

Great Britain, the Dominions and the Paris Peace Conference¹

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Introduction

The First World War was the greatest test for the cohesion of the British Empire after the first Dominions came into being.² The Empire entered the war as one single entity as the Dominions were still formally subordinated to their mother country. The Dominions had the right to decide about the extent of their involvement in the war effort; however, as a result of various pre-war agreements, their fleets and expeditionary forces found themselves under the command of the British Admiralty and the Supreme Military Command.³ Although the Dominions' military deployment was below the level of their mother country, their help was everything but negligible.⁴ Losses and victories of these overseas countries, symbolized by the heroism of Australians and New Zealanders during the Gallipoli Operation, of Canadians at Passchendaele and Vimy Ridge, and of South Africans during the conquest of German Southwest and East Africa, deeply entered the collective memory of the Dominions. In addition, they accelerated local

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² See H. E. EGERTON, *The War and the British Dominions*, Oxford [1914].

³ N. MANSERGH, *The Commonwealth Experience*, London 1969, p. 166.

⁴ C. E. CARRINGTON, *The Empire at War, 1914–1918*, in: *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: The Empire-Commonwealth 1870–1919, Vol. 3*, Cambridge 1967, pp. 641–642.

nationalism, weakened imperial patriotism and deepened their desire for independent policies.⁵

The British Government assured the Dominions that they would have the possibility to discuss the form of the postwar peace settlement already in 1915.⁶ Yet, the promise was not always kept. In mid-November 1918, for example, the Australian Prime Minister, William “Billy” Morris Hughes, complained that President Woodrow Wilson’s so-called Fourteen Points were adopted by the British Cabinet without consulting the Dominions about the issue.⁷ The Dominions felt particularly threatened by the U.S. “open door policy” and “free seas” principle and hoped these would not be enforced. This was especially the case when it came to former German colonies as they were somewhat in opposition to British imperial policy which, on its part, was introducing the imperial preference system bit by bit.⁸

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Shortly after declaring truce, representatives of the British Government and of the Dominions discussed the question of the Dominions’ status at the Peace Conference. From the very beginning, Leopold Amery tried to push through the idea that the Dominions together with India should have direct representation. Furthermore, he was convinced that the overseas autonomous polities should be viewed as equal partners of their mother country and, consequently, should be free to express their opinion on all issues of the peace arrangements, not only

⁵ A. MAY, *The Round Table and Imperial Federation, 1910–17*, in: *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 410, 2010, p. 553.

⁶ United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series*, Vol. 71, 14th April, 1915, cc. 16–17.

⁷ The British Library (hereafter BL), Balfour Papers (hereafter BP), Add MS 49775, Vol. XCIII, L. S. Amery, Representation of the Dominion at the Peace Negotiations, 14th November, 1918, ff. [191–192].

⁸ The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Cabinet Papers (hereafter CAB) 23/42/19, Imperial War Cabinet, [No.] 47: Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, 30th December, 1918, f. 2.

on those that directly affected them.⁹ The British Prime Minister David Lloyd George sympathized with the aspirations of the Dominions' representatives. Nevertheless, he originally assumed that five seats would be sufficient for the British Empire Delegation. However, the Dominions, with regard to their war effort, openly demanded separate representation.¹⁰ As a consequence, dual representation for the Dominions and India came into being: firstly, as members of the British Empire Delegation and, secondly, as members of the warring parties that were able, because of their special interests, to send two delegates forth to the meeting.¹¹

Nonetheless, the Dominions were subject to certain limitations. They could not vote separately for instance as the British Empire was to act, at least on the outside, as a single "political entity" with a unified view.¹² The dual representation of the Dominions rose the question what the actual position of the Dominions at the Paris Peace Conference was. Compared to their European allies, representatives of the Dominions had a significant advantage.

⁹ University of Cambridge: Churchill College: Churchill Archives Centre (hereafter CAC), Amery Papers (further only AP)AMEL 2/1/1, Representation of the Dominions at the Peace Negotiations, 14th November, 1918, ff. [s. p.].

¹⁰ Cf. R. L. BORDEN, *Canada and the Peace: A Speech on the Treaty of Peace, Delivered in the Canadian House of Commons on Tuesday, September 2, 1919*, [Ottawa 1919], p. 13; L. F. FITZHARDINGE, *Hughes, Borden and Dominion Representation at the Paris Peace Conference*, in: *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1968, pp. 163–169; D. LLOYD GEORGE, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. 1, London 1938, p. 205; F. S. MARSTON, *The Peace Conference of 1919: Organisation and Procedure*, London 1944, pp. 37, 51; C. P. STACEY, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies: 1867–1921*, Vol. 1, Toronto 1984, pp. 270–274; TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 1, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Villa Majestic, Paris, 13th January, 1919, f. [1].

¹¹ Canada, Australia and South Africa were able to send forth two delegates, India one as a representative of British India and one as a representative of the native states, New Zealand had only one delegate and Newfoundland had no delegate at all. L. F. FITZHARDINGE, *W. M. Hughes and the Treaty of Versailles 1919*, in: *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. 5, Is. 2, 1967, p. 133; TNA, CAB 29/7, W. C. P. [No.] 5, British Empire Delegation: Note by the Secretary of the Imperial War Cabinet, 13th January, 1919, f. [25].

¹² Cf. A. B. KEITH, *War Government of the British Dominions*, Oxford 1921, p. 151; TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 1, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Villa Majestic, Paris, 13th January, 1919, f. 3.

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As members of the British Empire Delegation they had access to confidential materials and conclusions of the Council of Ten and of the Council of Five. Therefore, they were able to express their opinion on all key issues that were being debated at the conference.¹³

Specific interests of the Dominions became obvious when it came to the question of dividing former German colonies in Africa and in the Pacific and of the associated creation of the Mandate System under the League of Nations. Indeed, Australia sought to annex German Pacific islands whereas South Africans were interested in German Southwest Africa.¹⁴ Already during the war, Australia continuously highlighted the need to prevent the spread of Japanese influence southwards.¹⁵ For this reason, negotiations about a mutual British-Japanese understanding concerning the future organization of German territories in the Far East and the Pacific took place in February 1917.¹⁶ Several Australian politicians initially suggested that the best thing for the future of German New Guinea and the Solomon Islands would be if the United States took over the administration of the territories in concern.¹⁷ Eventually, however, Australia's and New Zealand's statesmen reached the conclusion

¹³ Cf. J. W. DAFOE, *Canada and the Peace Conference of 1919*, in: *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1943, pp. 237–240; A. I. INGLIS, *Loring C. Christie and the Imperial Idea: 1919–1926*, in: *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1972, p. 21; MANSERGH, p. 179.

¹⁴ Cf. W. R. LOUIS, *Australia and the German Colonies in the Pacific, 1914–1919*, in: *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 1966, pp. 407–421; TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 4, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Villa Majestic, Paris, 27th January, 1919, f. [1]; *ibidem*, CAB 29/1, P. 34, Peace Conference: Memorandum Respecting German Colonies, January 1919, ff. [1]–20.

¹⁵ TNA, CAB 23/43/2, Procès-verbal of the Second Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, 22th March, 1917, f. 3.

¹⁶ Understanding between Great Britain and Japan regarding ultimate Disposal of German Rights, February [16], 1921, in: J. V. A. MacMURRAY, (Ed.), *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894–1919: Republican Period (1912–1919)*, Vol. 2, New York 1921, pp. 1167–1168.

¹⁷ R. C. SNELLING, *Peacemaking 1919: Australia, New Zealand and the British Empire Delegation at Versailles*, in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1975, pp. 17–18.

that former German territories should be in the hands of Great Britain or some other friendly country.¹⁸

On 29 January 1919, the British Empire Delegation discussed the draft of the resolution on former German and Ottoman territories. Because the American President Woodrow Wilson rejected the principle of annexation, a compromise solution was adopted. The territories in questions were divided into three different categories (labelled as A, B and C) and were to become trust territories of the League of Nations. During the discussions, Lloyd George pointed out that he did not want the Japanese to participate in the administration of the trust territories. The proposed restrictions on the exercise of the mandate did not satisfy the Australian Prime Minister, Hughes, who, because of the administration of British New Guinea, was accustomed to a different degree of authority in the field of trade and immigrant policy. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that he likewise treated the Japanese with a considerable amount of antipathy.¹⁹ A British representative, Sir Maurice Hankey, reassured Hughes that the purpose of establishing the Class C Mandate was basically forming a “*lease for 999 years*”.²⁰ Lloyd George, on the other hand, tried to convince Hughes that “*there was virtually no difference between the Class C Mandate and open annexation*”.²¹

On 6 February 1919 Hughes presented an important memorandum specifying the position of Australia on the issue of islands in the South Pacific. Hughes once again openly expressed his concerns about the Japanese population preponderance. He even called the matter as “evil” and overtly raised racial issues and the need to continue with the practice of “white

¹⁸ Cf. *Administration of Samoa*, in: The New Zealand Herald, Vol. 55, Is. 17073, 31st January, 1919; *Our Share*, in: Auckland Star, Vol. 50, Is. 25, 29th January, 1919, p. 4; SNELLING, p. 18.

¹⁹ FITZHARDINGE, *W. M. Hughes*, p. 136; M. P. A. HANKEY, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference*, London 1963, pp. 58–59; TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 6, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Rue Nitot, Paris, 29th January, 1919, f. [1].

²⁰ C. BRIDGE, *William Hughes: Australia*, London 2011, p. 80.

²¹ D. D. JONES, *The Foreign Policy of William Morris Hughes of Australia*, in: Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1943, p. 158.

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politics” as in the case of British New Guinea.²² A few days later he sent another memorandum, in which he expressed doubts whether the League of Nations would have the power to deter the Japanese from their expansionist plans. He also criticized the proposed principles, especially the limits of mandate administration.²³ The Australian Minister for the Navy, Sir Joseph Cook, made use of the negotiations and during a meeting that took place on 20 February 1919 he presented his request stating it should be forbidden to build armed forces in the mandate areas. He feared that Japan could take advantage of the situation and use the territories in concern as enemy bases.²⁴ Australian demands provoked fear among some of the British delegates that such uncompromising attitudes could cause the failure of the peace talks.²⁵ Last but not least, New Zealand’s Prime Minister Vincent Massey was not happy about the unwillingness of the Australians to support efforts to gain control over Samoa and the country’s unwillingness to act in the issue of administrating Nauru²⁶ where both of the Pacific Dominions had primarily economic interests.²⁷ The British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Milner, held the opinion that it would be beneficial for Great Britain, for practical reasons, if Australia and New Zealand participated in the mandate system in the Pacific.

²² TNA, CAB 29/7, W. C. P. [No.] 71, W. M. Hughes, Australia and the Pacific Islands, 6th February, 1919, ff. 1–5, [584–588]. To importance “White Policy” cf. Australia, *Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives*, No. 37, 10th September, 1919, pp. 12174–12176.

²³ TNA, CAB 29/8, W. C. P. [No.] 116, W. M. Hughes, Memorandum Regarding the Pacific Islands, 8th February, 1919, ff. 1–4.

²⁴ TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 9, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Villa Majestic, Paris, 20th February, 1919, f. 2.

²⁵ FITZHARDINGE, *W. M. Hughes*, p. 137.

²⁶ To the problems Nauru see TNA, CAB 29/9, W. C. P. [No.] 240, W. M. Hughes to Walter H. Long, 3rd January, 1919, f. [313]; *ibidem*, CAB 29/7, W. C. P. [No.] 97, W. F. Massey, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, 14th February, 1919, ff. 1–2, [761]; *ibidem*, CAB 29/9, W. C. P. [No.] 240, W. M. Hughes, The Control of Nauru under the Mandatory System, 13th March, 1919, f. [312]; *ibidem*, CAB 29/10, W. C. P. [No.] 345, W. M. Hughes, The Control of Nauru, 21st March, 1919, f. [173].

²⁷ SNELLING, pp. 16, 20, 23.

On 3 April 1919 the British Empire Delegates discussed Milner's memorandum of March 8,²⁸ which contained notes and remarks on Article XIX of the Covenant of the League of Nations dealing with mandate administration. Australia, South Africa and New Zealand were mostly concerned about those passages that focused on the Class C Mandate as they concentrated on small areas with sparse populations that were isolated from civilization. It was believed that this would defend best the interests of the local inhabitants. Milner did not think that their administration would be too demanding and, therefore, he agreed with the fact that these territories would have a small degree of autonomy. In addition, Milner also approved Japan's participation in the administration of former German territories north of the Equator and he likewise discussed the problematic status of the Island of Nauru.²⁹ However, he expressed certain doubts about the effectiveness of the sixth paragraph of Article XIX of the Covenant that enabled the integration of the mandate into the area belonging to the mandate power. In this context, he additionally highlighted possible complications that could arise if the inhabitants of the administered area decided to become independent.³⁰ Furthermore, Australia, in general, intended to continue with the implementation of "white politics" in New Guinea whereas the Japanese repeatedly made demands that the "open door" principle should be respected in the case of the territories in concern.³¹

Indeed, the new status of the Dominions at the Paris Peace Conference and their special interests were simultaneously expressed during negotiations about a new international organization – the League of Nations. Nevertheless,

²⁸ TNA, CAB 29/9, W. C. P. [No.] 211, Lord Milner, Mandates: Under Clause XIX of the Draft "Covenant" of the League of Nations, 8th March, 1919, ff. [1]–13, [99–111].

²⁹ TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 16, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Hotel Majestic, Paris, 3rd April, 1919, ff. 7–9.

³⁰ Srv. TNA, CAB 29/9, W. C. P. [No.] 211, Lord Milner, Mandates: Under Clause XIX of the Draft "Covenant" of the League of Nations, 8th March, 1919, f. 4, [102]; *ibidem*, W. C. P. [No.] 211A, W. M. Hughes, Mandates: New Clause 6 for Typical Mandate Class "C", 14th March, 1919, f. [112].

³¹ See BL, BP, Add MS 49734, Vol. LII, C. J. B. Hurst, 'B' and 'C' Mandates: Memorandum on the Present Position, 20th July, 1920, ff. [203–205].

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the first American proposal of the Covenant did not count with providing membership for the Dominions, Australians and New Zealanders, on the other hand, did not show much interest in the issue either.³² Yet, the Dominions were devoted to talk over the matter at the Imperial War Cabinet³³ even though the Canadian memorandum dealing with the possible form of the organization was not discussed.³⁴ However, no “Dominion text,” in fact, had a greater impact than the so-called Smuts’ pamphlet about the League of Nations of December 1918.

South African General Jan Christiaan Smuts spoke several times in favour of establishing an international organization that would replace the Great Powers in the postwar era in the matter of monitoring compliance with international law and universal peace between nations.³⁵ He even did so already in 1917. Indeed, the organization was to take up the position of the world powers that had failed to ensure peace when they allowed the outbreak of the war. Moreover, Winston Churchill pointed out that the League could only function properly if there was a certain agreement and understanding between Britain, France and the United States.³⁶ Milner also stressed the need to coordinate actions of the Allies, especially in the case of the Americans.³⁷

On 20 March 1918 the Committee of Sir Walter Phillimore, with whom Lord Robert Cecil, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

³² F. H. SOWARD, *Sir Robert Borden and Canada’s External Policy, 1911–1920*, in: Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1941, p. 78.

³³ K. C. WHEARE, *The Empire and the Peace Treaties 1918–1921*, in: *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: The Empire-Commonwealth 1870–1919*, Vol. 3, Cambridge 1967, p. 652.

³⁴ G. P. GLAZEBROOK de T., *Canada at the Paris Peace Conference*, Toronto 1942, pp. 60–61.

³⁵ Cf. G. CURRY, *Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts, and the Versailles Settlement*, in: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 66, No. 4, 1961, p. 969; A. LENTIN, *General Smuts: South Africa*, London 2010, p. 52; TNA, CAB 23/40/12, Imperial War Cabinet, [No.] 46: Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet 26th April, 1917, f. 9.

³⁶ TNA, CAB 23/42/18, Imperial War Cabinet, [No.] 46: Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, 24th December, 1918, f. 4–7.

³⁷ TNA, CAB 29/1, P. 28, Report of Committee on Terms of Peace, 24th April, 1917, f. 3.

and a great supporter of establishing the League, cooperated, presented an internal report to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Arthur James Balfour, on what the Covenant should look like.³⁸ A following, final report of early July was extended and included a detailed analysis of various old and new peace projects.³⁹ At the same time, an official group in France led by Leon Bourgeois⁴⁰ published its own idea of the League of Nations on 8 June 1918.⁴¹ However, Lord Phillimore was highly critical of it. A few months later, on 5 October, Robert Cecil also drafted a memorandum about the role and position of the League of Nations for the War Cabinet. He did so at the request of the Prime Minister himself. Lord Cecil analyzed the whole matter from a somewhat visionary perspective and, therefore, was not able to present a realistic proposal that would include an exact structure of the organization.⁴² Lloyd George was not satisfied with either of the proposals, and for this reason he asked Smuts to prepare his own point of view on the issue under scrutiny.⁴³

On 16 December 1918, consequently, Smuts published his own “practical proposal” about the League of Nations with the support of the British Government. It was to represent the heir of the values of devastated Europe.⁴⁴ Matters concerning former territories of the Ottoman Empire, Russia and Austria-Hungary, were to be based on the principle of “*no annexations and self-determination of nations*”. As for the question of Alsace and Lorraine,

³⁸ See R. CECIL, *A Great Experiment: An Autobiography*, London 1941, p. 60; RAFFO, P., *The League of Nations Philosophy of Lord Robert Cecil*, in: Australian Journal of Politics & History, Vol. 20, Is. 2, 1974, pp. 186–196; TNA, CAB 29/1, P. 26, The Committee on the League of Nations: Interim Report, 20th March, 1918, ff. [1]–7.

³⁹ TNA, CAB 29/1, P. 26, The Committee on the League of Nations: Final Report, 3rd July, 1918, ff. [1]–24.

⁴⁰ See L. V. A. BOURGEOIS, *Pour la société des nations*, Paris 1910.

⁴¹ TNA, CAB 29/1, P. 28, Report of the Committee Appointed by the French Government, 9th August, 1918, ff. [1]–7.

⁴² TNA, CAB 29/1, P. 29, War Cabinet: League of Nations: Memorandum by Lord R. Cecil, 5th October, 1918, ff. [253–273].

⁴³ CURRY, p. 969.

⁴⁴ WHEARE, p. 653.

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he recognized the legitimate claim of France, and in the case of former German African and Pacific territories, “*occupied by barbarians unable to rule themselves*,” he admitted that the idea of self-determination could be somewhat impractical.⁴⁵ Smuts, therefore, ranked among firm supporters of mandate administration from the outset.⁴⁶

Smuts’s main benefit, however, lied in the way how he regarded future relations between nations. Taking into consideration the experience and the development of the British Empire, Smuts held the view that relations between nations should be based on the principles of political freedom and equality, broad autonomy, political decentralization, allowing the existence of small nations, and “*finally an institution like the League of Nations, which [...] will guarantee the weak against the strong*”.⁴⁷ Smuts’ vision of international relations sparked interest in President Wilson who was especially interested in the designed structure of the organization and who modified some of the proposed points.⁴⁸ Smuts believed that it would be beneficial for the British Empire if its representatives and the Americans held close opinions about the issue. In fact, this was exactly what happened.⁴⁹ The Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Laird Borden, was of a similar view as Smuts whereas Hughes looked at Wilson’s intentions with deep suspicion.⁵⁰ In addition, the Australian Prime Minister, for instance, was convinced that the general’s concept of the League of Nations would further deepen the bond between Britain and foreign countries than between the Dominions and their mother country.⁵¹

⁴⁵ J. C. SMUTS, *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion*, London 1918, pp. 12–15.

⁴⁶ D. H. MILLER, *The Drafting of Covenant*, Vol. 1, New York 1928, p. 38.

⁴⁷ Cf. SMUTS, pp. 27–28; WHEARE, p. 653.

⁴⁸ R. S. BAKER, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, Vol. 1, New York 1922, pp. 225–228.

⁴⁹ To the British-American cooperation see P. KERR, *The British Empire, the League of Nations, and the United States*, in: *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 10, Is. 38, 1920, pp. 221–253.

⁵⁰ M. BELOFF, *Imperial Sunset: Britain’s Liberal Empire 1897–1921*, Vol. 1, London 1969, p. 281.

⁵¹ TNA, CAB 23/42/18, Imperial War Cabinet, [No.] 46: Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, 24th December, 1918, f. 12.

The British and American delegations worked together to prepare the final version of the Covenant of the League of Nations from early January 1919.⁵² On 3 February 1919 the British legal adviser Sir Cecil Hurst and his U.S. counterpart David Hunter Miller prepared a compromise solution known as the Hurst-Miller draft.⁵³ It largely relied on Smuts' previous proposals and it was used as a default text for further discussions that took place within the Commission of the League of Nations. In addition, the French proposal of Leon Bourgeois was not even discussed and the French regarded this with great displeasure.⁵⁴

The Hurst-Miller draft had 22 clauses and it meant indirect disadvantages for British self-governing polities. According to the second article, members of the League of Nations were to be represented by envoys or ministers and British Dominions were not to have separate diplomatic representation.⁵⁵ However, Miller later changed his mind and pushed through such modifications of the text so that even Dominions without diplomatic representation could be members of the League of Nations.⁵⁶ Great Britain did not want the League of Nations to become some sort of a "super-state" and made efforts so that the Dominions would have comparable rights to other countries.⁵⁷ For this reason, Britain accepted the principle of separate Dominion representation in

⁵² CURRY, pp. 975–981; G. W. EGERTON, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919*, London 1979, pp. 115–116.

⁵³ *Draft Covenant*, in: BAKER, Vol. 3, Doc. No. 16, pp. 144–151.

⁵⁴ CURRY, pp. 981–982.

⁵⁵ BAKER, Vol. 3, Doc. No. 16, p. 145.

⁵⁶ D. H. MILLER, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris with Documents, Vol. 4*, New York 1924, Doc. No. 236, p. 171.

⁵⁷ Cf. R. G. CECIL, *The Moral Basis of the League of Nations: The Essex Hall Lecture, 1923*, London 1923, p. 21; R. HENIG, *New Diplomacy and Old: A Reassessment of British Conceptions of a League of Nations, 1918–20*, in: M. L. DOCKRILL – J. FISHER (Eds.), *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?*, London 2001, p. 169. To critique of the text of the Covenant of the League of Nations TNA, CAB 29/14, W. C. P. [No.] 729, R. JEBB, *The British Empire and the League of Nations*, April 1919, ff. [149–167].

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the bodies of the League.⁵⁸ Subsequently, on 14 February 1919, the text of the Covenant of the League of Nations was adopted.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Miller remained doubtful whether the Dominions were actual states and, for this reason, he did not agree with their participation as potential non-permanent members of the Council of the League of Nations. In fact, he was convinced that Dominions and other dependent territories should not possess the privilege of representation.⁶⁰ The Dominions did not reflect the situation adequately until 21 April 1919⁶¹ when the Canadian delegate Arthur Sifton pointed out that under article IV Dominions could not be elected to the Council of the League Nations. He considered this to be everything but a happy formulation. Hughes, surprisingly, had no objections against it. Furthermore, he argued that if the British Empire was one state then it had to have only one representative. Nonetheless, Borden demanded that the Dominions should have the right to become members of the Council. Lord Robert Cecil subsequently assured the Dominions' statesmen that the intention of the British certainly was not to prevent the Dominions from participating in the running of the League of Nations. For this reason, they were forced to find a compromise solution. The word "state" in the text was to be replaced with the expression "members of the League", which included the Dominions under scrutiny as well.⁶² After discussing the matter with the American delegation, the change in concern was adopted and, as a result, British Dominions had the possibility to be elected as members of the Council.⁶³ In addition, Canadians also sought a certain modification or deletion of Article X of the Covenant, which dealt

⁵⁸ BL, Cecil Papers, Add MS 51102, Vol. XXXII, R. Cecil, Memorandum, 12th June, 1923, ff. [91–93].

⁵⁹ *Covenant*, in: BAKER, Vol. 3, Doc. No. 18, pp. 163–173.

⁶⁰ MILLER, *The Drafting*, p. 480.

⁶¹ Cf. TNA, CAB 29/10, W. C. P. [No.] 346, The League of Nations: W. M. Hughes, Notes on the Draft Covenant, 21st March, 1919, ff. [179–187]; *ibidem*, CAB 29/9, R. L. Borden, The Covenant of the League of Nations, 13th March, 1919, W. C. P. [No.] 245, ff. 1–17 [345–361].

⁶² TNA, CAB 29/28, B. E. D. [No.] 26, Peace Conference: British Empire Delegation: Minutes of a Meeting of Members of the British Empire Delegation, Hotel Majestic, Paris, 21st April, 1919, ff. 3–4.

⁶³ MILLER, *The Drafting*, pp. 477–483, 487–493.

with intrusion on territorial sovereignty of the League's member states. They considered it to be too binding.⁶⁴ In general, all British Dominions, with the exception of Newfoundland, became members of the new international organization.⁶⁵ Moreover, they likewise gained a new international position, a position that they had not had in the past.

Japanese delegates Count Makino Nobuaki and Viscount Chinda Sutemi negotiated with the American member of the Commission for the Preparation of the Covenant of the League of Nations Edward Mandel House, generally known as Colonel House, from 4 February 1919. The negotiations focused on how to expand the Pact with a passage dealing with racial equality.⁶⁶ In the end, they decided to include it into the article concerning religion.⁶⁷ On 13 February 1919 the negotiators presented the final draft of the text. In it, Makino argued that the equality of nations was the fundamental idea on which the League of Nations was based. Therefore, he continued, it should be accompanied by respect for other races and nationalities. Indeed, adopting the Declaration on Race Equality promised the reduction of racial and religious animosities in the world.⁶⁸ In fact, the Japanese demanded a guarantee of equality with Europeans as a condition to signing the agreement on the League of Nations. However, the clause in concern caused ambivalent reactions. Representatives

⁶⁴ Cf. A. BRADY, *Dominion Nationalism and the Commonwealth*, in: *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue canadienne d'Economie et de Science politique*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1944, p. 11; C. J. DOHERTY, *Article 10 of the Covenant – Guarantees against External Aggression of the Territorial Integrity of All States Members of the League*, in: GLAZEBROOK, Appendix C, pp. 140–149; G. M. CARTER, *Some Aspects of Canadian Foreign Policy after Versailles*, in: *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1943, pp. 99–103; R. CECIL, *The League of Nations and the Problem of Sovereignty*, in: *History*, Vol. 5, 1920/1921, p. 13; MILLER, *The Drafting*, p. 354; A. J. TOYNBEE, *The Conduct of British Empire Foreign Relations since the Peace Settlement*, London 1928, pp. 56–58.

⁶⁵ R. Y. HEDGES, *Australia and the Imperial Conference*, in: *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1937, p. 81.

⁶⁶ C. SEYMOUR (Ed.), *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House: The Ending of the War*, Vol. 4, Boston 1928, pp. 309–313.

⁶⁷ H. PURCELL, *Paris Peace Discord*, in: *History Today*, Vol. 59, No. 7, 2009, pp. 38–40.

⁶⁸ BAKER, Vol. 2, p. 234; FITZHARDINGE, *W. M. Hughes*, p. 138.

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of smaller nations welcomed it, while representatives of the Dominions rejected it vigorously. In particular, representatives of Canada, Australia and New Zealand felt threatened by Japanese expansionist tendencies in the Pacific and the Far East. For this reason, they did not want the Japanese to get the same status as Europeans. Last but not least, it should be mentioned that although the British Government accentuated the importance of racial issues, its members did not see the solution in adopting the Japanese request as it interfered with the sovereignty of future members of the League of Nations in the field of immigration policy.⁶⁹

In Hughes' eyes, the Japanese request featured an obvious appeal to alleviate Australian immigration laws and to change local "white policy".⁷⁰ The Australians assumed that Americans and Canadians, who practiced a similar restrictive immigration policy, would not support Japan's proposal. However, the opposite proved to be the case. As for the British Empire Delegation members, only Hughes and Massey vigorously rejected the adoption of the clause under scrutiny. Smuts, on his part, did so only partially for example. At a meeting of the Covenant of the League of 11 April 1919, the Japanese proposal did not pass 16:11.⁷¹ Furthermore, the approved document also paid attention to the mandate areas in Article XXII. A few days later, on 7 May, the Council selected mandate powers that were to administrate former German and Ottoman territories. The Dominions (except for Canada and Newfoundland) found themselves among those powers. Australia gained administration over former German New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and areas south of the Equator. New Zealand, for instance, was to administer former German Samoa, and the Japanese were

⁶⁹ K. ALLERFELDT, *Wilsonian Pragmatism? Woodrow Wilson, Japanese Immigration, and the Paris Peace Conference*, in: *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2004, pp. 547–548.

⁷⁰ BRIDGE, p. 83; G. M. CARTER, *The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions 1919–1939*, Toronto 1947, p. 4.

⁷¹ Cf. ALLERFELDT, s. 565; BRIDGE, s. 84; P. G. LAUREN, *Human Rights in History: Diplomacy and Racial Equality at the Paris Peace Conference*, in: *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 2, Is. 3, 1978, pp. 257–278; SNELLING, p. 23.

to oversee several islands located north of the Equator – i.e. the Marshall Islands and the Carolinas. The Island of Nauru, a well-known major source of phosphates, was jointly managed by Australia, Britain and New Zealand. In addition, the Union of South Africa was to control the administration of the territory of former German Southwest Africa. The Mandate System came into being gradually and was slightly modified in 1925. It enabled the League to become a guarantor of peace, not a colonial power.⁷²

The position of the Dominions at the Paris Peace Conference led to some theoretical (dis)advantages when it came to signing certain contracts. If the authorized Dominion representatives signed a treaty, they did so with the consent of their domestic governments and, therefore, the contracts were automatically valid.⁷³ In contrast, British delegates did not confirm the convention only on behalf of Britain, but on behalf of the whole Empire.⁷⁴ On 12 March 1919 Sir Robert Borden sent a memorandum to his Dominion colleagues, in which he stressed that all treaties should be written in such a style that the Dominions could be considered to be equal partners. Borden justified this course of action making use of the IX Resolution of the Imperial War Conference of 1917, in which the equality of nations within the Empire was highlighted.⁷⁵ He likewise proposed that the names and signatures of the British should be followed by a list of the Dominion ones.⁷⁶ Additionally, the Canadian Prime Minister sought

⁷² See A. J. CROZIER, *The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919–25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1979, pp. 483–513; L. L. ILSLEY, *The Administration of Mandates by the British Dominions*, in: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1934, pp. 287–302; A. SHARP, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking After the First World War, 1919–1923*, 2nd Ed., Basingstoke 2008, pp. 173–174; TNA, CO 886/9/7, Dominions No. 80, Mandates, May 1921, ff. [246–275].

⁷³ MANSERGH, p. 180.

⁷⁴ W. K. HANCOCK, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Nationality 1918–1936*, Vol. 1, London 1937, pp. 67–68.

⁷⁵ TNA, CAB 29/9, W. C. P. [No.] 242, R. L. Borden, The Dominions as Parties and Signatories to the Various Peace Treaties, 12th March, 1919, ff. [318–319].

⁷⁶ R. L. BORDEN, *Canada in the Commonwealth: From Conflict to Co-operation*, Oxford 1929, pp. 102–103.

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to make the Dominions to sign the contracts separately so that their new postwar status would excel.⁷⁷

The ceremonial signing of the Treaty of Versailles happened according to Borden's proposal. Signatures of five British statesmen, representing Great Britain, were joined by the signatures of Dominion delegates – this meant international recognition, however symbolic, of the new status of the Dominions. The Canadian Prime Minister was very involved in the whole matter. Nevertheless, the signatures did not come to the fore among the signatures of the British. From the legal point of view and with regard to the existence of the British Empire Delegation, in which the Dominions had their representation, the signatures of the dominion statesmen alongside the British ones were superfluous as the British represented the entire Empire on the outside.⁷⁸ For this reason, the Dominion statesmen insisted that these contracts did not mean any obligations for the Dominions until they were approved by the home parliaments overseas.⁷⁹ Even though Borden's intention to use the peace treaty with Germany as symbolic recognition of the Dominions' independence somewhat failed, the fact that they won the right to decide whether they would or would not sign a treaty meant a certain level of acceptance of the new status of the Dominions on the part of their mother country.⁸⁰

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Indirectly, the Dominions acquired the possibility to conduct their own foreign policy. In fact, the importance and significance of the overseas self-governing polities became apparent as a result of their membership in the League of

⁷⁷ TNA, CAB 29/9, W. C. P. [No.] 242, R. L. Borden, The Dominions as Parties and Signatories to the Various Peace Treaties, 12th March, 1919, f. [319].

⁷⁸ Cf. R. L. BORDEN, *Canada in the Commonwealth: From Conflict to Co-operation*, Oxford 1929, p. 103; GLAZEBROOK, p. 111; P. J. NOEL BAKER, *The Present Juridical Status of the British Dominions in International Law*, London 1929, pp. 67–83; WHEARE, p. 664.

⁷⁹ KEITH, p. 154.

⁸⁰ TNA, CO 886/8/3, Dominions No. 66, D. 22114, Extract from The Times, 11th April, 1919, [Doc.] No. 8, f. 16, [79].

Nations. Along with other dependent territories, the Dominions formed the British Empire. In addition, they won the right to individual representation in the Assembly of the League of Nations, they had the possibility to be elected to the organization's Council, etc. Nonetheless, the international community continued to see them as an integral part of the British Empire. The Empire, if nothing else, did indeed represented the Dominions in many ways on the outside. In spite of all the limitations arising from the Dominions' status, British officials were fully aware that "*they were no longer colonies, but nations intensely conscious of their nationhood*".⁸¹ The fact that Dominion representatives participated at the Paris peace talks marked the beginning of a new epoch in the constitutional history of the autonomous polities of the British Empire.⁸²

Abstract

The First World War represented the biggest challenge and a test of cohesion for the individual parts of the Empire. Newly, the dominions were to reach full recognition as autonomous nations of the imperial community. Participation of the Dominions at the Paris Peace Conference and the issues discussed there influenced the status of the Dominions not only to their mother country, but also to the wider world. All the Dominions, except for Newfoundland, found themselves among members of the new international organisation – the League of Nations. In addition, Dominion delegates also signed the Treaty of Versailles, which the overseas leaders considered a formal recognition of their formal independence on the part of the British. However, in contrast to the expectations of the Dominion representatives, a symbolic recognition of their new status did not take place and, therefore, the world continued to regard them as an integral part of the British Empire, i.e. that the British still represented them in many aspects on the outside. The course of the conference, however, did confirm that it was not possible to view the Dominions as "ordinary"

⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁸² TOYNBEE, p. 83.

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colonies or dependent territories anymore. The First World War strengthened the general trend heading towards a broader understanding of autonomy and to a more intense cooperation within the Empire.

Keywords

British Empire; Commonwealth; Great Britain; Dominions; Constitutional Relations; Foreign Policy; Paris Peace Conference; Treaty of Versailles; League of Nations