# 1 Rethinking the History of Internationalism

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For much of the twentieth century, the theme of internationalism – whether its expression as an idea or ideal or manifest in the making of international institutions – could rarely be heard as more than a whisper in narratives of the past. When, and if, historians addressed internationalism, they presumed its nineteenth-century origins in Marxist-inspired political movements. Or, if they noticed the liberal intellectual tradition of international political thought that we can track back to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment – whether we think of Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham or Germaine de Stael – they named it 'cosmopolitanism'.[1] When it came to the twentieth-century history of politics on an international scale, it was the primacy of states and their foreign policies that featured, much as the nineteenth-century European 'fathers' of the discipline had ordained. Historians of the twentieth century tended to neglect the liberal-inclined internationalisms that were characteristic of that political landscape and evident in advocacy of the primacy of international law and of the inevitability of intergovernmental institutions. There were a few exceptions: feminists had long acknowledged the international dimensions of the history of women structurally marginalised by nation states who agitated for political rights in international fora, and historians of national economies were more likely to look at international institutions in order to understand world or global forces of investment, trade and labour markets – although they rarely glanced back past the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 and its creation of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.[2] Even as social scientists acknowledged the political

[1] Mark Mazower's *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin, 2013) constitutes an important attempt to reincorporate that Enlightenment history with the modern era of internationalism. See also D. Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), and G. Sluga, 'Turning International: Foundations of Modern International Thought and New Paradigms for Intellectual History', *History of European Ideas* 41(2015), 103–115.

[2] For examples of the literature on women, see Sluga, Chapter 4 in this volume; on economics, see Clavin, Chapter 5.

role of mainstream international organisations and international ideas, these were neglected in histories of the twentieth century dominated by nation state–focused approaches to the themes of war and peace and the progress of democracy and capitalism or their demise.[3]

At the turn of the twenty-first century, historical interest in internationalism – as anything but the call to the workers of the world to unite – is gradually becoming the norm in a relatively short space of time. This shift is occurring in the context of a disciplinary vogue for 'transnationalism'; that is, capturing experiences that traversed and transcended the borders of nation states both within and beyond the European world. The work of the diplomatic historian Akira Iriye has been central to these developments, illuminating the traces of a distinctively twentieth-century 'cultural internationalism' that resonated through the realms of politics.[4] Following in the footsteps of Iriye and others – including historians of feminism and pacifism – a new cohort of historians, often sensitive to cultural analyses and with expertise in the history of imperialism and transnationalism as well as nationalism, are now accruing broad-ranging evidence of a relatively mainstream twentieth-century internationalism and the geographic, political and economic reach of its various ideological and institutional strands at critical moments in the twentieth century.[5]

The fourteen essays that comprise *Internationalisms: A Twentieth Century History* trace that history from the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Western scholars and commentators began to identify a 'new internationalism' – new insofar as it was deemed at the time to reflect observed 'sociological' transformations, from the expansion of

[3] See, G. Sluga, 'The Transnational history of international institutions', *Journal of Global History* 6 (2011), 219–222; and *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[4] See A. Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000); *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and 'The Internationalization of History', *The American Historical Review* 94, 1 (1989), 1–10. Over the past decade, this trend has been expanded through a number of institutional nodes, most prominently the Centre for History and Economics (Cambridge University) and the 'UN History Project' (Harvard), overseen by Emma Rothschild; Madeleine Herren's 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context' German-funded project and LONSEA at Heidelberg University and now Basel; 'Reluctant Internationalists', run by Jessica Reinisch at Birkbeck College, London; and Glenda Sluga's Laureate Research Program in International History, University of Sydney.

[5] See, among many others, the special collection of essays on transnational and international history: 'Transnational Communities in European History, 1920–1970', *Contemporary European History* 14, 4 (2005), 421–614; 'Conversations on Transnational History', *American Historical Review* (2006), 1441–1464; and Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (London, 2009).

'international' state and non-state organisations to the extension of transnational sociability and economic entanglement. This self-conscious late nineteenth-century awareness of a new internationalism is the launching point for our re-reading of the twentieth century, seen through the lens of international ideas and institutions such as the League of Nations or United Nations, the International Labour Organisation or the World Health Organisation, or even the earliest of international financial institutions, the Bank of International Settlements. The volume ends with the Cold War – when many of these organisations began to play their most significant political roles, recasting the political relations between men and women, as well as North and South and East and West. Within this chronological framing, the essays collected here parse the ideologically and intellectually interconnected pasts of nationalism, imperialism and internationalisms; the points at which these pasts converged; and the twentieth-century moments at which those ideologies can be more usefully disentangled. Exploiting the disciplinary strengths of historical methodologies, they reconnect international thought with modern politics, while remaining attentive to the historicity of texts and contexts and to the historical difference internationalisms made.

We have ordered the volume around three thematic sections. Part I, 'Inventing Twentieth-Century Internationalisms' introduces the traditional foundation narratives of the origins of internationalist thinking and institutions: religion, communism and feminism. Abigail Green and Patrizia Dogliani's respective analyses of religious and Marxist traditions of international thought and practice begin the important task of differentiating the conceptual and geopolitical strands of the *longue durée* of internationalism. Glenda Sluga argues that paying attention to the roles taken by women and the significance of feminism in the history of the League of Nations and the UN deepens our understanding of how governance strands of internationalist thought and practice came to the political fore on a global scale. It also exposes the intersecting political and personal ambitions of the socialist and liberal-democratic identified actors drawn to its prospects. Patricia Clavin pushes the borders of this new history even further, turning a gender lens onto bankers – a group at the heart of the most conservative readings of the economic and political implications of internationalism. Her study exposes the knotted narratives of masculinity norms and international financial institutions that shaped international bankers' responses to capitalism's boom-and-bust cycles.

The essays in Part II, 'States of Internationalism', concentrate on state stakeholders whose interests are often presumed to be at odds with internationalism. Liang Pan draws on primary sources to reconnect the

international and internationalist pasts of Japan and China with the history of the League and the UN. Madeleine Herren introduces us to the significance of international organisations for nationalist and fascist governments in 1930s Japan, Italy and Germany. Susan Pedersen's forensic analysis of the impact of the League on imperial politics restores both nationalism and imperialism to the history of interwar liberal internationalism at the League of Nations moment. By contrast, Talbot Imlay captures the difficult engagement of socialist parties with the ideological and institutional features of both Marxist and liberal internationalisms. Andrew Webster's essay tackles conventional state-dominated accounts of the League as a failed institution by reintegrating the place of nongovernmental organisations in the history of the League's disarmament ambitions.

The final set of essays in Part III, 'The Politics of Internationalism', draws the reader closer to the workings of international organisations and what we might call their 'internationalised' outcomes. Natasha Wheatley sets the scene by illuminating the often unexpected influence of international institutions on conceptualisations of political and legal sovereignty and subjectivity. Sunil Amrith assesses the impact of internationalism on imperialism through the story of the unequal geopolitics of the internationalisation of health. Roland Burke provides us with a breakthrough reading of a national era of international human rights, and, in the process, revises complacent chronologies of human rights history. Hanne Hagtvedt Vik pursues the history of human rights through the second half of the twentieth century in an investigation of the internationalist politics deployed by indigenous groups. Sandrine Kott develops the theme of intersecting liberal and socialist identifications of internationalism in a Cold War context, arguing against prevalent assumptions that the Cold War was a dead period for the political and cultural history of internationalisms.

Each of these case studies expands our historical knowledge of the variety of political imaginaries generating and generated by international ideas and institutions in the twentieth century. They also lay the empirical and analytical foundations for this volume's most assertive premise, that internationalisms were central to the major political questions and themes of the twentieth century: war and peace, imperialism and nationalism, states and state-building. They lead us to the conclusion, succinctly summed up by Sunil Amrith in his own essay,

> histories of international institutions, internationalist ambitions and international initiatives, all need to be embedded in the broader political debates to which they emerged as a response: debates about the shape of the world, about inequality, and about the (differential) value of human lives.

The process of embedding histories of internationalism in broader political debates is no simple task, not least because conventional histories of the twentieth century have relied so heavily on normative national conceptions of subjectivity, identity and political sovereignty. Decades after critical and constructivist scholars began to consistently warn against seeing the past only through the nation or the state, the conceptual prison-house of national norms remains a challenge for historians of internationalism.[6] In the interest of developing new methodologies for approaching the history of internationalism, we would argue that it is worth consolidating what we have already learnt from the study of nationalism. Here, we turn to a key text by Rogers Brubaker, a sociologist who, in the 1990s, compiled a list of myths and misconceptions that had taken root in nationalism studies.[7] With apologies to Brubaker, in what follows we use his headings and analyses in order to compile our own list of the myths and misconceptions distorting studies of internationalism and, on the basis of the evidence offered by the essays in this volume, to extrapolate on the importance of rethinking the history of internationalisms for writing the history of the twentieth century.

## Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism and Internationalism

Brubaker's critique of nationalism scholarship was framed by what he perceived to be an overarching and problematic conceptual divide between idealism and realism pervasive in analyses and theorisations of nationalism. There was, for example, a *utopian illusion* shared by analysts as much as nationalists that presumed the nation represented *the* political utopia. This utopian illusion had the effect of bolstering the *Realpolitik* relevance of national identifications and national-states. We can also see a utopian illusion at work in studies of internationalism, although in opposite ways: descriptions of internationalisms as utopian have tended to reinforce perceptions of internationalism and its history as irrelevant, usually because its utopian elements are linked with either communist or pacifist motivations – or, more simply, radicalism. One consequence of this version of an utopian illusion has been the presentation of

[6] For recent examples of the questioning of subjectivity in this history, see the project 'Reluctant Internationalists', at Birkbeck College, London, and the publications of the research group based at the University of Heidelberg: *Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context.*

[7] R. Brubaker, 'Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism', in John Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272–305.

internationalism as politically marginal to the historical projects of liberal-democracy and state sovereignty. By contrast, the essays in this volume direct the reader to the entangled histories of international thinking, and the liberal-identified state and non-state campaigns for international government. At specific historical moments these campaigns produced state-sponsored intergovernmental organisations and cast the term 'internationalism' into mainstream political prominence. On the one hand, the representations of this international past as utopian does reflect the historical salience of the idea of internationalism as a conduit for pacifism and humanitarianism. On the other hand, overemphasis of the utopian dimensions of internationalism has masked and marginalised the (complex) practical and ideological significance of international institutions and laws through the twentieth century: from the building and legitimation of national-states (*vedi* the history of anti-imperialism and decolonisation) to the reification of civilisational hierarchies of imperialism (*vedi* the conceptualisations of international law and the League's mandates system).

Calling out the ideological work of the realist–idealist divide in the reification of nationalism led Brubaker to critique the myth of the *realism of the group* – that is, the depiction of national groups as foundational human communities. Adding the history of internationalism to Brubaker's analysis lays bare a fundamental tension in depictions of both nationalism and internationalism that sets the realism of the national, cultural or racial group against the idealism of the international community. The essays here mine the rich veins of evidence that blur any ideal–real divide and reconnect evidence of international idealism (and utopianism) with realist attempts to improve on the shortcomings of nation states and nationally conceived economies. Sometimes these same efforts included the invention by national governments and populations of internationalism in their own images.[8]

Histories of internationalism are also as subject as nationalism studies to the *elite manipulation view* singled out by Brubaker. In the context of both analyses of nationalism and internationalism, the elite manipulation view has highlighted the actions and influence of legal or economic elites with vested ideological and often exclusive interests. It has lent credence to analyses of international governance of colonies introduced at the end of the First and Second World Wars as fundamentally exclusivist power grabs, and the introduction of a UN system in the second half of the

[8] For more on this argument, see Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, chap. 3; and Patricia Clavin, 'The Austrian Hunger Crisis and the Genesis of International Organization after the First World War', *International Affairs* 90, 2 (2014), 265–278.

twentieth century as the means of entrenching imperialism.[9] By contrast, the essays here caution against unhistoricised and abstract, unpopulated and disembodied characterisations of international institutions as too simply the handmaidens of cultural or economic imperialism. The point is not that there were no elites, nor that international institutions did not stand for narrow exclusionary realist (even *Realpolitik*) projects under the sign of economic liberalism or globalisation. The aim of this volume is a history of twentieth-century internationalisms that emphasises the contestations and competitions comprising the expanding international sphere of politics, including the opportunities that may have been opened up, even unintentionally, for non-elite actors.

When it comes to the myth Brubaker names *the return of the repressed*, the implications for nationalism studies and histories of internationalism usefully diverge. In the literature on nationalism, the return of the repressed invokes politically repressed communities that embody organic (quasi-spiritual, certainly psychological) national identities. In the context of our concerns, the return of the repressed casts a useful spotlight on the historical repression of internationalism, and the political marginality of groups or individuals who, in the past and in the absence of national representation, had more to gain from international fora – often these were women and colonial subjects. As Amrith argues, the historical marginalisation of these groups reflects the default historical attention paid to 'Western', state, male elite actors – a bias that has further reinforced the marginalisation of internationalism as simply utopian or idealist. In this case, an analytical tendency to focus on the repressed adds substantially to our geopolitical view onto the past, rendering the significance of internationalism and international organisations visible or relevant in the historiography of South and Southeast Asia, for example. It also refocuses historical attention on international and transnational archives and experiences, on the social and, in places, the prosopographical dimensions of political and economic history, including the investment of postcolonial states and non-state actors in international organisations.

In this volume, the chapters by Amrith, Sluga, Vik and Wheatley each acknowledge the very real inequalities of power and influence inherent in the international system and within international organisations – while at the same time recognising the historical importance of those organisations in the constitution of a political sphere that gave voice to a wide array of actors and a broader spectrum of liberal and democratic thought. The

[9] Mazower's *Governing the World* makes a compelling case for the complicity of international institutions in the post World War Two rise of neoliberalism.

essays reconstitute our sense of whose voices were important in the intersecting pasts of imperialism and nationalism, as well as internationalism. They reveal how throughout the twentieth century, the expansion of opportunities for political and social interaction was dependent on the establishment of intergovernmental as well as transnational institutions, on state and non-state organisations self-consciously assembled under the sign of the 'international'. These opportunities added up to an international political or, at least, quasi-public sphere in which, for example, Western feminists otherwise marginalised and segregated within national communities looked to intergovernmental institutions for political and personal opportunities and to represent their feminist concerns. As Sluga shows, in those international settings some women often could and did exercise the power of a cultural elite over other European or non-European women and men. Such examples also return us to the danger of valorising ideological utopianism, national or international.

Brubaker's listing of the myths and misconceptions of nationalism does not only offer a template for analysing and theorising internationalism, it also suggests a more fundamental interdependence between myths of nationalism and internationalism. Take as another example, the normative conception of political community, agency and subjectivity characteristic of what he terms the *seething cauldron view of nationalism*. This view was popular among political analysts in the 1990s, during the wars in Yugoslavia, as a way of explaining the outbreak of violence – nationalism had been boiling away under the lid of an internationalist communism; with the fall of the wall and delegitimation of communism, the lid came off; then, inevitably, the after-effects of the repression was the outbreak of war. From the perspective of the history of internationalism, the national essentialism at the heart of the seething cauldron view is also problematic because it presupposes that internationalism does not shape political outcomes because, unlike nationalism, it has no emotional valence for individuals; that is, there are no forms of international subjectivity that can compete with nationalism.

When we come to the misconception Brubaker names the *Manichean view* – which pits good nationalism against bad nationalism – we argue that the conceptual take-away for the history of internationalism is that categorisations of internationalism as either good or bad should be abandoned once and for all. The historical point is that there cannot be a simple analytical division between good internationalisms (whether pacifist or communist or liberal) and bad internationalisms (whether communist, imperialist or neoliberal). The importance of calling out this misconception in studies of both nationalism and internationalism

has been well-made in an essay on global history by Wang Gungwu, which discusses the 'enemies' of migration in the modern world.[10] Wang argues that, over the course of the twentieth century, this cast of 'enemies' came to include nationalist political movements that championed the rights of 'sons of the soil' over 'immigrants', and the modern nation states over which such movements opposed to migration established control in the second half of the twentieth century. In the early twenty-first century, it appeared that the 'enemies' of internationalism were equally easy to identify: depending on one's political standpoint, they included the unilateralism of the sole superpower, the nihilism of religious militancy, or the authoritarian defence of state sovereignty by powers such as Russia or China.

Our aim in compiling this volume has been to move historical debates beyond the Manichaeism of good–bad and idealist–realist oppositions, to focus on the diversity of voices, sources and approaches that can be brought to the problematics of power and political culture and to answering the historical question, 'what was the twentieth century?' *Internationalisms: A Twentieth Century History* calls attention to uneasy alliances and unlikely fellow travellers across the conceptual borders of nationalism and internationalism, and a broader spectrum of international thought and action. Some of the chapters, such as those by Dogliani, Imlay and Kott, explore the ideological transactions that took place across the boundaries of the socialist and liberal strands of internationalism through the twentieth century, from one 'international turn' to another. Others, such as those by Herren and Pan, show how, in the twentieth century, even the most avowed enemies of internationalism could pursued internationalist ambitions of their own.

Just as the study of nationalism enjoyed a historical and methodological makeover in the 1990s on a constructivist template, the history of internationalism is now ripe for recontextualisation and analysis. To go in a constructivist direction is not to return to a view of internationalism (or nationalism) as little more than smoke and mirrors. Instead, it is to encourage exploration of the ways in which the language of internationalism shifted throughout the twentieth century from the categories of the 'international', to the 'world', and the 'global', while the specific term 'international' retained currency across the century as the connective space that gave meaning to those other terms.[11]

[10] Wang Gungwu, 'Migration and Its Enemies', in Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens (eds.), *Conceptualizing Global History* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993).
[11] '"Patricia Clavin, Time, Manner, Place": Writing European History in Transnational and International Contexts', *European History Quarterly* 40 (4 October 2010), 624–640.

## New Histories of Internationalism

In putting together this volume, one of our initial intentions was to counter the reductive definitions of internationalism as only a communist idea, at times still prevalent in the historiography of the twentieth century. We also conceived the chapters as a means of restoring the historical relevance of internationalism to the modern history of nationalism, imperialism and globalisation, reconnecting their thematic significance as core twentieth-century ideologies and practices. We wanted to encourage the incorporation – and historical clarification – of conflicting and contested narratives of the international as a realm of politics and a defining element of liberal, as well as socialist, communist, and even fascist political cultures; to facilitate the disaggregation of internationalism and globalisation and the reincorporation of the national and imperial into the domain of the international through less anachronistic and more connected historical readings of twentieth-century politics and political cultures. Ultimately, the chapters in this volume expose the distortions and teleology of an exclusively national historical lens, in which international ambitions, institutions and practices are not taken into account. They familiarise us with individuals whose politics can be situated along the spectrum of liberal and illiberal internationalisms, with their varying emphasis on the place of the nation. Amrith, Burke, Clavin, Green, Sluga and Webster show that although once historians might have assumed the insignificance of internationalism (because it represented an utopian politics), that word and idea informed a busy spectrum of thought and practice across the twentieth century; in this same mode, Dogliani, Herren, Pan, Imlay, Pedersen, Vik and Wheatley add the embrace of internationalism's 'liberal' manifestations – by nationalists, imperialists and even fascists – to the more familiar, albeit still neglected intersecting stories of anti-imperialism, pacifism, feminism and socialism.

As originally planned, we would have included more essays on the history of 'subaltern' involvement in twentieth-century stories of internationalism, as well as the formative and mainstream influence of pacifist groups, and the conceptual significance of the social sciences.[12] With

[12] See, for example, C. Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); T. Harper and S. Amrith (eds.), *Sites of Asian Interaction: Ideas, Networks and Mobility* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); S. Tuck, *The Night Malcolm X Spoke at the Oxford Union: A Transatlantic Story of Antiracist Protest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); M. Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); M. Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,