

# **Fractured Empire: Ideas of Imperial Citizenship in the British Empire after the First World War**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Der Erste Weltkrieg brachte Bürger aus Großbritannien, und Untertanen aus den britischen Dominions und dem Kolonialreich zusammen, sowohl auf dem Schlachtfeld als auch hinter der Kampffront. Er hat sie auch unter einem historischen Rahmen vereinigt, was in den Nachkriegsjahren zu einer intensiven Beschäftigung mit den rassischen und legalen Widersprüchen der Staatsbürgerschaft des Britischen Empire führte. Der Krieg verursachte eine engere Zusammenarbeit zwischen Großbritannien und den Dominions an Fragen von gemeinsamem Interesse, vertieft durch eine gemeinsame Loyalität zum britischen Empire, eine Verbundenheit der weißen Rassen, und eine gemeinsame Kriegserfahrung. Immerhin verlangten die Politiker aus den Dominions größere Autonomie auf Grund derer Kriegseleistungen und Nationalisten in den Kolonien setzten sich für mehr Bürgerechte für ihre Wählerschaft ein. Dieser Artikel untersucht die rhetorischen, rechtlichen, moralischen, und materiellen Aspekte der Staatsbürgerschaft des Britischen Empire während des Ersten Weltkriegs und in den Jahren danach. Die verschiedenen Formen der Loyalität zum Britischen Empire und der koloniale Nationalismus, die die Untertanen des Empire zur Teilnahme an Großbritanniens globalen Krieg motivierten, werden erläutert. Auch untersucht wird wie der Krieg größere Zusammenarbeit sowie mehr Konflikte innerhalb des Britischen Empire verursachte, und die Entstehung in der Zwischenkriegszeit von antikolonialen Loyalitäten sowie weißen Loyalitäten zum Britischen Empire.

The First World War was a global conflict, in no small part due to the British Empire's participation. Imperial subjects were united through common allegiance to the Crown, and were at war when Britain entered the conflict in 1914. India contributed over 1.3 million soldiers and labourers to the war effort. Canada sent 620,000 Canadians to Eu-

rope, while 420,000 Australians, 130,000 New Zealanders, and 136,000 South Africans served in the Mediterranean, North Africa, and on the western front. The campaigns in east, west, and southern Africa were explicitly imperial, and drew over 100,000 Africans into the conflict mainly as soldiers, porters, and labourers.<sup>1</sup> Yet, as demonstrated by conscription debates in Canada and Australia, South African tensions between imperialists and Afrikaner nationalists, and the Easter Rebellion in Ireland in 1916, imperial loyalty was not an uncontested identity. Even those imperial subjects who fought willingly for “King and Empire” often interpreted the latter through colonial nationalist rather than pan-imperial or British terms.

The war was a crucible. It fostered closer imperial cooperation in the short term between Britain and the Dominions on issues of shared interest, cemented by a shared sense of imperial loyalty and white racial affinity buttressed by the common experience of war sacrifice. At the same time, the war’s intensity created fissures that progressively widened through the interwar years. Dominion politicians appealed to their societies’ wartime service in claims for greater autonomy as constituent polities within the British Empire, while colonial nationalists pressed for expanded imperial citizenship rights for their constituents. As a result, the ideal of imperial citizenship gained greater rhetorical, legal, moral, and material form after the war. Yet, ironically, this very process of substantiation served to dissolve the bonds of imperial loyalty to which imperial citizenship appealed. Ideas of imperial loyalty had always been strongest as sentiment and cultural attachment. They resonated in the abstract, and began to dissolve under pressure. This dynamic was evident during the Second South African War (1899–1902). While the settlement colonies sent regiments to fight alongside the British, the war also occasioned anti-imperial opposition in Britain (the pro-Boers, whose ranks included David Lloyd George) and in the Empire (especially amongst non-British subjects, such as Québécois nationalists led by Henri Bourassa).

The experience of the First World War brought together imperial subjects from Britain, the Dominions, and the colonial empire on the battlefield and behind the lines in British towns and cities. It also united them within a single historical framework, which necessitated in the postwar years an active engagement with the racial and legal inconsistencies of imperial citizenship. Interwar imperial thinkers considered means of overcoming these inconsistencies by devising frameworks which could incorporate non-white colonial elites, as well as privileging local authorities as a means of weakening colonial subjects’

1 J. Beaumont, “Unitedly we have fought”: Imperial Loyalty and the Australian War Effort, in: *International Affairs* 90 (2014) 2, 398; *History of the Great War: Based on Official Documents: Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1914*, London, Macmillan, 1925, pp. 20–24; R. Gerwarth and E. Manela (eds.), *Empires at War, 1911–1923*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014; J. Winter (ed.), *Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol. I: The Global War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014; L. Sondhaus, *World War One: The Global Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; M. Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006; J. Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History*, New York: Routledge, 2004; H. Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. I: To Arms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

claims to a common imperial citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Rather than foster greater imperial cohesion, however, the former alienated imperial nationalists from their colonial nationalist peers, while the latter served to isolate colonies from each other and circumvent the possibility of significant pan-imperial anti-colonial activism.

### **Imperial Loyalty, Colonial Nationalism, and the British Empire's Global War**

The First World War intensified both imperial loyalty and colonial nationalism in the Dominions. National commemorative initiatives began before the war's end. Australians and New Zealanders marked the first ANZAC day on 25 April 1916 to honour their countrymen who died at Gallipoli. After the war, Dominion war memorials were unveiled in Europe at battlefields such as Delville Wood (South Africa, 1926) and Vimy Ridge (Canada, 1936), in Dominion capitals such as Canberra (Australia, 1941), as well as in local town squares across the Empire. Perhaps the most intensive case of postwar imperial cooperation was the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), founded in 1917 by Fabian Ware, a British Red Cross mobile unit commander, to identify and provide burial grounds for the millions of Commonwealth dead across Europe and the Middle East. The IWGC's signature initiative was the Thiepval Memorial, which commemorates the 72,195 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died on the Somme battlefields. The IWGC was the first autonomous imperial partnership, with Britain and the Dominions each making financial contributions. The Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce even proposed (unsuccessfully) in 1924 that a fully-fledged Imperial Secretariat be created on the IWGC model.<sup>3</sup> IWGC cemeteries became markers of imperial sacrifice; in Ware's description in 1923, they constituted an empire of "honour around the world."<sup>4</sup> They were also, however, symbols of personal and national sacrifice, with Canadian soldiers' graves marked with a maple leaf and South Africans' with a springbok.

Similar multiple meanings became attached to the thousands of collected war relics and souvenirs that found their way into imperial, national and local museums, and soldiers' private homes. The British War Office collected material for the Imperial War Museum in London, opened by King George V on 9 June 1920 as "as lasting memorial of common effort and common sacrifice." It served this purpose through the interwar years, first at its initial grounds at the Crystal Palace (where it attracted 1,433,981 visitors in its first nine months), then in South Kensington, and finally from 1936 at its present location in Lambeth. Dominion war offices such as the Australian War Records Section also

2 A. Behm, *Imperial History in Britain, 1880–1940: Pasts, Politics and the Making of a Field*, PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2012, pp. 257–61, pp. 265–71.

3 F. Ware, *The Immortal Heritage: An Account of the Work and Policy of the Imperial War Graves Commission During Twenty Years*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937; G. E.H. Palmer, *Consultation and Cooperation in the British Commonwealth*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, pp. 210–11. The IWGC was renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960.

4 W. Taylor, *War Remains: Contributions of the Imperial War Graves Commission and the Australian War Records Section to Material and National Cultures of Conflict and Commemoration*, *National Identities* 17 (2015) 2, p. 224.

collected materials for national war memorials, illustrating how the war's imperial legacy was interpreted through nationalist perspectives. Interwar British Empire exhibitions also celebrated imperialism, particularly the purported benefits of imperial trade. Displays such as the West Africa exhibit at the 1924 Wembley exhibition (which included African craftsmen who lived on site), however, ironically demonstrated the period racism which undermined claims to inclusive imperial citizenship. While some Africans and Indians embraced the Exhibition out of imperial loyalty, others boycotted it or pointed to it as a call for imperial reform.<sup>5</sup>

A different form of commemoration emerged with the postwar publication of official histories of the imperial war effort. These included the *British Official History* (twenty-nine volumes published between 1922 and 1948), the *Official History of the South African Brigade* (1924), *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* (edited by Charles Bean from 1920–42), and the *Official History of the New Zealand Effort in the Great War* (four volumes published from 1921–3).<sup>6</sup> Each of these projects stressed in part the shared imperial nature of the war, particularly from an operational standpoint. They drew on official documents, and like similar projects carried out in other protagonist states, they were conceived as both nation-building exercises and early efforts in international public diplomacy.

Collectively these memorial practices encouraged a shared sense of imperial citizenship, especially amongst veterans and those close to men lost at war. The prominent Canadian writer and imperialist Stephen Leacock, for instance, argued in 1932 that the Empire should cancel all war payments and create an imperial tariff zone within which capital, migrants, and trade could circulate freely.<sup>7</sup> The war also gave rise to alternate nationalist identities, however. The Canadian parliamentarian Agnes Macphail criticized the consensus view that Canada's war dead had made a sacrifice for a just and noble cause, namely the defense of the empire, pointing to the war's more prosaic economic causes instead.<sup>8</sup> While her views were shouted down in the House as "spiritually desolate," Macphail's criticism of the emerging postwar Canadian nationalist myth that the war had helped forge the nation illustrates how ideas of "the nation" were contested even in the war's immediate aftermath. Similar views were offered by the Canadian nationalist John S. Ewart, who criticized the postwar celebration of Empire Day as an objectionable

5 T. Charman, "A Museum of Man's Greatest Lunatic Folly: The Imperial War Museum and its Commemoration of the Great War, 1917–2008" in *A Part of History: Aspects of the British Experience of the First World War*, London, Continuum, 2008, pp. 99–100, p. 102; Taylor, *War Remains*, p. 225, pp. 229–34; D. Simonelli, "[L]aughing nations of happy children who have never grown up: Race, the Concept of Commonwealth and the 1924–25 British Empire Exhibition," in: *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 10 (2009) 1; D. Stephen, *The Empire of Progress: West Africans, Indians, and Britons at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–25*, London, Palgrave, 2013, pp. 98–101, pp. 118–20.

6 A. Green, *Writing the Great War*, London, Frank Cass, 2003, pp. 5–20. The *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* was not published until 1962.

7 S. Leacock, *Back to Prosperity*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1932, p. 17, pp. 20–6, pp. 34–9.

8 J. Vance, *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997, pp. 262–3.

“glorification of imperialistic acquisitions.”<sup>9</sup> He called for Canada to exert its independence by holding its own counsel on whether to join future imperial wars. It ultimately did so first during the Chanak Crisis in 1922, when it refused Lloyd George’s call for imperial aid in proposed military action against Turkey, and then in 1939 when it waited a week after Britain to declare war on Germany after a parliamentary debate.

Antipodean responses to the war were equally mixed. Imperial loyalist organizations such as the Returned and Services League of Australia and the New Zealand Returned Servicemen’s Association called attention to servicemen’s demonstration of imperial citizenship during the war. Political leaders invoked the war in their calls for broader imperial partnership, as in 1923 when New Zealand Prime Minister William Massey called a Belfast audience’s attention to their countries’ shared “patriotic spirit of loyalty to the Crown and love and appreciation for the empire which our [common] ancestors built up.”<sup>10</sup> Yet the pre-war invented tradition of Empire Day was largely neglected in postwar Australia and New Zealand in favour of ANZAC Day, which served as both a patriotic celebration and a day to commemorate fallen soldiers. For many returned diggers themselves, it was mateship and local considerations rather than imperial sentiment that framed their war memories. In the Australian veteran Fred Farrall’s account, ANZAC Day served “to cultivate a spirit of war in the community. Of admiration or respect or honour or something for war.” National pride, race patriotism, and imperial loyalty became intermixed in postwar Australia, which lost the highest proportion of its troops (19%). Stephen Garton has termed this hybrid postwar identity “Empire nationalism.”<sup>11</sup> The Australian *School Paper*, used widely by teachers, increasingly featured nationalist songs and internationalist themes instead of imperial materials.<sup>12</sup> The decline of British and imperial sentiment was also caused by demographics, as the percentage of native-born Australian and New Zealand citizens increased as compared to British migrants, and rising American cultural and naval defense ties. In a war fought for the defense of empire, it was national, international, and local identities that developed most intensely.

The complicated dynamics of imperial citizenship can also be seen in the war service of indigenous peoples. Although indigenous peoples were British subjects, they faced various racially-motivated barriers to full citizenship in the Dominions. First Nations people in Canada were thus not conscripted, but approximately 4,000 enlisted voluntarily, and groups such as the Six Nations Women’s Patriotic League provided supplies and raised money for the war effort. The latter experience shaped Six Nations women’s postwar social reform activities, a domestic legacy of their wartime patriotic service. The New

9 J. S. Ewart, *The Independence Papers*, Vol. I, Ottawa, 1925, p. 74.

10 Massey quoted in K. Jeffery, *Distance and Proximity in Service to the Empire: Ulster and New Zealand between the Wars*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36 (2008) 3, p. 461.

11 S. Garton, *Demobilization and Empire: Empire Nationalism and Soldier Citizenship in Australia after the First World War – in Dominion Context*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 (2015) 1, 128–9.

12 F. Farrall quoted in A. Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 2nd edition, Clayton, Monash University Publishing, 2013, p. 202; Beaumont, “Unitedly we have fought”, pp. 398–400; J. Griffiths, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities, 1880–1939*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 67–8, p. 158.

Zealand government authorized a Maori Pioneer Battalion in 1915, following Britain's decision to mobilize Indian troops. The government saw the Maori as fellow imperial citizens liable for the responsibility of service, while many of the 2,200 Maori who served at Gallipoli and in France saw the war as an opportunity to express both their imperial and Maori identities. As the Maori medical officer Peter Buck (Te Rangihīroa) declared, the Maori were "a fighting race."<sup>13</sup> Even in Australia, where Aborigines were precluded from active enlistment on racially prejudicial grounds, between 800–1000 Aborigines volunteered during the war. Many of them counterintuitively cited imperial loyalty as their motivation, and pressed (unsuccessfully) for postwar benefits on the grounds of their imperial citizenship service.<sup>14</sup>

Indians served in the Sinai and Mesopotamia (where 8,000 found themselves besieged at Kut from December 1915–April 1916), and replaced most of the Australian, New Zealand, and Irish troops in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) in Palestine in 1918, which also included a small French colonial force in a case of intra-imperial cooperation. They also served behind the lines in France, and many wounded sepoys convalesced at hospitals in Britain. The personal bond of loyalty to the King-Emperor was important for many of these men, such as the soldier who professed to be "in Paradise" after George V visited wounded Indian soldiers in Brighton in early 1915.<sup>15</sup> Some Indians were motivated by imperial, or at least nationalist, motivations to serve, and used the language of imperial loyalty against Britons they encountered who had not enlisted. Yusuf Khan, writing from a Brighton hospital in 1915, recounted a fellow Indian asking Britons "if they were not ashamed to see us come from India to help the King while they, who were of the same race, were refusing to fight for him."<sup>16</sup> While united by imperial service and the racial disdain displayed by many white soldiers and officers, Indian soldiers were also divided by caste, religious, and regional differences. While not as significant as the Indian National Army in the next war, a small minority of Indians expressed their autonomy through direct opposition to Britain, such as the mutineers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry in Singapore in February 1915.<sup>17</sup> Exaggerated British fears of Muslim troops' vulnerability to Ottoman calls of *jihad*, in response to the Sanussiyya Sufi order's *jihad* against Egypt in 1915–17 and portrayed in popular works such as John Buchan's novel

13 A. Fletcher, Recruitment and Service of Māori Soldiers in World War One, in: *Itinerario* 38 (2014) 3, p. 59; T. Winegard, *For King and Kanata*, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2012, p. 6.

14 T. Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012; A. Norman, "In Defense of the Empire": The Six Nations of the Grand River and the Great War, in: S. Glassford and A. Shaw (eds.), *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012, pp. 33–9, 44–5; N. Riseman, *Enduring Silences, Enduring Prejudices: Australian Aboriginal Participation in the First World War*, in: D. Monger et al. (eds.), *Endurance and the First World War: Experiences and Legacies in New Zealand and Australia*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars, 2014, pp. 178–9, pp. 190–2.

15 D. Omissi, Europe through Indian Eyes: Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France, 1914 – 1918, in: *English Historical Review* CXXII (2007) 496, p. 381.

16 Yusuf Khan quoted in Gajendra Singh, in: *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World War*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 80.

17 Singh, pp. 130–54.

*Greenmantle* (1916), furthered weakened imperial bonds.<sup>18</sup> They also influenced postwar debates about the impact of the end of the Caliphate on Indians' imperial citizenship rights and loyalty.

The tension between imperial loyalty and racialized identities characterized Indians' postwar experiences, as illustrated by their postwar imperial development work in Iraq. Indian troops and labourers, alongside British colonial officials, rebuilt roads and expanded irrigation works during and after the war. The Indian Tata Steel Company provided large supplies of steel for the literal postwar reconstruction of Iraq, a project that involved approximately 20,000 Indian labourers. Indian aid in postwar Iraq demonstrates how the Empire facilitated (inadvertently) an early form of South-South cooperation.<sup>19</sup> This was one of the ways in which colonial subjects were able to use the infrastructure and levers of empire against itself. As Priya Satia has argued, "the imperial principle...impinged even on the aspirations of anti-imperial nationalism."<sup>20</sup> The Iraq project demonstrated Indians' capacity for governance and, alongside Indian soldiers' wartime service, strengthened Indian nationalism and further undermined Britain's pretensions to imperial rule in the subcontinent.

The British also drew on the principle of imperial loyalty in recruitment campaigns in Africa and the West Indies, although there as elsewhere this was only one of many motivations for enlistment. The East African Expeditionary Force suffered 17,646 casualties, as well as a further 44,572 Indian and African followers. These official statistics do not include the estimated 100,000 African porters who died during the war from disease. While the war did not create mass anti-colonial activism in Africa – most demobilized Africans returned to village lives where their newfound military skills were of little use – there were exceptions such as John Chilembwe's anti-British rebellion in Nyasaland in 1915 and small scale postwar urban trade union activism in African cities.<sup>21</sup> If anything, Britain's intensified interventions into African society during the war led to extended colonial governance in the interwar years. The British, unlike the French, were reticent to use black colonial troops in combat in Europe itself. From 1917, however, approximately 25,000 black South Africans did enlist in labour battalions for service in France, 600 of whom drowned when the transport SS *Mendi* sank in the English Channel in February 1917.<sup>22</sup> These men served alongside Indians, Egyptians, West Indians, and

18 E. C. Woodfin, *Camp and Combat on the Sinai and Palestine Front*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 115-20; J. Slight, *British Understandings of the Sanussiyya Sufi Order's Jihad against Egypt, 1915-17*, *The Round Table* 103:2, 2014, pp. 236-8; E. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, New York, Basic Books, 2015, pp. 70-1.

19 P. Satia, *Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War*, in: *Past & Present* 197 (2007) 1, pp. 230-1, pp. 240-1.

20 Satia, p. 214.

21 *History of the Great War: Medical Services General History*, Vol. IV, London, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1924, p. 504; R. S. Fogarty and D. Killingray, *Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 (2015) 1, pp. 105-7; B. Nasson, *British Imperial Africa*, in Gerwarth and Manela, pp. 148-51.

22 K. Jeffery, 1916: *A Global History*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 235; C. Koller, *The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and the Deployment in Europe during the First World War*, in: *Immigrants & Minorities* 26 (2008) 1/2, p. 113, pp. 127-8.

Chinese labour battalions. The latter were particularly significant from a global historical perspective, as historians now believe they carried an avian flu virus that sparked the postwar influenza pandemic.<sup>23</sup>

Across the Atlantic, West Indian troops garrisoned their own islands early in the war, with the German light cruisers the *Dresden* and *Karlsruhe* active in the Atlantic. Later in the war the West India Regiment, which dated to the American War of Independence, sent men to East and West Africa. A separate British West Indies Regiment raised eleven battalions, with a combined force of over 15,000 men, who served in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. West Indian colonies lost 1,256 men to combat or sickness. The war's legacy in the region was mixed. Local colonial authorities pointed to West Indians' war service as a symbol of imperial loyalty and erected memorials in Kingston and other cities, and many returning soldiers (who were often better educated than the Tommies alongside whom they served) pressed for better treatment (such as land allotments) as British subjects. Meanwhile, colonial nationalists, pan-Africanists such as the Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey, and trade unionists invoked a shared sense of racial consciousness rather than imperial service for their respective causes, pointing to the racism many West Indians faced during the war.<sup>24</sup>

Non-white soldiers experienced the war as individuals, of course, but common themes shaped the war's legacy in the colonial world. Some colonial servicemen perceived the limitations of their own societies through war service, especially those who served in Europe or alongside Europeans. This inspired some to call for modernization after the war, while others such as the 1,500 Africans who served in the Africa Native Medical Corps returned with specialist skills of their own which they could contribute to their communities.<sup>25</sup> Racism was a common feature of all these men's war service, perhaps the war's most lasting influence in India, sub-Saharan Africa and the West Indies. Imperial authority was weakened by black soldiers' witness of the war's carnage, social and personal relations with white women both undermined and exacerbated British imperial fears of miscegenation, and the wartime exploitation of colonial soldiers and labourers stirred colonial nationalist sentiments that would come to fruition a generation later after the next war.<sup>26</sup>

23 B. C. Hacker, *White Man's War, Coloured Man's Labour: Working for the British Army on the Western Front*, in: *Itinerario* 38:3, 2014, pp. 29-33; Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 122-40.

24 C.P. Lucas (ed.), *The Empire at War*, London: Oxford University Press, 1923, pp. 331-2, p. 335; R. Smith, *The Multicultural First World War: Memories of the West Indian contribution in Contemporary Britain*, in: *Journal of European Studies* 45:4, 2015, pp. 348-56; A. Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 123-8.

25 *History of the Great War: Medical Services General History*, Vol. IV, pp. 494-5.

26 J. Morrow, *The Imperial Framework*, in: *Winter*, p. 428.

## Interwar Imperial Cooperation and Conflict

The war had a corrosive effect on imperial legitimacy, governance, loyalty, and cohesion. A heightened sense of nationalism (especially in the Dominions) and a weakened sense of racial deference in the colonial world accelerated imperial fragmentation, while the postwar emergence of international governance and the intensification of public and private international networks provided alternate supra-national modes of identification for imperial subjects. After 1918 Britain had to balance imperial governance, shifting international conceptions of sovereignty, and imperial subjects' shifting relationships with the empire. One means of tracing the war's imperial legacies for questions of imperial loyalty and allegiance is through a selective analysis of the issues debated at imperial conferences from the Imperial War Cabinet deliberations in 1917-18 through to the Statute of Westminster and Round Table Conference on India in 1931.

The ideal of organized imperial unity first flourished in the 1870s and 1880s. The Imperial Federation League, advocates of a revived Colonial Committee of the Privy Council, and others published a steady stream of works. Britain and the settlement colonies convened the first Colonial Conference in 1887. It established an informal institutional forum within which Britain could discuss imperial affairs with representatives of the settlement colonies).<sup>27</sup> These late-Victorian initiatives, however, never gained significant political or popular support. In the barrister and novelist Edward Jenkins' description, the empire was a "barrel without the hoops," united in form but lacking the infrastructure, habits of loyalty, and common interests to bind it together.<sup>28</sup>

Imperial conferences were held beginning in 1909, when Britain and the Dominions discussed closer military and naval integration "for the defense of the Empire as a whole."<sup>29</sup> The nomenclature shift marked a more expansive view of the Empire's inter-connections and a greater commitment on participants' part to take measures to implement conference resolutions in domestic legislation or enforcement.<sup>30</sup> The 1911 Imperial Conference established the governance framework that imperial politicians used to negotiate questions of imperial affairs after the war. It focused on two key questions. The first was intra-imperial political and economic relations, especially the complex issues of jurisdiction over foreign affairs and naturalization. The latter issue, over which the settlement colonies made strong claims to autonomy, spoke directly to the idea of imperial citizen-

27 A.L. Burt, *Imperial Architects; Being an Account of Proposals in the Direction of a Closer Imperial Union, Made Previous to the Opening of the First Colonial Conference of 1887*, Oxford, B. H. Blackwell, 1913 [1888], p. 205, pp. 208-13; Imperial Federation League, *Report of the conference held July 29, 1884*, London, Cassell, 1884. Colonial conferences were also held in 1894, 1897, 1902, and 1907.

28 E. Jenkins, *The Colonies and Imperial Unity, or, The "Barrel without the Hoops,"* inaugural address delivered at the Conference on Colonial Questions, London, July 19, 20 and 21, 1871, London, Strahan, 1871, p. 16; D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007.

29 The Imperial Conference of 1909 in: M. Ollivier, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences from 1887-1937* Vol. II Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1954, p. 8.

30 J. Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences, 1887-1911*, London, Longmans, 1967, pp. 12-13, pp. 169-76.

ship. The second was imperial cooperation concerning functional issues such as postal reform, income tax reciprocity, shipping conventions, and the harmonization of laws. The 1911 Conference also established a Dominions Royal Commission to investigate the state of intra-imperial trade, resource extraction, and food supply. It reported in 1917, and was thus able to survey the closer intra-imperial cooperation that had developed during the first years of the war. The Commission recommended the creation of an Imperial Development Board, a full survey of the empire's natural resources in the interests of promoting their scientific development, closer imperial commercial ties (such as an improved imperial statistical system and the broader employment of the Dominions' consular systems for trade), more efficient imperial transport and communication measures to facilitate the shipping of goods, the creation of Dominion research institutes, and a redirection of the Imperial Institute's focus towards India and the Crown Colonies.<sup>31</sup> The Dominions and India participated in the 1917 and 1918 Imperial War Cabinets.<sup>32</sup> The Dominions' massive war contribution and sacrifice forced Britain to acknowledge their de facto national autonomy after the war, even if many Dominion subjects continued to identify as British and constitutional independence would not come for another decade. As the Prince of Wales told the Empire and Canadian Clubs in Toronto on 4 November, 1919, "the old idea of an Empire ... of a mother country surrounded by daughter states, is entirely obsolete now ... Our Empire has taken a new and far grander form. It exists as a single state of commonwealth, composed of sister nations of different origins and of different languages."<sup>33</sup>

Imperial politicians recognized that the war had altered the empire's internal dynamics, as well as its collective position in international affairs. During the war, liberal thinkers and politicians such as Lord Bryce and Lord Phillimore offered proposals for both a future League of Nations and a more confederal British Commonwealth of Nations. Amongst Dominion members of the Imperial War Cabinet, these initiatives were supported most strongly by South Africa's Jan Smuts, who had transitioned from Britain's opponent during the South African War to a convinced imperialist who led Empire troops against the German General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's *askari* in German East Africa in 1916.<sup>34</sup> Smuts played a leading role at Versailles, alongside Woodrow Wilson, in drafting the League's Covenant. In imperial affairs, he seconded Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden's desire that the Dominions be recognized as "autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth." He rejected a more formal imperial state, however, on the grounds that the British Empire was not a single community, but "a whole world

31 Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade, and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions, 1917, Cd. 8462, pp. 76-9, pp. 108-24, pp. 148-51, pp. 160-2.

32 W. D. McIntyre, *The Britannic Vision*, London, Palgrave, 2009, pp. 122-7.

33 Prince of Wales, *Impressions of My Canadian Tour*, in: *The Empire Club of Canada Addresses*, Toronto, Empire Club, 1919, p. 387.

34 Committee on the League of Nations [Phillimore Report], 20 March 1918, Willoughby Dickinson Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. Hist. c. 407; S. Mitchell, Jan Smuts, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and the Great War in German East Africa, in: J. Krause (ed.), *The Greater War*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 110-16.

by ourselves, consisting of many nations, of many States, and all sorts of communities, under one flag.”<sup>35</sup>

The war’s most significant political outcome was the Dominions’ and India’s claim to international status. Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and India were all independent signatories to the Versailles peace Treaty in 1919, and the Dominions sent delegates to the Washington Naval Conference in 1921-2 (although they were represented officially by Britain). League membership gave them standing in the League Assembly as independent entities, as well as the right to be elected to a non-permanent seat on the League Council. The Dominions also embraced internationalist undertakings after the war. Canada contributed money and supplies exceeding \$3 million to the Belgian Relief Fund, and Dominion troops participating in the joint Allied operation in support of the White Russian forces.<sup>36</sup>

While the Imperial War Cabinet as such was dissolved at war’s end, reverting to its prewar status as the Committee of Imperial Defense, its spirit of imperial collaboration continued in practice through the series of interwar Imperial Conferences that resumed in 1921.<sup>37</sup> The most important decision taken at the 1921 Imperial Conference was the rejection of the proposal advanced at the 1917 War Conference for an Imperial Constitution in favour of continuing the model of cooperation by conference established at the 1911 Imperial Conference. The conference thus established the doctrine of inter-se as imperial policy (the assertion that imperial affairs constituted internal rather than foreign affairs).<sup>38</sup> This decision reflected the Dominions’ collective assertion of their individual autonomy after the war. As the always blunt Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes told the conference, “I know of no power that the Prime Minister of Britain has, that General Smuts [and thus the other Dominion prime ministers] has not. Our presence here round this table...the basis of equality on which we meet, these things speak in trumpet tones that this Conference of free democratic nations is, as Mr. Lloyd George said yesterday, a living force.”<sup>39</sup> India was a conference participant for the first time, reflecting the greater (though still partial and circumscribed) autonomy it had gained through its war contributions.

The conference also discussed ways of continuing patterns of imperial cooperation that had deepened or appeared during the war. These included imperial air communication, where imperial representatives (save for Canada, which pursued a North American policy) pledged to fund air communication between Britain, India, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. They also solicited interests in imperial civil aviation operations, an is-

35 “A Speech delivered by General Smuts at the Banquet given in his honour by members of both Houses of Parliament, 15 May 1917,” in: J.C. Smuts, *War-time Speeches*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p. 31.

36 Lucas, *The Empire at War*, p. 78; I. C.D. Moffat, *The Allied Intervention in Russia, 1918–1920: The Diplomacy of Chaos*, London, Palgrave, 2015.

37 Palmer, *Consultation and Cooperation*, pp. 109-14.

38 L. Lloyd, *Loosening the Apron Strings: The Dominions and Britain in the Interwar Years*, in: *The Round Table* 92 (2003) 369, pp. 283-5.

39 The Imperial Conference of 1921, Appendix I: Opening Speeches, in: M. Ollivier, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences from 1887–1937*, Vol. II, Ottawa, Queen’s Printer, 1954, p. 423.

sue which took on greater importance in future years.<sup>40</sup> The Empire Press Union and the Newspaper Proprietors' Association called for cheaper inter-imperial cable rates and the return of the deferred press rates that had been curtailed during the war on the grounds of economy. They made their case in part by an appeal to "maintaining a good understanding between all peoples of the Empire."<sup>41</sup> Questions of nationality and imperial cooperation had been addressed at a Colonial Office Conference on State-Aided Empire Settlement earlier in 1921. Viscount Milner, who served in Lloyd George's War Cabinet and was now President of Britain's Oversea Settlement Committee, proclaimed the delegates' shared commitment that British migrants "should have opportunities for settlement under the flag, in countries British in spirit and British in their institutions." Britain sought help in managing the risk of unemployment at home, while the Dominions were eager to grow their populations with British settlers, particularly those with agricultural or industrial skills. Britain and the Dominions agreed to cooperate in disseminating information on migration, providing loans for overseas passage (or paying it outright in the case of state-assisted child migrants), and encouraging imperial migration over foreign immigration.

The Dominions operated organized emigration schemes in the 1920s aimed directly at returning servicemen, such as the 3,000 Family Scheme which facilitated British migration to rural Canada.<sup>42</sup> For its part, the British government operated a Free Passage Scheme from 1919-22 through which 82,196 ex-servicemen, ex-servicewomen, and their dependents emigrated to the Dominions. It was followed by the Empire Settlement Scheme launched in 1922. Demobilized soldiers were also offered land if they settled in Kenya. The British government made a brief effort from 1919-20 to mobilize Britishness amongst the global expatriate community through the Committee on British Communities Abroad, which anticipated some of the later public diplomacy work of the British Council.<sup>43</sup> Despite their official imprimatur, however, organized emigration schemes failed to attract the numbers hoped for by the Colonial Office. British and Dominion governments often differed over their preferred "type" of migrant, while women who had served during the war were reluctant to emigrate to become domestic labourers.<sup>44</sup>

The question of imperial nationality prefigured interwar imperial controversies. Indian imperial nationalists were confident that their countrymen's sizable wartime service

40 Appendix III: Report of the Imperial Air Communications Committee, Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, 1921, Cmd. 1474, pp. 45-7; External Affairs, Canada, "Memorandum on Air Communication," 22 December 1926, Library and Archives Canada, RG 25, Vol. 792, Reel T-1802-1803, File 440.

41 "Appendix IV: The Intercommunication and Dissemination of News within the British Empire," Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, 1921, Cmd. 1474, p. 56.

42 R.J. Mancuso, *Three Thousand Families: English Canada's Colonizing Vision and British Family Settlement, 1919-1939*, in: *Journal of Canadian Studies* 45 (2011) 3, pp. 11-15.

43 J. Fisher, 'A Call to Action': The Committee on British Communities Abroad, 1919-20, in: *Canadian Journal of History* 44 (2009) 2, pp. 265-6.

44 L. Noakes, *From War Service to Domestic Service: Ex-Servicewomen and the Free Passage Scheme, 1919-22*, in: *Twentieth Century British History* 22 (2011) 1, 2, pp. 19-21; K. Fedorowich, *Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995.

would result in expanded postwar rights and respect. These hopes were realized in a limited manner with the opening of the King's Commission to Indian officers in 1918, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (1919), and Indian representatives' junior participation at Versailles. The Maharajah of Bikaner signed the peace treaty and secured India's membership in the League of Nations despite the Covenant's declaration limiting membership "to fully self-governing countries including dominions and colonies."<sup>45</sup> Head of the Indian Council of Princes and a member of the Imperial War Cabinet, Bikaner represented the moderate Indian nationalist camp that desired greater autonomy, preferably Dominion status, within the Empire.

Indians' evolving imperial status was reflected in postwar debates about imperial citizenship, especially concerning Indians living in other parts of the Empire. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, one of India's representatives at the 1921 Imperial Conference, highlighted India's wartime supply of wheat, "money contributions out of our poverty," and manpower "to the tune of 1,274,000, which comes up to over one-half of the total overseas forces employed in the War." These contributions, Sastri argued, entitled overseas Indians to "a full enjoyment of citizenship within the British Empire." In response to Lloyd George's description of the Empire as "a Confederation of Races into which willing and free peoples had been admitted," Sastri argued that "freedom necessarily implies admission of all people to the rights of citizenship without reservation."<sup>46</sup> Sastri's argument placed Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary and Britain's representative at the conference, in a difficult position. He lauded the colonies' economic contributions to the war effort (Malayan tin, Honduran mahogany and West Indian cotton used for airplane construction, West African oils and fats), but was also forced to acquiesce to the Dominions' collective insistence on sovereignty over their respective immigration policies. Churchill thus equivocated, declaring that while "there should be no barrier of race, colour, or creed which should prevent any man by merit from reaching any station *if he is fitted for it* [emphasis added]," local principles need to be respected regarding a race-blind imperial citizenship lest "local feelings are excited" and "extraordinary social stresses arise when populations are intimately mingled."<sup>47</sup> Indians' imperial citizenship rights were recognized in principal through a resolution at the 1921 conference, but in practice British and Dominion autonomy over their respective immigration policies meant that overseas Indians continued to face discrimination and restrictions on mobility. This was true even beyond the Dominions, as for instance for Tamil plantation workers in Malaya. Their status was determined by a complex nexus of the newly created Agent of the Government of India, Malay authorities, and workers' *kangany*, the Tamil

45 H. Purcell, Maharajah of Bikaner, *India: The Makers of the Modern World*, London, Haus, 2010, pp. 88-102; The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 7, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/leagcov.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp).

46 Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, 1921, Cmd. 1474, p. 33.

47 Ibid., pp. 36, 39.

village recruiter who continued to arrange labour migration after the end of indentured labour occasioned by the war.<sup>48</sup>

Indian imperial citizenship rights came to a head at the 1923 Imperial Conference, occasioned by anti-Indian campaigns by British settlers in Kenya. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru spoke of India's integral role in the Empire, and implored the conference to honour the 1921 resolution by ensuring Indians equal status throughout the empire. He identified himself "as a subject of King George, and I fight for a place in his household, and I will not be content with a place in his stables." He appealed to the shared principle of imperial loyalty: "I claim, and let me know very plain, not as a matter of grace, but as a matter of right, as the King's subject, to have an honourable place in his household, a position of equality and honour with the Empire, wherever it may be."<sup>49</sup> Moderate Indian nationalists' appeals for equal treatment within the empire were ultimately frustrated. The Dominions (with South Africa most vocal) continued to define their own *de facto* national citizenships through restrictive immigration legislation that disadvantaged Indians (as well as other racial minorities), and Britain passed the Devonshire Declaration (1923) which declared Kenya an African colony (thereby sidelining the political claims of both Indians and white settlers). These defeats, coming on the heels of the Amritsar massacre in 1919, helped fuel the rise of interwar Indian nationalism. As in Ireland, the British increasingly relied on violence in India to maintain their position even as they negotiated the path to devolution. The racial anxieties provoked by these actions continued to shape Anglo-Indian negotiations over citizenship rights even after Partition in 1947.<sup>50</sup> The postwar focus on Indian imperial citizenship rights, however, also indirectly opened up Indian society. As Mrinalini Sinha and Sukanya Banerjee have shown, domestic social reform campaigns to improve the treatment of women in India drew in part on the individualism and universalism present in the broader discourse on imperial citizenship rights.<sup>51</sup>

The 1926 Imperial Conference was the seminal interwar imperial constitutional moment. It resulted in the Balfour Declaration that the Dominions were "autonomous communities within the British Empire" united by "a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations." Delegates then set about clarifying various constitutional and legal complications to make this declaration a political reality.<sup>52</sup> Resolutions were passed to ensure the Dominions had the power to give extra-territorial operation to their legislation, and to repeal the Colonial Laws Va-

48 S. Amrith, *Indians Overseas?: Governing Tamil Migration to Malaya, 1870–1941*, in: *Past & Present* 208 (2010) 1, pp. 246–53; S. Ansari, *Subjects or Citizens: India, Pakistan and the 1948 British Nationality Act*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41 (2013) 2, pp. 285–312.

49 Statement by Sir Tej Baduhur Sapru, Imperial Conference, 1923, Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings, Cmd. 1988, 1924, Appendix V, pp. 50, 51.

50 See S. Ilahi, *Imperial Violence and the Path to Independence: India, Ireland and the Crisis of Empire*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2016.

51 M. Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of Empire*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2006; S. Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2010.

52 A. L. Lowell and H. D. Hall, *The British Commonwealth of Nations*, Boston, World Peace Foundation, 1927, p. 656.

lidity Act (1865). The latter, which allowed Westminster to declare void any Dominion legislation that was repugnant to common law principles or British legislation, was rarely used in practice. Britain, for instance, did not apply its merchant shipping and navigation legislation to the Dominions after 1911, one of many tacit acknowledgements of Dominion sovereignty in the decades before the Statute of Westminster (1931) granted their constitutional sovereignty over their own foreign affairs. The Law's repeal, however, removed a potential legal impediment to the expansion of an imperial commonwealth based on the free association of its (white) members. It was also symbolically important, as was the principle agreed to at the 1926 conference that "any alteration in the law touching the succession to the Throne or the Royal Style and Titles" would require the assent of Dominion Parliaments as well as Westminster.<sup>53</sup> The latter declaration assumed broader constitutional significance after 1949 when the Crown was "divided" to exist separately in different parts of the Empire. This measure was an acknowledgement that the passage of independent Nationality Acts in the Dominions and Britain, the Republic of Ireland's departure from the Commonwealth in 1948, and the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 had finally made redundant the bond of "common allegiance" to the Crown which had served as the core of imperial citizenship.<sup>54</sup>

Imperial functional cooperation also continued after the First World War, a legacy of both Victorian imperial networks for issues such as telegraph and postal communication and the logistical cooperation developed amongst imperial partners during the war. It also paralleled the broader spirit of postwar functional internationalism, most evident at the League of Nations, which the League official and political theorist David Mitrany described as the welding together of "the common interests of all without interfering unduly with the particular ways of each."<sup>55</sup> Some imperial functional conferences dealt with revolutionary technological advances which the empire had confronted during the war, and which intensified in the globalizing years of the 1920s.<sup>56</sup> The Second Imperial Press Conference, held in Ottawa in 1920, drew press barons and editors from across the Empire. It built on the patterns of imperial information sharing developed during the war. Delegates crisscrossed Canada visiting local dignitaries, many of whom, the Irish journalist John Glendenning noted, were "most anxious to maintain the Anglo-Saxon type of [their] population."<sup>57</sup> The rising spirit of colonial nationalism, however, was also apparent. As the conference's chair, Viscount Burnham, observed, "no resolution would bind the whole unless it had been framed with due safeguards for autonomous arrangements."<sup>58</sup> Robert Donald, President of the Imperial Press Union, spoke of the press's

53 Report of the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation and Merchant Shipping Legislation, 1929, Cmd. 3479, 7-9, 19.

54 W. D. McIntyre, *The Britannic Vision*, pp. 249-57; P. Murphy, *Monarchy & the End of Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 40-8.

55 D. Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (1943) in: Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*, Chicago, Quadrangle, 1966, p. 104.

56 See R. Carr and B. W. Hart, *The Global 1920s*, London, Routledge, 2016.

57 J. Glendenning, "Oh! Canada": Personal Impressions as a Delegate to the Imperial Press Conference of 1920, Londonderry, *The Derry Standard*, 1921.

58 R. Donald, *The Imperial Press Conference in Canada*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1920, p. xv.

important role “in interpreting one part of the Empire to another,” and delegates passed resolutions calling for the return of cheaper imperial postal rates, the expansion of imperial wireless facilities, travel scholarships for young journalists, and broader cooperation in “the dissemination of Empire news.”<sup>59</sup> By the later 1920s imperial press cooperation was reinforced by the emergence of the BBC, as well as public and private broadcasters in the Dominions, which helped establish a more extensive imperial information and cultural nexus.<sup>60</sup>

Functional imperial conferences brought British, Dominion, and colonial officials into contact with experts and private sector actors in an array of fields as wide as that addressed by the League and international bodies in Geneva. These cooperative initiatives were closely aligned with the spirit of imperial economic cooperation that had developed during the war for logistical reasons. The British Empire Forestry Conferences, which began in 1920, included trade commissioners, entomologists, and pulp and paper industry representatives in addition to government officials from Britain, the Dominions, India, and colonial Africa. It sought to standardize forest terminology and conservation practices throughout the empire, and to make the empire as self-sufficient in forest products as possible. The Imperial Agricultural Research Conference in 1927 was even grander in scale. It brought Dominion and colonial actors into closer contact with the work done in Britain by the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Imperial Bureaux of Entomology and Mycology, tied imperial agricultural research with the work of the Empire Marketing Board (which funded the conference, and was itself an important vehicle for the expansion of both imperial and Dominion identities), and engendered imperial cooperation on veterinary science, animal nutrition and genetics, plant pathology, and fruit and dairy research. Sir William Furse of the Imperial Institute pointed to its utility as an imperial information clearing house, a governance function of increasing significance in an age of growing information complexity.<sup>61</sup>

Imperial experts also discussed cooperation in research and natural resource extraction concerning sectors such as wool, sugar cane, and horticulture in advance of the 1932 Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa that adopted a system of imperial preference.<sup>62</sup> Wartime imperial cooperation on scientific and industrial research continued after 1918, as did collaboration on issues such as hygiene and tropical diseases, patents, shipping, and medical research. Imperialists’ quest for standardization and harmonization in these various fields mirrored the concerns of interwar international governance more broadly,

59 Ibid., pp. 62, 284.

60 S. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 26-44; T. Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 22-42.

61 British Empire Forestry Conference, 1923, Summary Report and Resolutions, Ottawa, 1923, p. 7, pp. 10-11; Imperial Agricultural Research Conference, 1927, Report and Summary of Proceedings, London, 1928, 5, p. 73; F. Barnes, *Bringing Another Empire Alive? The Empire Marketing Board and the Construction of Dominion Identity, 1926-33*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42 (2014) 1, pp. 61-85.

62 Proceedings of the First Imperial Horticultural Conference, London, August 1930, London, 1930; Imperial Wool Conference, Report of Proceedings, London, 1931; Imperial Sugar Cane Research Conference, London: 1931, Report of Proceedings, London, 1932.

as evident in both the League of Nations' activities and the multitude of transnational civil society campaigns.

Finally, there were many instances of private imperial cooperation in these years. Imperial civil society networks intensified their cooperative activity after the war, often with an expressly internationalist outlook. Frances Younghusband, the explorer and army officer who led the British expedition to Tibet in 1903-4, told the Religions of the Empire conference held at the Imperial Institute in 1924, that the Empire provided "an example in practical life before the eyes of all the world of what can be done to achieve at least orderliness of living."<sup>63</sup> The Imperial War Relief Fund combined the efforts of British and Dominion humanitarian organizations to provide postwar relief in Europe, as did the more internationally-orientated Save the Children Fund which was created by the British activists Dorothy Buxton and Eglantyne Jebb in 1919. The Universities' Bureau of the British Empire (created in 1912) fostered interaction and a shared imperial worldview amongst the Empire's larger universities. Imperial loyalism was also furthered through Dominion university curricula, and the teaching and public advocacy of prominent academics such as the Canadian historian George Wrong.<sup>64</sup>

### Anti-Colonial and Imperial Identities

The First World War exacerbated both anti-colonial and imperial nationalisms. Opponents and critics of empire pursued ideas of self-determination after the war, inspired variously by the visions of Wilson and Lenin and also as a reaction against the intensification of the imperial state's coercive wartime presence. More moderate "imperial nationalists" appealed for a greater role for their countrymen within the empire on the grounds of their war service. While this group ultimately lost the longer-term political battle to their anti-imperial brethren, in the interwar years they were in fact more numerous and the incremental gains they made, uneven and circumscribed as they were, gave cause to believe that the British Empire could be reformed to the benefit of colonial subjects from within, rather than overthrown.

Britain's reliance on colonial troops, labourers, and resources to fight on multiple fronts was both a demonstration of power and, in making apparent its dependence on colonial subjects, of weakness. Egypt provides a case in point. Approximately 18,000 Egyptians were impressed into labour service in Europe and the Middle East in 1916, and in 1918 a further 135,000 served in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force as labourers and camel

63 W. L. Hare, ed., *Religions of the Empire: A Conference on Some Living Religions within the Empire*, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1925, 17.

64 E. Baughan, *The Imperial War Relief Fund and the All-British Appeal: Commonwealth, Conflict and Conservatism within the British Humanitarian Movement*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40 (2012) 5, pp. 847-52; Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 152-70; Paul Phillips, *Britain's Past in Canada*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 1989, p. 57.

transport drivers.<sup>65</sup> War service intensified Egyptian nationalism. Britain unilaterally terminated its Protectorate over Egypt in 1922, but preserved the status quo regarding its special interests in Egypt due to its strategic imperial importance.

This strategic importance had been demonstrated during the war, when Cairo served as Britain's regional command centre. It also explains Britain's repression of Egyptian nationalist resistance. Britain detained Saad Zaghlul, the leader of the Wafd Party, in Malta to dissuade him from travelling to Versailles to press for Egyptian independence, precipitating the Egyptian uprising of 1919. When Zaghlul eventually made it Paris, he was denied an audience at the conference. In 1921 Lord Allenby, then High Commissioner of Egypt, exiled him under martial law to the Seychelles due to his refusal to curtail his political activities. Zaghlul protested attempts to silence his political activity as "a tyrannical order," and asserted that any actions "used against our lawful endeavours will only help the country to realise her aspirations to complete independence."<sup>66</sup> His deportation order triggered violent demonstrations, and the Wafd Party's anti-British publications were also suppressed. Allenby lamented to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, in January 1922 that Britain should "abandon the hope of finding any body of Egyptians of no matter what class, party, or creed who will be willing to cooperate with us if the policy which I am recommending [the abandonment of the Protectorate] is rejected."<sup>67</sup>

In the event, Zaghlul was back in Egypt in 1923 and elected President in 1924. While Egyptian nationalists gained a foothold in their struggle for independence, the hopes of Arabs elsewhere in the region were disappointed. As T. E. Lawrence wrote in his memoir *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), "after the victory [the seizure of Damascus in 1918] there came a slow time of disillusion, and then a night in which the fighting men found that all their hopes had failed them."<sup>68</sup> Britain had used Arabs as de facto imperial citizens during the Arab Revolt, but its diplomatic double-dealing during and after the war left them with precarious postwar citizenship rights in the new and, in the case of Palestine, ultimately violent mandate territories.

These examples reveal the racial divisions, and underlying imperial identity of whiteness, which continued to determine bonds of imperial citizenship during and after the war. A strain of "racial utopianism" was present in the thought of interwar British imperialists such as Lionel Curtis, who were convinced that international peace was possible under a united Anglo-Saxon global leadership. Curtis envisioned a reinvigorated empire – what he termed the "project of a commonwealth" – based on an ideal of imperial citizenship which would unite the empire's subjects within the aegis of a shared imperial state. These aspirational ideas were more rhetorical than policy prescriptive, reliant on an assumed pan-imperial bond of Anglo-Saxonism which largely ignored the empire's vast non-white

65 A. Jackson, Sir Charles Lucas and The Empire at War, in: Round Table 103 (2014) 2, p. 170.

66 Saad Zaghlul, telegram, copied in Allenby – Curzon, 23 December, 1921, in: Correspondence respecting Affairs in Egypt, Cmd. 1592, 1922, p. 14.

67 Allenby – Curzon, 20 January, 1922, *ibid.*, p. 24.

68 T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* London, Penguin, 1975 [1926], p. 53.

population and which had been fractured by the war. The racial essence of these political ideas found its material parallel in interwar British campaigns for physical culture, seen by its proponents as a metric of imperial vitality.<sup>69</sup>

Ideas of race and civilisation as the ideological and ideational underpinnings of empire came under increased stress after the war, indicative of the erosion of late Victorian certainties and the growing logical inconsistency of the Empire's constitutional structure. The result was a process of uneven devolution, whereby the Dominions asserted their autonomy but remained (in the case of Éire, temporarily) within the Empire, India was granted piecemeal and incremental sovereignty through the constitutional device of diarchy (by which Indians were granted a measure of autonomy over domestic and local issues), and the "dual mandate" proclaimed by Lord Lugard for Nigeria signaled the Colonial Office's embrace of indirect rule as its new governing strategy across much of colonial Africa.

Each of these constitutional transitions expressed regional variations of an empire-wide expansion of a diluted form of imperial "whiteness," whereby attempts were made to expand the dominant pre-war imperial identity to include non-white elites and other "loyal" demographic groups. In India this entailed the cultivation of the "Montagu-Moderates," imperial nationalists whose loyalty Britain hoped could be maintained through the extension of limited citizenship rights. Yet the unsettled nature of imperial governance precipitated by the war also opened up space for alternate forms of Indian identity. Alongside an anti-imperial Indian nationalism led by Gandhi were alternate nationalisms that did not aspire to the emerging postcolonial goal of an independent nation state, such as the anti-indentured labour movement. Its advocates were largely village-level Indians who called attention to the impact of indentured labour on Indian society itself, and who conjured a "bottom-up" anticolonial mass politics in which the "nation" had no concrete form at all.<sup>70</sup>

Perceived bonds of imperial whiteness also shaped the scores of interwar social and cultural initiatives that brought together men and women from around the empire. The first British Empire Games were held in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1930, and imperial sports officials even debated creating a British Empire Olympic team. Imperial teacher exchanges offered educators, often young women, the opportunity to work and live in another part of the Empire, while pro-empire (and often conservative) social and associational organizations like the Imperial Orders of Daughters of the Empire, the League of Empire, and the Girl Guide Movement stressed themes of sacrifice and voluntarism which matched those of war service. They also offered opportunities for imperial subjects of all

69 L. Curtis, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, Vol. III, London, Macmillan, 1916; M. Lake and H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; D. Bell, *Before the Democratic Peace: Racial Utopianism, Empire and the Abolition of War*, in: *European Journal of International Relations* 20 (2014) 4, pp. 657-58; I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Building a British Superman: physical Culture in Interwar Britain*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (2006) 4, pp. 602-4.

70 M. Sinha, *Premonitions of the Past*, in: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74 (2015) 4, pp. 827-30.

ages to demonstrate and affirm their sense of imperial loyalty.<sup>71</sup> Many of these initiatives and organizations predated the war. Yet like official intra-imperial cooperation, these efforts were buoyed by the large-scale wartime intermingling of imperial subjects on the battlefield and behind the lines, as well as the broader “internationalist moment” of the 1920s. Inasmuch as the Empire was itself an “international” body, it provided a similar set of pathways, outlooks, and resources for imperial subjects to transcend their local experiences.

The interplay of imperial and international influences also shaped postwar race relations in Britain itself. Interwar non-white immigration was small compared to later decades, yet here too the war provoked upheaval. Non-white sailors and servicemen in port cities like Liverpool, where one in seven of the city’s black colonial residents had enlisted in a demonstration of pan-racial imperial loyalism, faced riots caused by economic anxiety amongst white labourers struggling with the postwar contraction of commodity trades and racist calls to repatriate black servicemen to their colonies of origin. Many West Indian, Indian, and African students in Britain, meanwhile, were attracted to ideas of pan-Africanism. This sense of “black internationalism” had origins in the prewar Universal Races Congress (1911) and American civil rights discourse, but its immediate spur was the postwar language of self-determination and the broad disillusionment with white imperial rule provoked by black soldiers’ service with whites during the war and the explicit rejection of racial equality at the Versailles negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

The American writer J. D. Whelpley opined in 1924 that “two paths now lie open before the present Government of the British Empire. One leads to the bolder policy of a return to first principles, freedom of trade and a possible return to prewar conditions after much travail. The other leads to a more quiet and peaceful haven through the adoption of a protective policy and a consequent relinquishment of all claims to vigorous and self-assertive leadership in international affairs.”<sup>73</sup> In reality, neither option was feasible.

71 Ma. Llewellyn, *Dominion Nationalism or Imperial Patriotism?: Citizenship, Race, and the Proposed British Empire Olympic Team*, in: *Journal of Sport History* 39 (2012) 1, pp. 45–62; K. Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002; J. Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity, 1901–1926*, New York, Garland, 1987, pp. 181–7; M. Hendley, *Organized Patriotism and the Crucible of War: Popular Imperialism in Britain, 1914–1932*, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012; Kristine Alexander, *The Girl Guide Movement and Imperial Internationalism during the 1920s and 1930s*, in: *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2 (2008) 1, p. 42.

72 J. Jenkinson, “All in the Same Uniform?” *The Participation of Black Colonial Residents in the British Armed Forces in the First World War*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40 (2012) 2, pp. 207–30; M. Matera, *Black Intellectuals in the Imperial Metropolis and the Debate over Race and Empire in Sanders of the River*, in: L. Beers and G. Thomas, *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars*, London, Institute of Historical Research, 2011, pp. 229–30, p. 234; M. Adas, *Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology*, in: *Journal of World History* 15 (2004) 1, pp. 56–61.

73 J. D. Whelpley, *Reconstruction*, New York, Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1925, pp. 200–1.

A return to “prewar conditions” was impossible, given the development of colonial nationalism and the disaggregating forces of postwar technological progress and emerging practices of international governance. For the same reasons, the ideas of imperial autarky and economic protectionism advocated by imperialists like Leopold Amery were also impractical. Imperial tariffs could be raised, but the multiple and increasingly global flows of people, ideas, and commodities in the interwar years could not be staunched so easily.

Instead, British imperial decision-makers pursued multiple strategies in response to the dislocation of imperial sovereignty caused by the war. The imperial state expanded in Africa and the Middle East, employing repressive violence and the new technology of air power to cement its authority, yet simultaneously diluted its sovereign power through its participation in the mandates system and its strategic embrace of indirect rule. While the Dominions developed the independence their soldiers had claimed on the battlefield in incremental constitutional steps after the war, such devolution paralleled a dense network of intra-imperial cooperation on all manner of economic, cultural, and political issues. It was telling of these shifts that the British Commonwealth Relations Conference, held in Sydney in 1938, was organized around the “national interests of the member nations” of the Commonwealth, with the bonds of empire discussed through the vague formulation “diversity in cooperation.”<sup>74</sup> India, always *sui generis*, nonetheless also followed this Janus-faced pattern in the interwar years. Both moderates and revolutionary nationalists sought the respect, equality, and equanimity they believed their due as fellow imperial citizens, and campaigned for different versions of greater autonomy, stretching from Dominion status within the empire to outright independence.

A common feature in all of these relationships was the Empire’s collective contribution to Britain’s war effort. This legacy, in combination with the increased postwar political importance of public opinion due to the end of secret diplomacy and the internationalization of many political issues, meant imperial subjects were better equipped to press their individual and collective claims after the war. For some, this meant a more equitable and autonomous place within the empire; others experimented with new ways to contest imperial rule.

Earlier attempts to give the idea of imperial citizenship a material form, such as efforts by the Colonial Office and the General Register Office in 1911 to conduct a comprehensive imperial census, had proved excessively complicated and often incomplete.<sup>75</sup> The Empire was too decentralized, and even in the crown colonies where Whitehall theoretically exercised control, the “on-the-ground” necessity of indirect rule meant its administrative abilities were circumscribed by reliance on local rulers who had their own interests.

74 H.V. Hodson (ed.), *The British Commonwealth and the Future: Proceedings of the Second Unofficial Conference on British Commonwealth Relations*, London, Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 135-66, p. 278.

75 A.J. Christopher, *The Quest for a Census of the British Empire c.1840–1940*, in: *Journal of Historical Geography* 34 (2008) 2, pp. 280-2.

The British government's will and ability to govern empire diminished after the war. Liberals and socialists at home called for imperial reform, the Dominions pressed for autonomy, and colonial nationalist sentiment increased in Egypt, India, and the British mandates of Iraq and Palestine, and began to stir in sub-Saharan Africa. While the centenary commemorations of the First World War in the United Kingdom have tended to focus on the English experience, the Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Dominion, Indian, and African contributions were collectively immense and deserve to be remembered as part of the broader "British" war effort.<sup>76</sup> The war's most important legacy for the British Empire was to bring the various and disparate imperial ideas and identities which had circulated before the war into a single frame. Britain was now forced to deal with questions of imperial citizenship within a unified field of vision, rather than the ad hoc and "absent-minded" fashion of pre-war imperial governance.

76 A. Mycock, *The First World War Centenary in the UK: 'A Truly National Commemoration?', Round Table* 103:2, 2014, pp. 153-63.