was the official who 'more consistently tried to go faster than the Secretariat suggested' in fulfilling its duties.<sup>37</sup> His missives to Drummond evinced a desire for hastening the PMC's composition and removing all obstacles that could hamper his work. He established close links with other Commission members, including Pierre Orts, a former Belgian colonial minister, and the Portuguese representative, Count Jose de Penha Garcia, with whom he defended the public and open nature of PMC sessions, a proposal finally rejected by the Council in 1921. Ormsby-Gore's involvement in the PMC ended prematurely with his appointment as Britain's under-secretary for colonies in 1922. Van Hamel was particularly active in the early discussions about mandates. The legal aspects of the Covenant and its implications for international law were his main concerns and duly communicated to Drummond. He was notably strict in his interpretations about the ramifications of the international rights afforded by the Covenant. His proposals often met sarcastic comments from Drummond's office that considered him an 'enthusiast', 'flushed' with the idea that mandated populations enjoyed 'a kind of supranational protection'.<sup>38</sup> He also advocated for the rights of

mandated populations and proposed several unsuccessful initiatives to deal with their claims.

Nansen adopted an uncompromising stand as head of the Sub-Commission on Mandates, a position he briefly held in December 1920. In reviewing League policies, Nansen invoked the subcommission's right to scrutinise all the draft mandates submitted by the Allied Powers to the Council and demanded immediate action of the Council in this regard. He made his views known to Drummond and refused to accept the restricted conditions offered by the secretary general to review such papers.<sup>39</sup> When confronted with such difficulties, Nansen made public his views at the Assembly, complaining of lack of transparency and opportunity for public consideration of the draft mandates.<sup>40</sup> With his subcommission dissolved after the first Assembly, Nansen became the League's high commissioner for refugees in 1921.

Other officials whose work did not directly involve mandates also expressed misgivings about the drafting of mandates. These included some legal advisors to the League – like the British diplomat, Eric Forbes Adam, the international lawyer Sir John Fischer Williams, and Rolin – and representatives of other countries in the Assembly such as Louwers or the Canadian delegate, Charles Doherty. The expression of such views, although without much consequence due to their incidental character, nevertheless illustrated that concerns about mandates were not exclusive to the Secretariat.<sup>41</sup>

In expressing the opinions cited above, most of these individuals did not consider themselves as representatives of their own countries but, rather, as defenders of League principles. Such was the case for the most critical voices at the Secretariat – Cecil, Noel-Baker, and Ormsby-Gore – who aligned more to the idea of international trusteeship than other nationals and resolutely defended such principles over the interests of the Allied Powers.<sup>42</sup> The same applied to Rappard, a passionate internationalist, and even Beer, the first promoter of the 'mandate' idea despite his brief involvement with the League. Other Secretariat members were perhaps more interested in defending the jurisdiction of international law – van Hamel – or their own humanitarian concerns – Nansen – whilst some other public figures may have also promoted their own political views – Rolin. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent some of these men may have pursued their own agenda in adopting a clear stance in defending League authority. Certainly, several were eminent figures with reputations to sustain, either in the legal profession – van Hamel – or as rising liberal politicians – Rolin. Others may have been inclined to assume a prominent role due their humanitarian credentials – Nansen – or public duties – Cecil. For some, ambition may have also played a part in their involvement – Rappard harboured aspirations for a high position in the Secretariat.

As noted earlier, and apart from the sovereignty of the League over mandated territories, the main concerns expressed by Secretariat members referred to three corresponding administrative practices involved in the drafting of mandates: consultation with the populations living under mandates, the type of administration established in mandated territories, and the League supervision of the process.

The question of consultation with local populations was particularly contested in A Mandates, where the League Covenant acknowledged, 'the wishes of the local communities would be a principal consideration in the selection of the mandatory'.<sup>43</sup> Despite the Covenant, the British and French promptly distributed the former Turkish territories of Mesopotamia, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine between them, drafting their mandates without consultation with their inhabitants. Once the terms of the drafts of A Mandates became known publicly, the League was predictably inundated with outraged claims from the Middle East in which 'imperialist powers' were accused of 'trampling under foot solemn promises to oppressed peoples of Turkey' and implanting a 'system of dismemberment' in the Middle East.<sup>44</sup> Several Secretariat members added their voices to these complaints, considering that the procedure followed in A Mandates was an entirely unacceptable prescription of the terms of League mandates – van Hamel<sup>45</sup> – and an imposition that exposed the League to charges of hypocrisy and camouflage – Noel-Baker.<sup>46</sup> Others, such as Orsmby-Gore, saw in the approval of A Mandates a dereliction of duty on the League's part,<sup>47</sup> which others interpreted simply as a 'whitewash annexation'.<sup>48</sup> Rappard deemed League 'indifference and inactivity' in responding to the numerous complaints that the approval of A Mandates provoked in the Middle East as a clear example of double standards.<sup>49</sup>

Lack of consultation with local populations was also a concern in B Mandates, where no such provisions had been included in the Covenant. Pleas for consultation, however, found support from some leading public figures, particularly David Lloyd George, the British prime minister, and demanded by local communities in Cameroon and Togo.<sup>50</sup> Some Secretariat members agreed that the League had a responsibility in the matter. Van Hamel, for instance, claimed that in the absence of an International Court of Justice, the League ought to set up an 'ad hoc' tribunal to deal with the claims of the local population,<sup>51</sup> a view shared by Noel-Baker, who considered the procedure finally approved to handle petitions from African communities 'a travesty'.<sup>52</sup>

The type of administration for mandates also remained a contentious matter, chiefly because of British plans to create a Jewish state in Palestine and the separate treaty signed between Britain and King Feisal in 1921, which recognised Mesopotamia's independence. Even Drummond considered British designs in Palestine as 'clearly contrary' to the Covenant,<sup>53</sup> whereas other Secretariat members criticised the 'embarrassing' attitude of the League

during the process of their approval.<sup>54</sup> League advisors also saw Mesopotamian independence as entirely unacceptable and a flagrant neglect of League duties.<sup>55</sup>

Administration of B Mandates also remained controversial, particularly when practical considerations regarding the extension of some of these territories – Togoland, Cameroon, and Ruanda-Urundi – soon prompted the mandatory Powers to declare that their rule would come on the same basis as those of their neighbouring colonies of British Ghana and Nigeria, French Benin, and the Belgian Congo, respectively. Some Secretariat members considered this annexation as blatantly inconsistent with Article 22 of the Covenant and accused the League of reducing these territories to C Mandates.<sup>56</sup> Another more striking challenge compounded administrative issues in B Mandates: French demands to recruit military forces in Togo and Cameroon and use them, if necessary, outside the mandated territory. Approved by the Council in July 1922, this request saw Rolin deem it a ‘violation of the Treaty of Versailles’,<sup>57</sup> and Rappard, a violation of the League Covenant.<sup>58</sup>

The lack of supervision by League officials in drafting the mandates was the third and most pressing denunciation by Secretariat members, who never accepted the subordinate role of the organisation in the process. Noel-Baker repeatedly argued that Drummond seize the initiative on the matter whenever the Allied Powers threatened to delay it.<sup>59</sup> Others like Nansen and Cecil demanded Assembly involvement and public scrutiny of the mandates’ drafts, a right that Rappard also requested as PMC head.<sup>60</sup> Secretariat members deemed League inability to respond to such requirements a ‘failure’ and an evasion of duties.<sup>61</sup>

The way in which Secretariat members expressed their concern and channelled their discontent varied with time and circumstance. In some cases, they exchanged views and criticisms, particularly when they knew each other well, like Noel-Baker and Cecil. In others, like Rappard, they tended to consign their opinions to personal diaries and commentaries. Occasionally, figures like Nansen and Cecil made public speeches in which they vented their frustration as happened at the December 1920 Assembly. In most cases, however, they reserved their views in direct communications to Drummond. These individuals were not able, or even disposed, to build networks for a variety of reasons. In some instances – Nansen, Orsmby-Gore, and Beer – their involvement in the League was short-lived. With the exception of Noel-Baker and Cecil, they did not know each other very well, and their areas of expertise and priorities did not fully align. Some were aware of related criticisms directed at the League by several humanitarian or international associations like the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society or the Syrian-Palestinian Congress. Representations from these associations against the system of mandates evoked brief correspondence with members of the Secretariat, particularly

Noel-Baker and Rappard. Neither attempted, however, to establish any lasting connexions or co-ordinate any lobbying initiatives with these associations, although they circulated the groups' protests and demanded from Drummond that the Council discuss them.<sup>62</sup> In most cases, however, such suggestions were turned down, and simple acknowledgements were issued to the claimants without further action.

Far from presenting a united effort, the opinions of Secretariat members also wavered at times, as did the vigour, constancy, and determination to defend them. Even those who firmly opposed League procedures adopted on mandates were not immune to political considerations, which, on occasion, they accepted as a lesser evil. Rappard, for instance, despite all his opposition to the lack of consultation with local A Mandate populations, sometimes expressed his reluctance to cause 'unnecessary' difficulties for the Council and was happy to endorse expurgated versions of his reports issued by Drummond.<sup>63</sup>

Even Noel-Baker, perhaps the staunchest defender of League principles at the Secretariat, could occasionally show signs of accommodation. Aware of 'the danger that the Mandates would be indefinitely postponed, and that the occupying Powers would assume complete and unfettered "squatter's rights"', he recommended simplicity and immediate action as general policy, even if that compromised some of the Covenant's principles. He disregarded some problems related to the administration of B Mandates – for instance, the disputed boundaries between Togo and Cameroon.<sup>64</sup> Similar ambiguities of a more serious nature were apparent in van Hamel's stance. Even whilst objecting to the lack of consultation of local communities in A Mandates, he recognised its advantages for the position of the League that 'would then afterwards have to accept those points without being responsible'.<sup>65</sup>

The inconsistencies of these officials and their *modus operandi* revealed, perhaps more than anything, the very restricted role of the Secretariat in the League's structure. More of a European club than a 'genuine international officialdom',<sup>66</sup> the Secretariat was not a decision-making body, not even an advisory one. Its mission was to undertake administrative duties related to the organisation of the League and disseminate information to the Council and Assembly. With regard to mandates, although some of its divisions may have been more involved in the practicalities of the system – the Mandates Section, particularly – their duties were restricted to assisting other League bodies in preliminary work and facilitating documentation for their benefit. In short, the Secretariat was not supposed to create problems or raise issues relating to the administration of mandates. Essentially, it was a technical organ carrying out administrative duties and, as such, it is unsurprising that the Great Powers did not acknowledge any special distinction to this body and only expected co-operation and bureaucratic undertakings from it. Although often

apprehensive about the Assembly or Council, where their influence was more restricted, the Allied and Associated Powers paid little attention to the Secretariat and generally ignored it.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that the Secretariat was something more than a peripheral entity in the League's general structure. Certainly, Geneva was an important hub of information and contacts, a point of 'administrative convergence', where opinions from Secretariat members could exert some influence; and Drummond took an active part in the formulation of mandate policy, often setting the tone of the debate in both the Council and Assembly. Dissemination of information was an important part of the Secretariat's remit and could have a significant influence in deliberations and decisions, with its officials acting as both a catalyst and a bridge between the design of policies and their implementation.<sup>68</sup> Crucially, however, for any dissenting voices within the Secretariat to be heard, such views needed circulation to other League institutions and, for that to happen, Drummond needed to take notice of them, consider them worthy of discussion, and draw them to the attention of the Council or Assembly. Drummond was not that sort of secretary general.

Drummond's aristocratic background, elitist education, and connexions with the British Foreign Office – where he served for 20 years – together with his command of French and German, had made him an ideal candidate for secretary general. His selection came at London's request, which saw in him a committed official, reserved and aloof, moderate and resolute, unlikely to challenge or raise difficulties to the victorious Powers' designs.<sup>69</sup> His bureaucratic qualities were particularly appreciated for the post, one in which he strove to endow the League with an efficient administrative structure.

Drummond saw his role as facilitating the pre-eminent standing of the Great Powers within the new organisation and considered himself more a British representative than an internationalist.<sup>70</sup> He was keen on inter-Allied co-operation and viewed with apprehension any appearance of obtrusion on the part of the Secretariat. His role as a 'transmission belt' between public criticism and the League was one that Drummond took seriously and protectively. His response to the critical views and proposals about mandates landing on his desk relied on two main assumptions: the League's limited powers on these issues and the need for compromises that permitted an accommodation with the victorious Powers' designs.

In Drummond's eyes, like those of many historians today, the major Powers would not have accepted any League 'interference' in relation to mandates, and the League could do little to prevent their overwhelming influence on the matter.<sup>71</sup> 'Quite frankly', Drummond said in one of his characteristic notes of refusal to Rappard, 'I do not think that the Council would agree to this . . . . The Council would not give the Assembly the right to advise on the draft Mandates, and I do not think that they would give this right to the

Commission [PMC)].<sup>72</sup> For the sake of consistency and expediency, Drummond defended the view that the same procedure of drafting and approval should apply to all mandated territories, regardless of their category. Dismissing concerns relating to the Covenant, Drummond referred to continuity of policy and the League's interests to justify his opinion.<sup>73</sup> In following this policy, the League would appear in the eyes of public opinion as having the victorious Powers presented it with *faits accomplis*. The League would, therefore, have to accept their decisions without being responsible for them, a strategy that Drummond hoped would protect its reputation.<sup>74</sup>

Drummond used a variety of administrative strategies to avoid friction between the Secretariat and the major Powers, ranging from behind-the-scenes preparations to flat refusal of proposals contrary to Allied Power interests. Generally, he was keen on delaying procedures to give the Powers time to resolve contentious issues and confront the League with accomplished facts. For instance, his dilatory tactics permitted the Great Powers hastily to convene the San Remo Conference from 19 to 26 April 1920 and then conclude the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey on 10 August 1920 before the League had taken any initiatives on A Mandates. Drummond was also keen to facilitate the smooth passage of proposals at the Council, for which he identified key individuals who could provide the desired outcome. A case in point was the liberal politician Paul Hymans, Belgium's Council representative, whom Drummond invited to present his own memorandum at the crucial meeting in August 1920 in which the Council was to decide on the sovereignty of mandates.<sup>75</sup> Hymans did not disappoint, backing the interpretation included in Drummond's memorandum and persuading the Council that the decisions arrived at by the Powers on A, B, and C Mandates were legitimate and in conformity with the Covenant.<sup>76</sup>

In general, Drummond was eager to avoid public scrutiny of mandate drafts and the Council's actions. He was particularly apprehensive of criticisms at the Assembly, where he long opposed the discussion of mandates. Apart from restricting information to Assembly committees, Drummond was also keen to suggest ways to prevent its censure. His offer to the major Powers that they should prepare the initial draft mandates in October 1920, for instance, was mainly due to his anxiety about criticism the Council would suffer if no mandates were received before the first League Assembly in November. In presenting this proposal, Drummond affirmed that the League had the capability and resources to draft the mandates, a point frequently dismissed by historians. However, he also admitted this latter possibility was a course of action that he was far from desiring.<sup>77</sup> As a way to avoid 'unnecessary tensions' between the Council and Assembly, Drummond also favoured swift reaction on the Council's part.<sup>78</sup> The Council's unilateral approval of C Mandates on 17 December 1920, the first sanctioned after the Treaty of Versailles, proved this point. They offered the advantage of being relatively uncomplicated,

administered by the mandatory Powers as integral parts of their adjacent colonial territories. This arrangement also afforded the Council the opportunity to settle the procedure in approving other mandates that, in a similar fashion, would be neither publicised nor discussed by the Assembly but simply approved by the Council.<sup>79</sup>

Limiting the circulation of suggestions, documents, or memoranda awaiting the consideration of the Council or Assembly was another customary procedure. In his role as mediator between the Secretariat and the League's main institutions, Drummond saw 'no advantage' in many of the proposals and criticisms addressed to him as secretary general and recommended 'simple acknowledgement without further action' in most of them.<sup>80</sup> League powerlessness was his most repeated observation. Occasionally, however, Drummond could be more explicit. In a reply to Noel-Baker, who had addressed critical remarks to him about the League's position in the Middle East, he made a clear and unapologetic reference to the constraints under which the League was acting. 'You must remember', he admonished his secretary, 'that we have the difficult and delicate task and must be to some extent the best judges of what we can and can't do politically'.<sup>81</sup>

Drummond was a respected figure amongst the victorious Powers, whose diplomats often sounded out him to prevent difficulties and obstacles. Alexandre Millerand, for instance, the short-lived French premier, made clear to him that the Great Powers would not accept any League involvement in the question of mandate modalities or their status and urged him to seek Council approval of these designs. Anything but confirmation of the Allied Powers' previous agreements, Millerand warned, 'would only increase confusion and delay solutions'.<sup>82</sup> Drummond was quick to reassure the French delegate on the Council, Leon Bourgeois, on this account and confirmed that he expected Council members to agree to these terms in August 1920.<sup>83</sup> In a similar note to Balfour, Britain's Council representative, Drummond added that the Powers should not expect much trouble in having their mandates approved by the Council.<sup>84</sup> Drummond gave similar assurances regarding Assembly discussion of mandates, a debate that mandatory representatives on the Council were anxious to avoid.<sup>85</sup>

Drummond even offered suggestions to accommodate the Allied Powers' ambitions and provided makeshift interpretations to legitimise them. He was instrumental, as mentioned previously, in impressing on the victorious Powers a sense of urgency to draft mandates and have them approved without the interference of the Assembly, an opportunity they duly took in December 1920.<sup>86</sup> After attending a Cabinet meeting in London in June 1921, Drummond also proposed to Lloyd George's government the insertion of additional clauses in the British draft mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine 'unlikely to cause any difficulties when the



Mandates were up for discussion'.<sup>87</sup> His endorsement of French designs to recruit military forces in Togo and Cameroon proved to be even more imaginative: Drummond referred to a missing comma in the League Covenant and a subsequent lack of clarity on the issue, an argument that proved decisive in the final approval of both mandates in July 1922.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some Secretariat officials distrusted Drummond, criticising his 'timidity' and 'lack of courage'<sup>89</sup> and doubting his ability to defend the League's ideals.<sup>90</sup> Noel-Baker was often under the impression that Drummond was allowing the major Powers to outmanoeuvre the League.<sup>91</sup> Others, like Cecil, believed that his passivity would discredit the whole system of mandates.<sup>92</sup> Certainly, there were instances where Drummond seemed directly accountable for the League's *faux pas* and inconsistencies. One involved overlooking the need for explicit compliance of all the victorious Powers before endorsing the hastily approved C Mandates in December 1920, a serious mishap in the eyes of some League officials that provoked strong American protests and a considerable delay in approving mandates.<sup>93</sup>

For all his shortcomings, however, Drummond had other qualities, particularly of a bureaucratic nature. Meticulous and punctilious in his work, he remained conscious of the necessity of endowing the League with a solid administrative structure, a task in which he mostly succeeded.<sup>94</sup> He was closer to those members of his entourage who shared his views on mandates, such as his British assistant, Captain F.P. Walters, and could be cold and aloof to those who did not as in the case of Rappard.<sup>95</sup> Regarding his own position, Drummond was convinced that the Secretariat was a marginal player in the drafting of mandates and that its main role was not to hamper the freedom of mandatory Powers. In his view, there was very little that the League could do to defend the Covenant's principles on the question of mandates, and its main duty was to facilitate their approval without creating friction between the victorious Powers and the League.<sup>96</sup>

As justified as the previous views might be, some League officials persisted in expressing disappointment with the organisation in general and the Secretariat in particular. Even if supposedly neutral and non-interfering, the Secretariat was nevertheless responsible for doing 'everything it can to advance the main objectives of the League'.<sup>97</sup> At minimum, the secretary general was to act as an impartial figure, informing the Council and Assembly of any significant issues emerging regarding the mandates. Even amongst the victorious Powers, Drummond fell short on that account. Foreign officials often noticed, with surprise in some cases, that he was wholly accommodating to Great Power prerogatives and showed a tendency to reduce as much as possible the League's intervention on mandates".<sup>98</sup>

There is also ample evidence that, far from being impartial, Drummond tended to favour Great Power priorities, restrict fault-finding information, and influence procedures to facilitate the approval of mandates. From early in the

process, Drummond favoured the 'German method', which allowed the Allied Powers to allocate mandates, draw boundaries, and settle administrative conditions in all German colonies in Africa that, for many, limited the Council's role to simple note taking and approval. Drummond was also instrumental in shaping the Council's response to the mandate administration in August 1920, when the 'German method' was first agreed, and in favouring the extension of this procedure to A Mandates despite frequent misgivings expressed by Secretariat members and other League supporters. However, when the unresponsive attitude of the Allied Powers threatened to delay the process and damage League prestige, he reminded them that, according to the Covenant, the League was entitled to draft the terms of the mandates.

Whether believing this or not – other Secretariat members were unflinching about this prerogative – he nevertheless preferred to have the Secretariat confronted with a series of *faits accomplis* that, in his view, would help preserve the prestige of the institution. He was obviously aware that there were grounds for criticism regarding the League's attitude, particularly in respect to A Mandates, and tried to minimise such caveats. Even whilst personally admitting that the draft mandate for Palestine was contrary to the Covenant, for example, he did not oppose its approval, preferring that the Great Powers assume that responsibility. On numerous occasions, he dismissed proposals or critical comments from other Secretariat members and resisted their circulation to the League or Assembly. In some cases, as with the treaty with Mesopotamia/Iraq, he seemed to accept unequivocally the views of the British Foreign Office, which, according to other members of the Secretariat, were glaringly opposed to the principles of the Covenant. In sum, as a gatekeeper of the views of the main Powers, Drummond's chief preoccupations in the question of mandates related to facilitating their approval and upholding League prestige in the process.

The Allied Powers, who swiftly ignored the Covenant and executed post-war agreements in the uncompromising defence of their own interests, openly manipulated the essential principles of the administration of mandates. Draft mandates entirely accommodated such designs, which found little resistance in League bodies. The Assembly's lack of scrutiny and the inhibition of the Secretariat and Council, where neither Drummond nor other Council members felt inclined to challenge these schemes, permitted the uncontested approval of all mandates by July 1922.

Even the role that the PMC was supposed to play in supervising mandates became seriously discredited before it first convened in October 1921. PMC scrutiny had been one of the conditions that had given hope to even the most reluctant members of the Secretariat, such as Noel-Baker, who expected a more proactive role in representing the League. Although the PMC's remit was only to supervise the compliance of the mandates' administration with the League's principles, its sessions were not expected to be unimportant as, in

accordance with the Covenant, they would be open to the general public and their minutes publicised for the benefit of member-states. This was far from a minor issue; several League representatives had argued that bringing mandates under public scrutiny at the PMC sessions was essential for the success of its administration. In Noel-Baker's opinion, the open nature of the PMC sessions was 'the real sanction of the whole Mandates system', and he was perhaps optimistic about its future work. He even dared think that the League had not laboured 'in vain'.<sup>99</sup>

Such hopes, however, suffered a crushing blow after the first five PMC meetings held between 4 and 8 October 1921. Following complaints from the mandatory Powers, the Council decided that, in future, PMC meetings would occur behind closed doors. To justify this decision, reasons were adduced ranging from the discretion required and the position of mandatory representatives – some declared themselves feeling uncomfortable at these public sessions – to justify this decision. After this brief period of the inaugural sessions, therefore, not only was the irrelevance of the PMC in drafting the mandates confirmed but the closed nature of its future sessions was a step that some Council representatives considered as 'a defeat' that they regarded 'with the outmost regret'.<sup>100</sup> The dismayed reaction of some Secretariat members to this new imposition demonstrated the extent to which they considered the PMC's role compromised by the lack of transparency, an issue perhaps overlooked in recent literature.<sup>101</sup> The PMC found itself in the awkward position of having to declare at the end of its initial meetings in 1921 that it had nothing to report on the issue of mandates.<sup>102</sup>

Relentless criticism by Secretariat members had little effect on mandate policy. Judging by their results, it is inevitable to question if they had any influence at all. Only a few reservations expressed made their way into Council discussions where they suffered routine dismissal. Drummond, for his part, rarely responded to them with any length and depth. In addition, the ominous forebodings and warnings that many Secretariat members expressed about the League's future did not come to fruition. The League did not decline into irrelevance in this period, despite many warnings from Secretariat members about the potential for such an outcome. On the contrary, rather than a 'disaster' or 'failure',<sup>103</sup> mandates served to cement the reputation of an institution that not only survived but thrived in the 1920s, and whose administrative structure was efficiently steered by Drummond. In short, critical voices in the Secretariat were not only ineffectual in their criticism but also inaccurate in their predictions. Yet, they anticipated with unerring accuracy some the problems the League would face in the Middle East, where mandatory Powers were soon conducting military operations against local populations – Britain in Iraq in 1920 and France in Syria in 1925. They also foresaw the disrepute that mandates would bring to the League in the views of non-

European observers, a point overlooked in most of the enthusiastic appraisals of the League in the 1920s.<sup>104</sup>

Secretariat members, moreover, were able to offer alternatives to some of the most pressing problems created by the ambitions of the Allied Powers. During discussion of the Palestine mandate, for instance, both Rappard and Noel-Baker suggested distinct approaches to 'an extremely difficult task', which many doubted could be fixed at all.<sup>105</sup> They contended that the League could not approve the draft mandates in the Middle East whilst war in Turkey was still raging and recommended waiting for the ratification of the Treaty of Sèvres by all concerned parties before settling the matter. According to Rappard, it was 'beyond the province of the League to intervene where, in international law, war still continues'.<sup>106</sup> Clearly seeing the broken foundations of the British mandate in Palestine and its incompatibility with the Covenant, he and Noel-Baker proposed an international conference to allow the League to defer approval.<sup>107</sup> Against such a possibility, however, Drummond favoured the view that priority on the matter should devolve from 'definite instructions' by Council members, a view that facilitated League approval of the Palestine mandate in July 1922.<sup>108</sup>

Another significant question that Secretariat members' criticisms revealed was the precarious position and limited power that the Secretariat possessed in the League's general structure. These officials were painfully aware of this fact and the Secretariat's subordination to other League bodies, particularly the Council.<sup>109</sup> Increasing frustrations emerged by the Council usually rejecting Secretariat initiatives and relegating them to the margins with Drummond's general assent. Secretariat members understood that the League's administrative structure had been designed to favour the ambitions of the victorious Powers and that the Secretariat's limited role in this structure responded to those designs. They lamented, however, that Drummond seemed more concerned about exculpating the organisation's evident shortcomings in this regard than about defending its ideals.<sup>110</sup> In this complaint, Secretariat members anticipated much of the criticism levelled at the United Nations today.<sup>111</sup>

More important, critical voices in the Secretariat pointed at the central issue that the future of mandates did not depend so much on geographical conditions or local tensions, but on their fidelity to the principles of Covenant. The varying fortunes of A and B mandates have often appeared in scholarship via regional disparities, a perspective that lends general validity to the mandates doctrine by lauding mandate administration and implicitly ascribing the problematic management of particular mandates to idiosyncratic local problems.<sup>112</sup> Such an interpretation, however, minimises the fundamental contradictions of the mandates doctrine, which was the main objection raised by Secretariat members and the chief reason they anticipated the future difficulties that mandates would experience.<sup>113</sup> In other words, dissenting

Secretariat voices vigorously argued that mandates represented a 'sacred trust'. The crucial question of whether the League had responded to that trust needed to be judged by the degree of adhering the mandates to the principles of the Covenant rather than the future administration of mandatory Powers. In the light of the long-term shortcomings of African mandates and ongoing Middle Eastern conflicts, such apprehensions proved justified.<sup>114</sup>

Recent scholarship on mandates has underlined positive aspects and beneficial consequences of mandatory administration in some African territories and moderately praised the League's role in the process, particularly PMC scrutiny in their administration. In the context of the very limited powers granted to the League in the post-war period, such developments appear as sustained challenges to pre-war colonial mentalities and attitudes and promising advances in international administration.

By looking at the relatively obscure role of the Secretariat and the opinions of some of its members during the drafting of the mandates, this analysis disputes some of the assumptions of the previous literature. First, it highlights the crucial importance of the early debates in shaping the nature of the League and the mandates' role in such controversies. Second, it reveals the existence of a key group of eminent members of the Secretariat, whose beliefs questioned the system of mandates, considering it fundamentally defective. Critical voices in the Secretariat also highlighted the League's administrative shortcomings in the process of mandate approval, particularly the limited role of the Secretariat and the ambiguous attitude of Drummond. Finally, Secretariat members foresaw the discrediting of the League over the system of mandates and the challenges that the mandatory Powers would face in the future. The critical voices that rose within the Secretariat during the discussion of draft mandates certainly attested to the courage and convictions of some of its members. Such voices, however, were easily discarded and relegated to the margins, often with the tacit assent of Drummond, who rather than a 'rescuer of the system of mandates',<sup>115</sup> as it has been fashioned, arguably acted as an accomplice of the Allied Powers.

This diplomatic process demonstrated that the notion of effective scrutiny attributed to some of the League institutions – namely the PMC – in the administration of mandates is misplaced. The PMC's supervisory role, which only started in 1922, proved essentially flawed, mainly because of its restricted scope of action, reduced capabilities, and limited powers. Although it may have been the case that the PMC was less docile than its creators intended, there was very little the PMC could do or supervise in a mandates system that, since its conception, had been manipulated to the point that its final terms bore little resemblance to the 'sacred trust of civilisation' it supposedly represented. The approval of mandates simply confirmed the in-built bias of the system in favour of the victorious Powers' ambitions and the timorous and apprehensive role of Drummond, who acted in the process as if the authority

conferred on the League by the Covenant hardly existed. The supervision of a system erected on this basis was of dubious relevance and little consolation for those expecting the mandates to initiate a new era in international relations. The Allied Powers easily domesticated the supposed internationalism that the system of mandates inaugurated, as revolutionary as it may have appeared in its inception. They adapted their priorities and tactics to the new international milieu unobstructed by the League, which often took the path of less resistance. This inhibition in asserting its authority inevitably damaged the League's prestige in the eyes of its most committed supporters and, particularly, in those non-European populations that expected most from the system of mandates. In the process of drafting mandates, some members of the Secretariat, rather than the PMC, were the true champions of League values.

## Notes

- 1 Michael D. Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929–1946* (Eastbourne, 2004); Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett, ed., *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspective* (Leiden, 2004); Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (Abingdon, 2015); and Martin S. Shanguhya and Toyin Falola, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History* (NY, 2018).
- 2 Nele Matz, "Civilization and the Mandate System under the League of Nations as Origin of Trusteeship," *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law* 9, no. 1 (2005): 55. See also Susan Pedersen, "Back to the League of Nations," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 1091–117; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "A League of Empires: Imperial Political Imagination and Interwar Internationalisms," in *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World*, ed. Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, (Cham, 2018), 87–126. See Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge, 2007), 116–20, for a selected bibliography on the mandates.
- 3 Particularly in Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford, 2005); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015).
- 4 For instance, Pedersen, *Guardians*; Patrick Cottrell, *The League of Nations: Enduring Legacies of the First Experiment at World Organization* (Abingdon, 2017), 273–79 are devoted mostly to the PMC.
- 5 Steiner, *Lights*, 43–44.
- 6 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 11ff; Jerónimo, "League of Empires," 88–92.
- 7 For instance, Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007).
- 8 Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 28–45; Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*, 139–40.
- 9 Michael Callahan "Mandated Territories are not Colonies': Britain, France, and Africa in the 1930s," in *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in*

- Historical Perspective*, ed. R.M. Douglas, Michael Dennis Callahan, and Elizabeth Bishop (Lanham, MD, 2006); Pedersen, *Guardians*, 50–63.
- 10 Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*, 175–79.
  - 11 William Bain, *Between Anarchy and Society* (Oxford, 2003); Pedersen, *Guardians*, Jerónimo and Monteiro, *Internationalism*.
  - 12 A tradition continuing in the scholarship today: Lisa Anderson, “‘Creative destruction’: States, identities and legitimacy in the Arab world,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 40/4–5(2014), 369–79; Louis Fishman, “The ‘Successful Failure’ of Post-World War I Middle East,” *Turkish Review* (1 May 2015): <https://www.pressreader.com/turkey/turkish-review/20150501/282011850991254>.
  - 13 Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis, Inter-war Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015), 21–55.
  - 14 Gail-Maryse Cockram, *South West African Mandate* (Cape Town, 1976), 75. See also Matz, “Civilization and the Mandate,” 70–71.
  - 15 Michael Callahan, “Mandated Territories,” 1–20.
  - 16 Rappard manuscript, February 1923, AFS [Archives Fédérales Suisses, Bern] PA [Personal Archives] J1.149/1977/135/157. See also Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*, 148.
  - 17 The debate in Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*, 147ff.
  - 18 Cockram, *South West*, 75.
  - 19 Matz, “Civilization and the Mandate,” 70–71.
  - 20 Drummond to Bourgeois [French delegate, League Council], 17 August 1920, ADMAE [Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve, Paris] SDN [Société des Nations] SG [Secrétariat General] M [Mandates] 543.
  - 21 Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*, 451–53.
  - 22 van Hamel to Drummond, 8 August 1919, LNA [League of Nations Archives, Geneva], Registry Files 1919–27 [RF] Mandates Section [MS] R1/161.
  - 23 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 17 January 1920, LNA RF MS R1/161.
  - 24 Louwers to Hymans [Belgian delegate, League Council], 22 July 1920, ASPFAE [Archives du Service Public Fédéral Affaires Étrangères, Brussels] SDN MC [Mandats Coloniaux] RU [Ruanda-Urundi] AF/I-5/1918-22.
  - 25 Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty*, 147; Cottrell, *League of Nations*, 131–36.
  - 26 Rolin to Frank [Belgian minister of colonies], 23 July 1920, ASPFAE SDN MC RU AF I-5/1918-22.
  - 27 Beer to Drummond, 21 September [1919], Milner [Viscount Alfred Milner Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford] dep/390.
  - 28 Asquith speech, 17 June 1920, ASPFAE SDN Secretariat, 1920–1930, P/10.760.
  - 29 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 12 October 1920, ADMAE SDN SG M/543.
  - 30 Rappard personal note, 5 May 1921, LNA RF MS R38/12747. On the same line, Steiner, *Lights*, 44; Pedersen, *Guardians*, 49.
  - 31 Noel-Baker to Cecil, 22 August 1921, NBKR [Philip Noel Baker Papers, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge] 4/463.
  - 32 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 46–49.
  - 33 Daniel Gorman, “Liberal Internationalism, the League of Nations Union, and the Mandates System,” *Canadian Journal of History* 40, no. 3 (2005): 449–78.
  - 34 League of Nations, RFA [Record of the First Assembly] PM [Plenary Meetings], 18 December 1920, 722.
  - 35 Rappard to Drummond, 4 March 1921, LNA RF MS R6/248.
  - 36 Drummond to Rappard, 9 November 1922, *Ibid.*, R60/21310.
  - 37 Noel-Baker to Wilson Harris, British League of Nations Union [BLNU], 6 October 1921, NBKR 4/440.

- 38 Anonymous comments on van Hamel to Drummond, 6, 15 August 1919, LNA RF MS R1/161.
- 39 Nansen to Drummond, 13 December 1920, *Ibid.*, R2/161. More on Nansen in Hans Olav Thyvold, *Fridtjof Nansen* (Oslo, 2012).
- 40 Nansen speech, 18 December 1920, League of Nations, RFA PM 712.
- 41 See, for instance, Doherty speech, 18 December 1920, *Ibid.*, 718.
- 42 Cockram, *South West*, 30; Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 45–46; Pedersen, *Guardians*, 11. Lord Robert Cecil, for instance, always claimed to speak for the League and not Britain. See Gaynor Johnson, *Lord Robert Cecil: Politician and Internationalist* (London, 2013), 121–42.
- 43 “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/leagcov.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)
- 44 Lotfallah [president, Central Committee, Union Syrienne] to Council, 9 September 1922, LNA RF MS R2/161.
- 45 van Hamel to Drummond, 1 March 1920, *Ibid.*, R13/1780.
- 46 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 19 February 1920, *Ibid.*, R13/1780, and 23 March 1920, *Ibid.*, R1/161.
- 47 Ormsby-Gore to Rappard, 5 May 1921, *Ibid.*, R3/161.
- 48 The latter was the opinion of a British diplomat, Eric Forbes Adam, a former member of the British Delegation at the Peace Conference: Forbes to Drummond, 7 November 1919, *Ibid.*, R13/1780.
- 49 Rappard to Drummond, 10 October, 7 December 1921, *Ibid.*, R21/4284.
- 50 Speeches in Glasgow, July 1917, and London, January 1918: Cockram, *South West*, 71. Cf. O. Olympio [president, Committee on Behalf of Togoland Natives] to Milner, 10 September 1919, LNA RF MS R20/3099.
- 51 van Hamel to Drummond, 6 and 15 August 1919, *Ibid.*, R1/161.
- 52 Note by Noel-Baker, 5 February 1923, *Ibid.*, R60/22099. According to the resolution adopted by the Council on 31 January 1923, complaints about African mandated populations would go to the mandatory Powers; they would decide whether to forward them to the Council.
- 53 Drummond to Hymans, 29 January 1921, ASPFAE, SDN, MC, Documents, LB 160/1921.
- 54 Rappard to Hymans, 4 February 1921, *Ibid.*
- 55 According to the international lawyer, Sir John Fischer Williams, legal adviser to the League: Fisher to Council, 16 November 1921, LNA RF MS R58/17502.
- 56 Garnett [secretary, BLNU] to Drummond, 28 July 1921, NBKR 4/440, with supportive written comments by Noel-Baker.
- 57 Rolin to Frank, 23 July 1920, ASPFAE SDN MC RU AF/I-5.
- 58 Rappard to Drummond, 15 April 1921, LNA RF MS R3/161.
- 59 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 12 October 1920, ADMAE SDN SG M/543.
- 60 Nansen to Drummond, 9 December 1920, LNA RF MS R2/161. Cecil speech, 18 December 1920, RFA PM 718–22. Cf. Rappard to Drummond, 4 March 1921, LNA RF MS R6/248.
- 61 Nansen to Drummond, 9 December 1920, LNA RF MS R2/161.; Noel-Baker to Ormsby-Gore, 24 September 1921, NBKR 4/440.
- 62 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 7 November 1921, LNA RF MS R3/161.
- 63 Rappard to Hymans, 11 February 1921, ASPFAE SDN MC Documents LB 160/1921.
- 64 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 17 January 1920, LNA RF MS R1/161.
- 65 van Hamel to Drummond, 1 January 1920, *Ibid.*, R13/1780.
- 66 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 7.



- 67 For instance, Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon A. Ikonou, “The Construction of the League of Nations Secretariat. Formative Practices of Autonomy and Legitimacy in International Organizations,” *International History Review* 41, no. 2 (2019): 257–79.
- 68 Patricia Clavin, “Europe and the League of Nations,” in *Twisted Paths: Europe 1914–1945*, ed. Robert Gerwarth (Oxford, 2006), 330–31.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 330; Pedersen, *Guardians*, 46.
- 70 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 47.
- 71 Natasha Wheatley, “The Mandates System as a Style of Reasoning: International jurisdiction and the parceling of imperial sovereignty in petitions from Palestine,” in *Routledge Handbook*, ed. Schayegh and Arsan, 107–08. See also Pedersen, *Guardians*, 82.
- 72 Drummond to Rappard, 14 March 1921, LNA RF MS R7/248.
- 73 Drummond to Balfour, 7 August 1919, FO [Foreign Office Records, National Archives, Kew] 608/152; Drummond to Forbes, 2 November 1919, LNA RF MS R1/161.
- 74 Drummond to van Hamel, 1 March 1920, *Ibid.*, R13/1780.
- 75 Drummond to Hymans, 16 July 1920, ASPFAE SDN MC Documents LB 160/1919-20.
- 76 Rapport by Rolin, 18 August 1920, *Ibid.*, P/10.109.
- 77 Drummond to Bourgeois, 12 October 1920, ADMAE SDN SG M/543. Amongst historians who question League capabilities are Cockram, *South West*, 30–57; Pedersen, *Guardians*, 2–6.
- 78 Balfour speech, 18 December 1920, League of Nations RFA PM 722.
- 79 Cecil voiced such criticism, *Ibid.*
- 80 Drummond to Rappard, 11 November 1921, LNA RF MS R3/161; Drummond to Rappard, 24 October 1921.
- 81 Drummond to Noel-Baker, 11 January 1922, NBKR 4/440. Underlined in the original.
- 82 Millerand to Drummond, 26 July 1920, ADMAE SDN SG M/543.
- 83 Drummond to Bourgeois, 17 August 1920, *Ibid.*
- 84 Drummond to Balfour, 7 August 1920, FO 608/152.
- 85 Jean Gout [French delegate, League Council] to Bourgeois, 11, 30 November 1920, ADMAE SDN SG M/543.
- 86 Drummond to Bourgeois, 12 October 1920, *Ibid.* France and Britain, in particular, promptly reached agreements that made it possible that by 10 December, all Class A, B, and C Mandate drafts were submitted to the League Council.
- 87 Shuckburgh [India Office] memorandum, 24 May 1921, WO [War Office Records, National Archives, Kew] 32/5109.
- 88 Drummond to Rappard, 16 March 1921, LNA RF MS R3/161.
- 89 Ormsby-Gore to Rappard, 11 May 1921, *Ibid.*
- 90 Rappard to Drummond, 3 March 1921, LNA RF MS R6/248.
- 91 Noel-Baker to Cecil, 7 November 1922, Cecil [Lord Cecil of Chelwood Papers, British Library, London].
- 92 Drummond to Noel-Baker, 31 August 1921, NBKR 4/440.
- 93 Ormsby-Gore to Drummond, 24 May 1921, LNA RF MS R3/161. On the American position on mandates, see John Milton Cooper, *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge, 2001), 412–35; Steiner, *Lights*, 349–87.
- 94 See David Macfadyen et al., *Eric Drummond and his Legacies: The League of Nations and the Beginnings of Global Governance* (Cham, 2019).
- 95 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 96 Drummond to Noel-Baker, 31 August 1921, NBKR 4/440.
- 97 Noel-Baker to Drummond, 22 March 1922, NBKR 4/436.
- 98 Louwers to Hymans, 22 July 1920, ASPFAE SDN MC RU AF/I-5.

- 99 Noel-Baker to Wilson Harris, 6 October 1921, NBKR/4/440.
- 100 Catastini [Italian delegate, League Council] to Drummond, 4 November 1922, LNA RF MS R60/21310.
- 101 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 50–63.
- 102 League of Nations, *Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes* (Geneva, 1921), 10.
- 103 Nansen to Drummond, 9 December 1920, LNA RF MS R2/161; Noel-Baker to Cecil, 22 August 1921, NBKR 4/463.
- 104 See Manela, *Wilsonian Moment*, 215–26.
- 105 Rappard to Hymans, 4 February 1921, ASPFAE SDN MC Documents, LB 160/1921. Noel-Baker to Drummond, 13 March 1922, NBKR 4/440, March 13.
- 106 Rappard to Drummond, 27 October 1922, LNA RF MS R58/17502. A similar argument in Awad Halabi, “Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence, 1919–22,” *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 41, no. 3 (2012): 19–37.
- 107 Rappard to Drummond 10 October 1921, LNA RF MS R21/4284. Such views question the argument that the British mandate over Palestine was an imaginative and possible answer to an impossible problem; cf. James Renton, “Flawed Foundations: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestinian Mandate,” in *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller (Farnham, 2010), 15–37.
- 108 Drummond to Hymans, 29 January 1921, ASPFAE SDN MC Documents, LB 160/1921.
- 109 Noel-Baker to Cecil, 8 June 1921, NBKR 4/463.
- 110 Rappard manuscript, February 1923, AFS PA J1.149/1977/135/157.
- 111 See, for instance, Manuel Fröhlich, “The Ironies of UN Secretariat Reform,” *Global Governance* 13, no. 2 (2007): 51–9.
- 112 See Callahan, “Mandated Territories,” 1–20.
- 113 Rappard to Drummond, 27 October, 14 November 1922, LNA RF MS R58/17502.
- 114 Dieudonné Oyono, *Colonie ou Mandat International? La politique française au Cameroun de 1919 à 1946* (Paris, 1992), 68–74.
- 115 Pedersen, *Guardians*, 11.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributor

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