The Construction of the League of Nations Secretariat

Formative Practices of Autonomy and Legitimacy in International Organisations

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Abstract: This article investigates the formative staffing practices of the League of Nations Secretariat. Drawing on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, it argues that core traits of the League's institutional capacity and identity was produced through the institutionalisation of recruitment practices in the League's formative years from 1919 to 1923. Through an exploration of early negotiations and practices of staffing, we show how the League built and balanced legitimacy, by combining a clearly international make-up of the League Secretariat with acute sensitivity to state interests, and autonomy, by defending the Secretary-General's exclusive prerogative of staffing, in a way that has been defining for the trajectory of International Organisations (IOs) until today. The article thus turns to the *institutional landscape* where the individual and its surroundings meet: through the daily staffing practices of the Secretariat, it explores how an institution came to be, function and assert its influence as an autonomous and legitimate diplomatic agent in a broader international field. As such, the article, as an innovative contribution to the field, argues that international historians should connect thorough institutional investigations with elements of the 'cultural turn' in International History, in order to properly engage with and understand IOs as diplomatic actors.

1. Introduction

Once it existed, it needed to be. The League of Nations came into being at the Paris Peace Conference through the Covenant of the League, and once it existed – *on paper* – it would have to be there in the physical sense. With no precedent to build upon, the first Secretary General of the League of Nations, Sir Eric Drummond, took it upon himself to create the first permanent international administration of an international organisation aspiring to secure world peace. In doing so, he created a new and curious creature in the international field, rife with tensions, dilemmas and contradictions which have since characterised all international organisation bureaucracies: The League Secretariat existed through the will of states; yet needed to exist autonomously of the same. It built primarily upon principles of national administrations; yet had to create its own unique permanent multinational bureaucracy to act and cope in the diplomatic sphere. It was to exert no independent power; yet had to do exactly that, in order to serve the interests of all states fairly and therefore to the benefit of international order as

such. Since the League became the 'mother' of all subsequent international organisations, the League Secretariat offers an opportunity to discern the roots of how subsequent international organisations have dealt with a recurring theme of their existence: the mediation between national interests and autonomy.

This article therefore asks: how did the Secretariat establish itself as an autonomous organisation in the formative years of the League?

In answering this question, the article turns to the mundane practices of staffing the Secretariat.[1] Through this analytical prism, we may understand how international relations, institutional boundaries and professional identities and norms were created in the initial construction of the League Secretariat. In doing so, we draw on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu. As Peter Jackson suggests, Bourdieu offers international historians a "cultural theory of action" which enables us to study the coming into being of, and interactions within, certain 'fields'.[2] It makes sense to consider the League of Nations Secretariat as an institution that developed into a distinct bureaucratic field, demanding certain traits – or durable dispositions – from its staff, which, over time, gave it capacity to act as a distinct player in the broader diplomatic field. And it makes equal sense to understand the production of these 'dispositions' by way of the practices that determined the human composition of Secretariat: staffing. Through this practice, the Secretariat learned to interpret and incorporate the rules of the larger diplomatic game and the many predetermined material conditions that constrained their freedom of movement, in order to play a part in the competition for power and domination – and thus shape the game itself.

This article analyses these practices as they evolved and cemented themselves in the early years of the organisations existence (1919-1923). We focus on this time frame for two reasons. First, in institutional terms, the years from 1919 to 1923 were the foundational moment in the organization's life when recruitment practices were institutionalized, the competences of the Secretariat on personnel

matters were clarified vis-à-vis the League Council and Assembly, and the Secretariat emerged as a well rounded, independent diplomatic actor. Second, while recruitment practices continued to evolve throughout the League's existence (as we will briefly touch upon in section 6), the years from 1919 to 1923 saw the crystallization of the key principles, balances and hierarchies that came to structure recruitment throughout the inter-war years. In looking at these early recruitment practices, it will be argued that they consisted of two main elements: on the one hand, the shielding of all processes of staffing in order to secure absolute autonomy for the Secretary-General, and thus the Secretariat, in such questions; and, on the other hand, within certain limits, establishing a close dialogue with leading member states and developing hiring practices that to a remarkable degree reproduced existing hierarchies of power and prestige. Skilfully balancing these two considerations, Drummond managed to build the Secretariat's autonomy and legitimacy among member states.

In developing this argument, we wish to make a contribution to the League of Nations historiography as well as a broader methodological point related to the cultural turn in international history. Much of the early work on the League of Nations was written by its former employees: Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer offered a detailed expose of the Secretariat's structure and function, but left the political context and significance of the League's institutional development aside. Frank P. Walters, on the other hand, wrote a thorough *political* history of the League, but showed only sporadic interest in institutional practices and forms. Charles Howard-Ellis' *The Origin, Structure and Working of the League of Nations* is at once a historical-legal exploration of the League and a liberal-socialist manifesto for world peace. All three should be considered institutional memoirs as much as academic products. More importantly in this context, none of the three moves beyond the open, official League documents to focus on the incremental institutional *practices* that shaped the Secretariat's coming into being.[3] This article, by contrast, sheds light on these practices of staffing

and place them in a political context, to draw out their broader institutional significance in the interwar years as well as for the League's successor organization, the United Nations.

Despite a growing interest in the League of Nations over the last decade or so, moreover, the League Secretariat has only recently attracted academic attention. Exploring the League as a hub for transnational expertise across various policy areas, historians have highlighted the activities of various individuals and networks in the Secretariat. However, it was Klaas Dykmann who first directed analytical attention to the overall composition of the Secretariat in 2015.[4] Exploring 'how international the staff really was'[5], Dykmann concludes that while nationality did play a role in staffing practices, there seemed to be "no clear pattern or hierarchy" in how it played out.[6] In this article we argue that Dykmann's broad brushed analysis of the discourse and numerical composition of the Secretariat does not get to the heart of this issue and that by exploring the formative practices of staffing from 1919 to 1923, clear hierarchies and patterns of dynamics between internationality and nationality in the Secretariat emerges. More fundamentally, while we know that the balance between autonomy and legitimacy lies at the heart of international secretariats to this day, this is the first historical exploration of how and why a specific kind of relationship between the two core interests developed with the League's formative staffing practices.

In adopting this approach, the article offers a broader contribution to the "cultural turn" in international history. Since the end of the Cold War, the "cultural turn" that swept the historical profession a decade earlier, has both broadened and deepened studies of international relations in international history as historians have taken an interest in 1) culture as a tool for state policies (particularly in the battle for 'hearts and minds' during the Cold War) and explored 2) the role of cultural encounters outside formal state structures through private organizations, networks travel and tourism.[7] A third strand within this approach has borrowed concepts from cultural and literary theory, postcolonial studies, and anthropology to study how culturally constructed beliefs about, for instance,

ethnicity, race, religion or gender shape the way diplomatic decision making elites perceive and respond to international politics.[8] Criticism has been levelled against this literature for a lack of analytical rigour in understanding how culture shapes policy decisions and for isolating the role of cultural predisposition at the expense of material structures, such as demography or industrial capacity, also conditioning policy choices.[9]

It is this lack of understanding of the dynamic relationship between cultural predispositions and the environment in which they exist that has led Jackson to argue in favour of an approach that focuses on the practices of social actors and shows how these practices are produced by the interplay of their individual habitus and the structures of the particular field in which they are acting.[10] This article takes its inspiration from Jackson, but wishes to add a dimension that he only touches on indirectly and which is almost entirely absent in current international history: the role and importance of institutions. International politics is created through institutions, yet the role of institutions as producers of meaning has remained in the dark.[11] Here, the article offers something new: we turn to the *institutional landscape* where the individual and its surroundings meet – where concrete meaning is produced through institutional practice. Through the daily doings of the Secretariat, we explore how an institution came to be, function and assert its influence as an autonomous and legitimate agent in a broader international field.

2. Early Decisions – Sir Eric Drummond 1919

The Secretariat was the only permanent body of the League whose sole function and only instructions were to promote the aims of the organisation.[12] With no precedents to build on, the job of developing its organizational structure, defining its relations with the surrounding world and devising strategies for the recruitment and instruction of its officials was a daunting one.

The Secretary-General tasked with this job was seasoned British diplomat, Sir Eric Drummond, and he started setting up this new body already before he was formally appointed on 28 April 1919.[13] Originally, efforts had been made to find a prominent statesman to head the organization, but no suitable candidates were willing to take on the job and it was therefore decided to appoint a non-political functionary instead. An Etonian with a 20-year career in the Foreign Office under his vest, Drummond was in many ways the quintessential British civil servant: discrete, tactful, cautious and a firm believer in the importance and legitimate rights of the major European powers to direct European and global affairs.

Even if Drummond was meant be a non-political functionary, he was given substantial freedom to decide the basic political forms and functions of the new multinational organization. Indeed, one may argue that the decisions taken by Drummond in 1919-20 were of fundamental importance in shaping the League Secretariat as an independent bureaucratic field. As we shall see later, this influence was gradually reduced as member states and other League institutions engaged with the Secretariat, making demands and suggestions for the operation of the organization, thus structuring Drummond's leadership decisions and strategies, and not least his staffing practices.

The reasons for Drummond's initial, expansive room of manoeuvre are in part to be found in the formal basis for his work. The Covenant only addressed the Secretariat in two brief articles stating that the Secretariat should comprise "a Secretary General and such secretaries and staff as may be required" (Art. 6) and that all positions in the League should be open to both men and women (Art. 7). If anything, it secured the autonomy of the Secretary-General as it specified his authority to appoint the staff of the Secretariat, with the approval of the Council (Art. 6).[14]

At the same time, political oversight was sparse. In April of 1919, at the Versailles Peace Conference, a Committee on Organization of the League of Nations was established to make plans for the establishment of the official machinery of the League. However, the Committee, which

consisted of representatives from the states with seats on the first Council (the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Belgium, Brazil, Greece and Spain), only held two formal meetings, on 5 May and 9 June, in which they accepted Drummond's proposals for the League structure and opened a credit of £100.000 for him to engage temporary staff and offices.[15]

In this open-ended situation, Drummond made several decisions with lasting effects. Fundamentally, he decided that the Secretariat should be an *international* secretariat proper. Upon his appointment, he was aware that "there were two utterly opposed ideas as to how the Secretariat should be constituted".[16] The Secretariat could be modelled on the various inter-allied committees that had coordinated technical and economic aspects of the war effort and, thus, be organized along national lines. This was the core idea of a proposal submitted to Drummond in March by the British Cabinet Secretary Sir Maurice Hankey.[17]

The other model, preferred and promoted by Drummond, was "the constitution of a truly international civil service – officials who would be solely the servants of the League and in no way representative of or responsible to the Governments of the countries of which they were nationals."[18] He made no secret of his own strong belief in this model, and happily for him, the members of the Committee voted unanimously in favour of his proposal in their first meeting.[19]

After returning to his new small London office from the Versailles ConferenceDrummond began drafting the organization of the League Secretariat.[20] The most important problem in developing the institutional framework was whether the Sections should be formed on a geographical basis or according to subject matter. Once again strengthening the Secretariat's international profile, Drummond opted for the second option and set up sections according to policy areas: Economy and Finance, Health, Transport and so on. In doing so, he wanted to avoid the national clusters of employees which might emerge in geographical sections and to promote cooperation of civil servants from different national backgrounds within each policy area.[21]

Drummond's decisions regarding the setup of the Secretariat were based on the assumption that national interests were properly represented in the Council and the Assembly, while the members of the Secretariat were to "serve the League as a whole and not any particular Government".[22] However, this first, radical plan for the Secretariat was tempered by two other important, early decisions.

First, Drummond believed in taking a cautious and pragmatic approach in setting up the new organization. With inspiration from Sir William Wiseman – liaison between US President Woodrow Wilson and the British Government during the war – he wished to create a lean and flexible preliminary organization, from which a broader more permanent organization would gradually emerge.[23] Thus, in preparation for the Organization Committee's meeting in May 1919, he proposed that he be authorized to hire "for the efficient conduct of the affairs of the League" as he liked, but with contracts not exceeding five years[24] A proposal that gained the Committee's support.[25]

The restrained approach was partially tactically motivated: Drummond thought it essential to carry on with as small a staff as practicable until the Conference at Paris drew to a close because it offered "a unique opportunity of securing men and women of great experience in official international affairs". After having secured this early team, Drummond intended that the various heads of Sections should be permitted "as far as possible to choose their own staffs".[26] However, Drummond's prudence was equally an indication of his preference for a pragmatic recruitment strategy for an organisation that was "alive and dynamic, influencing and being influenced by the other forces whose inter-play is moulding the political aspect of the world to-day", thus allowing him to adapt future recruitment of staff to political dynamics that were yet unknown.[27]

Secondly, while insisting that the Secretariat should not be structured along national sections, nationality should, Drummond believed, remain at the heart of the balance that had to be struck. While sceptical of Hankey's proposed nationally organized Secretariat, he agreed that member states in the League should have some sort of Liaison Officer within the Secretariat.[28] It became even more evident

when the Organization Committee raised the issue of Under-Secretaries in the League. From an administrative viewpoint, Drummond believed that a Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General would be sufficient. However, to cater to both French and American interests, Jean Monnet (France) and Raymond B. Fosdick (USA) were selected as Deputies. This however, triggered complaints from the remaining Great Powers – Italy and Japan – in the Organization Committee. As a consequence, Dionisio Anzilotti (Italy) and Inazo Nitobe (Japan) were appointed Under-Secretaries-General. Apart from reasons of political prestige, Under-Secretaries-General kept the Secretariat in touch with the dominant states.[29] Unlike the Director's, however, they did not necessarily administer a specific functional section. It was, in other words, a "kind of ambassadorial position".[30] While this undoubtedly helped build the legitimacy of the institution in the frail beginnings of the League's existence, it also became a key issue of contention as small states rallied against this administrative replica of the permanent Council.[31]

National considerations were also present in Drummond's own early recruitments; before any name appeared on the early draft organograms, nationalities were indicated.[32] The small team he had hired by July 1919 was predominantly American and Northern European. These were Monnet (France), Fosdick (USA), Paul Joseph Mantoux (France), Arthur Salter (Britain), Erik Colban (Norway), and Joost Adrian van Hamel (Netherlands).[33] Shortly after, Nitobe and Anzilotti joined the team.[34]

Once this core staff was in place, it became a key concern to strike a general balance between *different* nationalities – or what Drummond would later call "the equilibrium of nationalities".[35] While anxious to give Directors their say in the appointment of staff, the Secretary-General nonetheless retained the right of oversight, to ensure due proportions of nationals. As he put it in a document in late June of 1919, it was "essential":

> that the staff of each section should not be appointed independently, but that all the appointments to the Secretariat should be considered as a whole. This aspect of any individual appointment must be taken into account, as well as that of the personal suitability.[36]

To sum up, through the spring of 1919, three core principles had emerged which would govern the League Secretariat's staffing practices for the next couple of decades: First, the Secretariat was an international organisation and members of staff were loyal only to the institution and the Secretary-General; second, when hiring staff for the Secretariat, nationality was an important and relevant quality; third, hiring staff for the Secretariat was the privilege of the Secretary-General and there were no binding guidelines directing his work. The conditions of the Secretariat were perhaps best summarised in the Balfour Report which was drawn up by a committee set up by the Council to examine Drummond's work in June 1919:

> "By the terms of the Treaty, the duty of selecting the staff falls upon the Secretary General, just as the duty of approving it falls upon the Council. In making his appointments, he had primarily to secure the best available men and women for the particular duties which had to be performed; but in doing so, it was necessary to have regard to the great importance of selecting the officials from various nations. Evidently, no one nation or group of nations ought to have a monopoly in providing the material for this international institution."[37]

In the early discussions and decisions in the spring of 1919, then, we see several of the tensions and conflicts which would come to shape the Secretariat as a transnational bureaucratic field: between merits and nationality; between the autonomy of the Secretary-General and the support of the Council and Assembly; between high posts and lower posts; between Great Powers and smaller powers, between European and Overseas members. Continuously ensuring that 'equilibrium' was found

between these many different considerations was key to upholding the legitimacy, and therefore the functional capacity of the League of Nations as an international organisation.

3. Autonomy and institutional capacity-building – The Secretariat and the Assembly 1920-22

After its creation, the Secretariat would continue to develop in a dual process of capacity building and formalization between 1920 and 1922: internally, through a proper committee for hiring and staff regulations and externally through the work of the Assembly and the so-called Noblemaire Report which shaped the principles of recruitment and demanded fiscal stringency. The Secretariat struggled to establish its autonomy, therefore, in an increasingly structured field.

3.1.The struggle for autonomy in the Assembly 1920

The Balfour report had given Drummond a strong starting point. However, the Secretary General's authority to decide who and how to recruit came under almost immediate scrutiny in the Fourth Committee of the First Assembly.[38] The debate that played out in the committee and the decisions that were reached marked another decisive moment in the Secretariat's existence.

At a meeting of the Fourth Committee, 19th November, 1920, several of the national delegates, led by Sir James Allen (New Zealand), pushed hard for the introduction of competitive examinations as a way of securing fair assessments and new blood within the Secretariat. Through competitive examination, broader national representation and guarantees against favouritism and monopolisation of posts in the Secretariat, could be secured, the thought was. However, it would also eliminate the flexibility and responsiveness in recruitment that Drummond considered key to the Secretariat's success. Thus, when French delegate M. Hanotaux, in the same meeting, asserted that competitive exams would be unmanageable during the organisational period, Drummond wasted no time in

making use of the lifeline thrown to him, proposing instead of examinations "an impartial body to make the choice". This gained support. Much to the dismay of Drummond, however, the South African representative, Sir Reginald Blankenberg, proposed that this impartial appointment body be "composed of the Secretary-General and two Council Members". This suggestion, which drew Council members into the actual appointment of staff was obviously highly problematic from Drummond's perspective. Luckily for him, Mr. Barnes (British Empire) remarked that the Covenant (Art. 6) "conferred on the Secretary-General the duty of choosing his staff, and [that] it was impossible to modify this provision." Drummond supported this view and proposed instead "to create *within the Secretariat* the special advisory body proposed by Sir Reginald Blankenberg". Thus, agreement was reached and the Committee amended the proposal of competitive examinations by proposing "to create a special body within the Secretariat in order to assist the Secretary-General in the selection of the Staff".[39] In doing so, the assembly had confirmed Drummond's authority in staff appointments and granted the Secretariat autonomy in developing selection procedures.[40]

The Great Powers, and in particular Britain, must have felt fairly certain that they could exert the necessary influence with regard to staffing through informal channels and by the weight of their flesh. The smaller states, on the other hand, saw standardised tests as a way of securing a fair chance for staff of their nationality. Drummond here sided with the Great Powers; their views dovetailed nicely with his fight for the prerogative to make staffing decisions, without official interference. Creating the 'black box' of an autonomous committee secured for the Secretariat the room (literally) to master the international politics inherent in its staffing practices – develop the *sense de jeux,* so to speak – outside public scrutiny. Equally important, it gave it the opportunity to mark off the Secretariat as a specific field in itself, with a definite entry point (through the committee) based on specific criteria (selection procedures). The next step was to put both of these elements in place.

3.2.Professionalization: committees and regulations

After the First Assembly in November of 1920, a process of professionalization unfolded which came to stabilize the Secretariat as a (partially) self-governing field with its own professional dispositions and practices. There were two dimensions to this process: the creation of a coherent institutional infrastructure of committees and sub-committees that dealt with recruitment and promotions and the development of a set of formalized standards, rights and obligations for employees through formalized staff regulations. At the heart of both lay the issue of nationality.

Having secured maximum freedom to appoint, promote and dismiss from the Assembly, Drummond went on to create the so-called Staff Committee. The Staff Committee would be a closed body, he emphasized, where only "the results of its deliberations" would be made available and free from external interference and pressures.[41] Consisting of three Directors, the Deputy-Secretary-General and Drummond himself,[42] it would constitute an extension of, rather than a constraint on, his authority.

Another push for bureaucratic professionalization and differentiation took place when, in January 1922, the Staff Committee was renamed the Appointments Committee (AC). The AC would retain a similar structure as the Staff Committee[43], but was a larger body than the Staff Committee, with a separate Sub-Committee for minor appointments (salaries up to 13.700 Swiss francs), and official rapporteurs for both (Erik Colban and Mr. Huston of the Establishment Office respectively).[44] A further formalisation came in June 1922, when Drummond appointed Professor Attolico as Under-Secretary-General for Internal Administration. This he did on the firm recommendation of the so-called Noblemaire Report (more on this later), ordered by the Assembly, and because "the amount of internal administration work falling upon him was more than he could possibly manage".[45] In this reconstituted and enlarged form, the AC – as the Staff Committee before it – would sit more or less

bi-monthly, oft headed by Drummond himself, to discuss and decide upon staffing and organisational issues.[46]

The fact that issues of recruitment and promotion were now referred to a specific committee also proved very helpful in defending the Secretariat's autonomy in relation to pressures coming from the Assembly. Almost immediately after its creation, Drummond used the fact that a formal multi-national Staff Committee had been set up, to ward off criticism, when the issue of national representation re-emerged at the Second Assembly in 1921.[47] Likewise, when a Hungarian delegate of the Fourth Committee at the Assembly in 1923, asked the Secretary-General why there were no Hungarian members of the Secretariat, Drummond closed down the discussion by pointing out that these appointments "were made by a Committee of five persons, and a Sub-Committee of three for the subordinate staff". Referring to bureaucratic procedure was an efficient weapon for defending institutional autonomy.[48]

The committees also helped Drummond ward off internal pressures from employees in the Secretariat and create legitimacy around recruitment and promotion practises in the organisation. Drummond was, as seen, initially ready to grant the largest possible freedom to his immediate subordinates in terms of recruitment. With the creation of a committee, these almost unlimited powers were rolled back and placed within institutional forms which ensured equality, standardised procedure and a broader representation of interests. Though it was purely advisory, the AC would in practice function as a collegium seeking unanimous decisions. The body gained a deliberative quality as agreement on norms and procedures were reached through thorough discussions, often sparked by specific appointments. As Ranshofen-Wertheimer notes, the AC offered Drummond "moral help" when he had to make unpopular choices and shielded him "from much criticism which would otherwise have been directed against him personally" thus creating a strong internal institutional orthodoxy that strengthened the Secretariat's autonomy.[49]

On the other hand, we may note the Committee's 'reactive' *modus operandi*: it was created to withstand external and internal pressures and only took principled decisions when specific appointments forced the issue, it was – as Loveday would later argue – an "inadequate machinery for deciding those broad policy issues". Moreover, lower staff had little influence on the doings of the AC. While Secretariat officials held seats on the committee, they were of the rank of Director or higher and appointed by Drummond himself. This contrasts with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) where half the members of a similar committee were appointed by the staff union.[50]

Alongside the creation of a lasting committee structure, the League Secretariat also developed formalized staff regulations. In the provisional regulations, drawn up by Colban on Drummond's instruction[51] in preparation of the Second Assembly, considerations of nationalities were not that prominent. It simply stated that "The Staff Committee, in considering the proposed appointment, will endeavour to reconcile the requirements of efficiency, economy and international character of the Secretariat. Particular consideration will be given to persons already members of the staff of an inferior grade or salary, in case of a vacancy in superior or high-salaried posts."[52]

3.3. Adjustments: the Noblemaire Report 1921

Just like the creation of the AC, the development of staff regulations intertwined with the Assembly's attempts to assert influence over the national composition and balance of the Secretariat. Even if Drummond's authority on staff issues had been acknowledged at the First Assembly, member state delegations still insisted that the Assembly "had the right to make observations on the manner in which the Secretary-General appointed the officials of the Secretariat."[53] They got an opportunity to do so in response to the Noblemaire report which was presented at the Second Assembly in 1921. The report was produced by an expert committee of five, headed by the French politician Georges

Noblemaire, on behalf of the Committee of Enquiry which had been set up by the First Assembly. The committee had been tasked with evaluating the organisation of the League Secretariat as well as the ILO, and at the centre of the discussions of the report was the issue of national representation in the Secretariat.[54]

The Noblemaire report itself was quite innocuous with respect to the national composition of the Secretariat, while it acknowledged the exceptional circumstances under which Drummond had had to hire his staff and commended its quality. As regarded future recruitment, it essentially re-affirmed the principles of the Balfour Report stressing the general rule of 'competitive selection' (defined as "open competitive examination, or selection based on a comparison of the records and qualifications of candidates"), while also emphasizing the "extreme desirability" of proper and fair national representation. In order to make room for these national considerations, the committee granted Drummond plenty of leeway to make 'special appointments'.[55]

When the 1921 Assembly convened, however, Drummond found himself under severe attack on the issue of national representation – from a completely new angle. Up to this point, debates about nationality in the Secretariat had essentially been debates about the fair and balanced representation of the major and (to a lesser extent) minor European powers in the Secretariat. Now, India launched an attack that pointed out the critical under-representation of non-Western states in the Secretariat. According to an overview that the Indian delegation had drawn up in preparation of the Assembly, out of the 367 persons working in the Secretariat, 139 were British, 73 were French and 62 were Swiss.[56] These numbers were entirely disproportionate to the financial contributions of these states to the League. As one of the delegates, Sir William Meyer, demonstrated, Great Britain contributed 9.16% of the League's expenses and received 36% of the salaries paid. France, contributing the same amount to the League's budget held 20% of the positions in the League, and Switzerland who paid roughly 1% of the League's budget received 8,7% of the League's salaries. By contrast, India paid

6,6 % of the League's expenses but was represented by only one member on the Secretariat. The same was the case for China and Japan, while countries like Cuba, Brazil and Rumania were not represented at all on the Secretariat.[57] Claiming that the national composition of the Secretariat was "eminently unsatisfactory", Meyer therefore put forth a resolution proposing to instate a rule that "… no country shall have a higher percentage of the staff of the Secretariat or the International Labour Office than would amount to double the percentage it subscribes to the League expenses" as well as to terminate short term contracts with over-represented nationalities and substitute them with nationals from under-represented countries.[58]

Though not stated explicitly, it was clear that the delegates were demanding equality of rights and obligations among Western European and non-Western European member states. In making this claim for the first time, they touched on an issue that would become a recurring theme for the League as well as for future international organisations, as notions of European cultural and political exceptionalism and superiority were increasingly challenged and transformed.

Drummond, however, believed the Indian suggestions to be entirely untenable. After having reaffirmed his commitment to hiring "the greatest number possible of nationalities", he stressed that this could only be "progressively realised".[59] In an unusually direct way, he stated that the adoption of the Indian suggestion would be "fatal for the work of the Secretariat".[60] At this point, the Canadian representative, Sir George Perley, intervened in what looked like a prepared, perhaps even coordinated, manoeuvre and proposed an amendment to the Indian resolution which substituted its plans for national quotas in the Secretariat with a softer statement on the desirability of "fair proportions from the various States member of the League […] regard being always had to the requirements of efficiency".[61]

Perley's proposal gained broad support and was unanimously adopted. Though it side-tracked the Indian proposal, it nonetheless marked a shift in the guidelines for the Secretariat's recruitment

practices, turning the principle of the Balfour Report on its head: Drummond should no longer hire based on merit, subsequently taking into account nationality, but strive to recruit nationalities in fair proportions, taking into consideration efficiency.

The renewed emphasis on nationality, pushed forward by India, was transposed directly into the Staff Regulations that was given its official shape after the Second Assembly and first issued in June 1922. Here, Article 15 now emphasised that "special regard shall be had to the maintenance and development of the international character of the organisation", while also stating that "between candidates possessing equal qualifications, preference shall be given to a candidate whose nationality is not already adequately represented in the staff".[62] While this outcome might be seen as an important victory for the non-Western European and smaller member states, it is important to note two things. First, the Indian offensive prompted Drummond to articulate – and thereby consolidate – certain national categorisations and inequalities in the Secretariat's recruitment. For instance, Drummond and Noblemaire rejected Meyer's proposal to hire non-French and non-British nationals, with adequate language skills, for lower administrative positions, due to the burden of educating and supervising such staff. Likewise, Drummond made it clear that he had no intentions of changing the practice of recruiting local Swiss staff for the menial work at the League headquarter: "The recruitment of typing and translation staff in countries as far off as India could not be seriously entertained," he brusquely responded, citing reasons of economy.[63]

Drummond's position, though economically sound, underlined that the Secretariat would remain a predominantly British/French/Swiss organisation. When competing to get their nationals into the Secretariat, most member states were in reality jockeying for a very limited segment of positions, between the Under-Secretaries-Generalships at the top, reserved for the Great Powers, and secretarial and maintenance jobs reserved for French, British and local workers at the bottom of the organisation.

Second, with regards to higher posts in the Secretariat, the Noblemaire Report and its reception in the Second Assembly had little effect. As mentioned previously, the provisional staff statutes prioritized internal promotions.[64] This was essentially a conservative rule that benefitted the member states who already had many nationals on the Secretariat. Nonetheless, it survived the Second Assembly and made it into the final staff regulations.[65]

The privileged position of internal candidates, seems to indicate that experience gained working in the Secretariat was deemed a valuable, indeed irreplaceable, capital when it came to promotions.[66] Indeed, the AC would often exclude outside candidates to higher posts on the grounds that it was too risky to hire someone they did not know and too time consuming to show them the ropes. When thinking about the League Secretariat as a bureaucratic field, this seems to indicate that this field is considered to produce its own unique professional capital, which is superior to and differentiates it from adjacent, competing fields.

At the same time, the member states at the First and Second Assemblies had strengthened the Secretariat's authority by affording it the opportunity to professionalize and control its procedures of appointment, thus enabling its emergence as an autonomous field of practice. As we shall see in the following exploration of the practices of the AC, the most challenging issue to address within this field was the many different and complex ways nationality mattered.

4. Doing nationality – Inside the Appointments Committee

Through the Appointments Committee, Drummond built and retained the autonomy of the Secretariat. The AC's everyday doings was, however, in equal measures an exercise in integrating state interests. Accumulated, nationality was a vital political capital for the Secretariat, giving it the potential to act effectively in the diplomatic sphere. We may discern three important ways in which the actions of the AC integrated state interest.

First, the AC studied every aspect of the Secretariat's staffing in light of national considerations – and consequently state interests. As seen, the resistance against open and mandatory competitive examinations during the First Assembly was due to the need to preserve this prerogative, and the AC would continue to resist any such attempts in the years to come. In June 1922, for instance, the AC scrapped the idea of standardized tests for the low-level and purely technical staff because they needed 'personal knowledge of the candidates', thus retaining the right to discuss matters of national composition.[67]

Even when filling vacancies in the internal administration of the Secretariat state interests mattered. Over two meetings in the fall of 1923, the Committee was looking to appoint an Assistant Head for the Distribution Branch. Professor Attolico had recommended a Hungarian candidate and van Hamel a Dutch candidate, both primarily for reasons of nationality. Joseph Avenol, on his part, "had strong objections on the grounds that the nationality question was not the primary consideration in this particular post".[68] At the next meeting, a sub-committee could report that while the Dutch candidate was "perhaps the best fitted (…) [t]here were, however, a number of Dutch officials on the Staff and the Committee had to decide whether weight should be given to the fact that at present there was no Hungarian". Being Dutch himself, van Hamel now argued that only "technical efficiency should be taken into account". Colban, on the contrary, pointed out that the Secretariat was at the moment "attempting to get into closer touch with [the] Hungarians". The Secretary-General, in the end, concluded that the Hungarian candidate should be called in for an interview.[69]

Similarly, when dealing with the most technocratic elements of the Secretariat, such as the Health Section, Drummond kept an eye on national representation. In reaction to debates in the Third Assembly (1922), where criticism had once again been aired against the French/British dominance in the Secretariat,[70] he instructed Ludwik Rajchman, Director of the Health Section, to give technical evaluations of the candidates he wanted to hire, in order to fend off British or French candidates that

otherwise would be hard to resist if the governments insisted. Drummond could sanction such manoeuvres in the technical section, but would not dream to do the same for the more political sections.[71]

In general, appointments made for the more political sections entailed much more complex national consideration, as Drummond readily admitted to the Council in 1922.[72] Appointing a new member of the Political Section, for instance, the AC had to consider how to find the right grouping of countries depending on the issues on their agenda. This they had learned from the time of the Upper Silesia negotiations, when it proved very difficult to modify the composition of the Section "without causing serious inconvenience". Thus, finding replacements when someone resigned or transferred was an intricate exercise in not undoing careful compromises already found.[73] Equally, members of political sections were often indispensable precisely because of their nationality and connections with specific governments.[74]

Similarly, in the Disarmament Section, nationality mattered a great deal. The Director, for instance, after having first been an Italian, 'had' to be someone from a neutral country, or at least from a country not favouring any specific form of disarmament. This formed part of an even bigger balancing act: when Salvador de Madariaga (Spain) was replaced as Director of the Disarmament Section, he argued that he should be replaced by someone from the neutral countries, as "the number of Directors from ex-neutral countries should not be reduced".[75]

Whether in the political, technical or purely administrative parts of the Secretariat, then, state interests had to be taken into account. Ignoring them was an exercise in calculating risks and fallouts, while condoning them meant harvesting goodwill, increasing influence or at least securing a golden moment of silence (absence of complaints). The practices of the AC produced a complex web of national considerations that covered every corner of the Secretariat.

Second, despite the *ad hoc* and pragmatic manner of the AC, it nonetheless systematically reproduced European power hierarchies and a certain civilizational order. As already noted, the highest posts were, if not *de jure* then *de facto*, retained for certain (mostly European) great powers. In 1919, it was simply agreed, that the Secretary-General should be British and the Deputy Secretary-General French until the roles would reverse with the appointment of the subsequent Secretary-General. And the Under Secretaries-General were, in many ways, "seconded by their governments"[76] and constituted "a frank compromise between political necessity and administrative efficiency".[77] Significantly, in the AC discussions, this great power constellation was never openly contested nor even explicitly articulated – it was simply understood.

Choosing between different governments' candidates, the AC reproduced a tacit Western European civilizational order, which reflected both perceptions of relative power and cultural prominence. The underrepresentation of non-European staff, raised by the Indian Assembly delegate, was an obvious manifestation of this, but the AC also produced more subtle hierarchies. There was a marked difference in the response, for instance, to a Serbian claim to retain a post for a candidate of their nationality, vehemently rejected by the AC, and how the entire committee walked on eggshells in order to find a non-offensive solution to Professor Attolico's explicit demand that a post be kept 'Italian'. Similarly, some nations, like the Hungarians, had to realize that they "had no chance of being represented in a political section" and be "satisfied" with non-political posts.[78]

Sometimes such considerations were coated in a language of qualifications. South American and certain Eastern European candidates, for instance, were considered less trustworthy without European University degrees.[79] When the AC discussed whether the Secretariat should appoint its first Finnish employee, a member of the Committee warned against promising any long term contract because he "considered it very difficult in the case of new nationalities to judge whether their mentality and training was such as would render them satisfactory members of the Secretariat".[80]

Such language was absent when the League started hiring Germans. The civilizational centre as seen from the Secretariat was reflected, and indeed manifested, in the priorities and discussions of the AC.

The AC also produced, or confirmed, power relations and cultural affinities, by thinking in terms of clusters of countries. Repeatedly, for instance, any candidate of the Nordic countries, whether Norwegian, Swedish or Danish, was seen to satisfy the demands of representation from the region as such. From the perspective of the League, the Nordic countries were somewhat indistinguishable, and, in any case, not important enough to have their *separate* claims heard.[81] Another example was how the British Dominions were seen as part of the British 'quota' in a specific section. In the summer of 1923, for instance, van Hamel warned that the Social and Opium Section was on the verge of "becoming an all-British department" if they hired a proposed candidate from New Zealand. Again, hiring practices intertwined with broader political issues: Britain was, in the words of Madariaga, "in an awkward position over the repression of opium out of whose production and trade a number of their Asiatic possessions made handsome revenues". The French and the British locked horns over this issue: the British pushed the French on 'white slave trafficking', while the French pushed the British on opium.[82] A testimony to his dexterity, Drummond resolved the matter by taking the New Zealander as part of his personal staff, promising to lend him out to the Social and Opium Section when needed.[83]

If the first observation is that state interests were infused into all staff questions discussed by the AC; then the second one is that the AC (re)produced a hierarchy of states through their practices. This hierarchy of states mirrored the Secretariat's perceptions of power, prestige, culture and civilization, and would find its physical – flesh and bone – expression in the men and women of the Secretariat.

Third, and last, it is evident from the AC's early deliberations that a broad representation of nationalities was preferable to strict meritocracy and absolute efficiency. In this sense, the debates of

the first two Assemblies shaped not only the rules of the Secretariat – i.e. the staff regulations – but also its actual practice.

Arguing in favour of hiring its first Finnish Member of Section (Minorities), professor Attolico said he had "come across Article 16 of the Staff Regulations which provided for appointments without competition in cases where it was desired to secure officials of particular nationalities", judging this as "a case where that rule should be applied". This was a significant interpretation, since it would establish precedence for similar situations. However, nationality would not be an asset if the candidate was not supported by the government of that country. In fact, (s)he could very well become a liability. In this instance, Colban could report that the Finnish candidate "was warmly recommended by all three Members of the Finnish Delegation to the Assembly while his Government would regard him as a *fair representative* on the Secretariat". Drummond was thus prepared to offer a 7-year contract with a one-year probation.[84]

One obvious reason for this practice was the Secretariat's need to be perceived as an *inter*national actor. As Drummond and his former colleagues would reflect during the Second World War:

> "Delegates and diplomats acting as employment agents for their compatriots can force upon the responsible officials the issue of whether to build a highly efficient, hard-working staff, chosen from about fifteen or twenty countries at the cost of dissatisfaction among all the other members, or one which is not necessarily less efficient as a whole, but is somewhat larger than would be required from a strictly working point of view, since it contains a quota of officials appointed primarily for reasons of nationality".

One could not ignore factors of "national prestige and interest", Drummond argued, and representation of all the member states was, therefore, "desirable in itself, both for the contacts it establishes and because it assuages the legitimate desires of Governments".[85]

The second reason for a broad representation, then, as Drummond articulated, was to secure good liaison with as many member states as possible. In a discussion of the Staff Committee in 1921, a Serbian candidate for the Information Section was forwarded by Director Comert because the candidate would be "the first Serbian who had actually been recommended by the Serbian Government. He had relations with both parties in Serbia". Drummond, however, could not agree: "[He] was not of [the] opinion that the Information Section should be a microcosm of the whole Secretariat. It was the duty of the members of the various sections to keep in touch with their own governments, and not only the function of the Information Section".[86] Thus, every (higher) member of the Secretariat was considered as a contact point of his/her respective government. With years, this would be the norm: in a report on the first Seven-Year period on a Venezuelan member of the Disarmament Section, Drummond praised him for 'excellent liaison work'.[87] Equally, when Aghnides received his above-mentioned special seniority, this was partly because he was "the only member of the Secretariat responsible for the liaison work with Greece which had recently attained a considerable proportion".[88] In considering the best combination of "efficiency in the secretariat and confidence on the part of member States" liaison activities made up one of two major aspects of its external relations. It was, Drummond later concluded, important that liaison work "should be spread among the staff as widely as possible, because this helps to keep the officials in personal touch with conditions away from the centre". Thus, liaison work was essential not only to gain access and legitimacy, but also in order to keep the Secretariat itself from becoming insular.[89]

The third observation is, therefore, that the AC and Drummond preferred broad representation to strict meritocracy, because this – combined with a tacit reproduction of state hierarchies – gave them legitimacy as an *international* actor and leverage as a *diplomatic* actor. This way the Secretariat's inner most procedures of staffing were directly linked to its external authority.

5. Entering the Diplomatic field

The Secretariat's character and capacity as a diplomatic agent emerged gradually. The process started with decisions about how the Secretariat should act in relation to the Allied powers coming out of the First World War. It continued through the myriad of decisions on how to prepare agendas and organize deliberations in the Council and Assembly and it branched out to discussions on how to engage with the ILO, with international conferences outside the League, with the new League of Nations Associations, with overseas member states, with neutral member states, with Germany and the Soviet Union, with the press and so on. Through this plethora of *ad hoc* decision-making, Drummond and his closest allies gradually developed an understanding of the Secretariat as collective and stable international actor.[90]

However, it was not until 1922 that the Secretariat leadership was confronted with the inherent dilemma between its proclaimed independence and neutrality, on the one hand, and its sensibility to and deep inclusion of national interests so apparent in its staffing practices, on the other. The dilemma was triggered by the Genoa Conference. The first major international conference to tackle relationships between League member states, Germany and the Soviet Union, the conference came to highlight the question of what and who the Secretariat represented when engaging in a broader diplomatic context. This prompted the Secretary-General to articulate some of the core traits of the Secretariat as a diplomatic actor. In a meeting, 30 March 1922, Drummond stated that he was "afraid that if the members of the secretariat got into the habit of thinking of themselves as representatives of their Governments, this would in course of time, undermine the whole basis on which the Secretariat had been organized. He feared it might prove a disruptive force of great importance".[91] Drummond then went on to instruct participants in the meeting on the line he wanted them to pursue as Secretariat members at the conference, stressing that they should strike a balance

between the French and British standpoints and aim to ensure that the work of the conference was handed over to the League unless this proved impossible due to German and Soviet resistance.[92]

Drummond's clear instruction that loyalty to the Secretariat trumped national loyalties, and that members of the Secretariat were allowed to represent the Secretariat and its policies only, marked a critical point in the Secretariat's institutional maturing, as it unequivocally established the Secretariat's status as a coherent and independent diplomatic persona. However, it was a standpoint that also raised serious problems; for the members of the Secretariat to act in unison, clear instructions about the Secretariat's policies were needed. However, the very notion that the League had the authority to autonomously develop policies was controversial. This had become clear already in the Noblemaire Report in 1921 which had applauded the Secretariat's efficiency, intellectual capacity and initiative, but also made it quite clear that the staff were not to proceed any further in the direction of independent initiative. In Noblemaire's analysis, the Secretariat was entrusted with the task of preparing and implementing the decisions of the Council, Assembly and committees, but not competent to make suggestions or make independent interpretations of the decisions reached in the League's political bodies.[93]

The Secretariat's scope of maneuver was put on the Secretariat leadership's agenda in February of 1923 when Colban proposed to strengthen the political function of the Directors' Meetings. The Directors' Meetings were weekly meeetings among the Secretary-General, Under Secretaries-General and Directors met and Colban suggested that this group should start devising policies for the Secretariat. This suggestion was met with strong opposition. Joseph Avenol, who had recently joined the Secretariat, picked up on Noblemaire's point and made an intervention that resonated through all the other reactions to Colban's proposal, when he pointed out that fundamentally all authority in the Secretariat's work lay with the national governments: serving 51

different governments, no less, the Secretariat was to have no independent administrative or executive power of its own, nor had its members the duty, or the right, of initiating policy.

The solution to this conflict between the need for autonomous Secretariat policies and the lack of authority to initiate them was, according to the majority in the meeting, to provide leadership and assert influence in a less tangible way and in dialogue with member states. As van Hamel put it, "while there could be no active policy for the Secretariat, the Secretary-General nevertheless had a moral responsibility of the development of the League – this with the help of Governments, and not against their will".[94]

To exercise this indirect, moral leadership, the multinational setup of the Secretariat was crucial. The broad national composition enabled Drummond to make decisions and devise strategies that were based on a clear understanding of the views of the member states with most at stake in any particular case. As Drummond himself phrased it: "… if a question arose which specially affected a particular country, or particular member of the Secretariat, it was his habit to consult the opinions of those of his colleagues who were interested."[95] On the other hand, if conflicts between member states arose, as Loveday later reflected, the international civil servant "is the servant of all Member States in their collective capacity and is there not to take sides in a dispute, but to further the purpose of the organization that employs him".[96] To make the Secretariats unbiasedness crystal clear, Drummond would often assign a member of the Secretariat of a nationality with no interest in the matter, to assist with the problem at hand. Moreover, the multinational setup of the Secretariat – and of its leadership in particular – also represented a valuable resource in shaping member state opinions. Since the early days of the League, Drummond had regularly called on his Under Secretaries General and Directors to visit their home countries and nudge them towards his preferred solutions. In February 1923, Drummond made this explicit: "while agreeing that, technically, the Secretariat must not be held to have any policy of its own, [he] recognized that the individual Directors did, in fact, exercise a

considerable influence on opinion in League matters within their respective countries. It was essential that they should all speak with the same voice, and therefore desirable that they should agree in advance on the line to be taken."[97]

In sum, it seems safe to conclude that the particular mix of institutional autonomy and deep integration of national interests that we have outlined in the recruitment practices was crucial to the Secretariat's capacity to act as an efficient and legitimate diplomat agent. In particular, it shows how the broad national setup of the Secretariat and its sensibility to existing power hierarchies enabled it to assert an authority that was created in a continuous dialogue with member states and which was both in tune with and capable of transcending their immediate interests and agendas.

6. League Staffing Practices – the interwar years and beyond

By 1923, the institutional infrastructure and formal regulations around staff selection had found a settled, permanent form. Judged by the limited existing literature, the League's actual recruitment practices also continued to develop along the course plotted in the early 1920s. While the great powers maintained their dominance over the highest posts in the Secretariat,[98] the tendency to broaden recruitment practices for the middle-range posts to include more member states continued. In 1920, there were 15 different nationalities working in the Secretariat. By 1930, that number had grown to 38 and by 1938 to 43.[99] The overall regional (im)balances in the Secretariat also remained in place as the ratio between European and non-European officials only shifted slightly: from 7:1 in 1920, 5:1 in 1930.[100]

The League's model for balancing internationality and national considerations also came to shape the 'second generation' of IOs following the Second World War, that is, in large parts, still in operation today. It did so, not least due to representatives of the Secretariat themselves. In a series of meetings in London during the Second World War, Drummond and other leading (ex-)League officials drew up a report to convey the institutional know-how of the League Secretariat to

subsequent IOs.[101] These experiences, many of them summarised in the so-called London Report, came to lie at the heart of the setting up of the administration of the United Nations and its special agencies. The report was picked up by The International Civil Service Advisory Board, set up in 1949 to develop a standard of conduct for international civil servants. The Board was chaired by long term League official Thanassis Aghnides and its 'Report on Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service (1st Ed. 1954)' came to serve as a handbook for international civil servants in the UN, the ILO, the WHO, GATT and many other international organizations. The Standards of Conduct drew explicitly on the London Report and it was, as historian Benjamin Auberer writes, a "comprehensive appraisal of the need for an independent international civil service modelled in many respects on the League's international civil service".[102]

Reading the 'Standards of Conduct', we note how autonomy and internationality is valued and presented much in the same way as in the Secretariat. Referring to Article 101 of the United Nations Charter, they laid out clearly that the generally accepted ideal now was an *international* civil service, where each international civil servant was expected to act with integrity, 'an international outlook' and undivided loyalty to the institution. What this 'international outlook' meant in everyday practice was, in fact, based explicitly on Thanassis Aghnides' personal experiences in the League Secretariat, where he felt the encounters with colleagues from different nationalities "rub off one's rough spots and sharp edges", offering a daily "opportunity and obligation to demonstrate [ones] 'international-mindedness'".[103]

Likewise, "[…] the independent selection of staff by the Secretary-General and Executive Heads of the specialized agencies […]" was another essential criterion for the UN systems administration. The Board attached "the greatest importance" to this principle and emphasized that it needed to be "maintained in practice as well as in theory".[104] With this a basic tenet, the recruitment process itself would also replicate, at least for the foreseeable future, the League system, with a

Selection Board established *within* the Secretariat, which would "be advisory to the Executive Head, who would retain his independent authority for the final choice", and a competitive examination for recruitments to certain parts of the administration.[105]

Just as the UN system safeguarded the internationality and autonomy of the Secretariat much in the same ways as the League had done, it also replicated its practices for creating legitimacy through the integration of state interests. For instance, two reports of the Civil Service Advisory Board[106], which the 'Standard of Conducts' were based upon, laid out clearly that the selection of staff should by based on efficiency and competence as well as a "wide geographical distribution of the staff".[107] As had been the case in the League, the Board considered that geographical distribution was more important in political parts of the UN machinery than in the small specialized agencies. However, referring to experiences of "every international organization" and "the League of Nations", the Board also held that local recruitment was essential in the lower levels of the administration and that "the value to the organization of geographical distribution in these levels [did] not outweigh the difficulties."[108] Equally modelling itself on the League, the Board adopted the principle that promotions should be sought within the institution first and from other international organizations second, before hiring from the outside, while allowing a "reasonable inflow of fresh talent".[109] Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Board stressed the importance of flexibility and room of manoeuvre in staffing questions. The Board thus recommended "a regional approach to geographical distribution", and that 'corrections' should be made gradually, and without a rigid scrutiny of singular departments, but rather considering "the Secretariat as a whole". Echoing Drummond, the Board opposed any strict quota, though this had been advanced by several governments, holding the "firm conviction that the fixing of any rigid quota for geographical distribution would be extremely harmful to an international secretariat".[110]

The 'Standards of Conduct' remained relatively unchanged until 2001, getting its last major update in 2013, and is still an important document for international civil servants.[111] Its specific model of balancing autonomy and legitimacy seems almost self-evident today but it is – in large part – the product of specific institutional choices and practices of staffing within the League Secretariat, performed in the peculiar historical context of the aftermath of the Great War. Thus, this article conveys one of the foundational roots of the omnipresent and contested international bureaucracy we know today.

7. Conclusions

This article has explored how the League of Nations Secretariat managed to establish itself as an autonomous organisation in the formative years of the League (1919-1923). Drawing on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, and in particular the concepts of *field* and *practice* as elaborated by Jackson, the article has shown how core traits of the League of Nations institutional capacity and identity were produced through the early negotiations and practices of staffing from 1919 to 1923. It has demonstrated how through the careful balancing of a strong insistence on institutional independence and an acute sensitivity to state interests, the Secretary-General managed to build the Secretariat's autonomy and legitimacy as an indepedendent bureaucratic field among member states.

More specifically, it has shown how there were three elements to the process. First, there were the early and critically important decisions taken by Sir Eric Drummond in the spring of 1919 which had a constitutive effect on the form and function of the Secretariat as an international bureaucratic field. Second, the dialectic process that played out between the Secretariat and the Assembly from 1920 to 1922, as the Assembly attempted to assert its influence over the national composition of the Secretariat while Drummond struggled to preserve the Secretariat's institutional autonomy. This saw the Secretariat emerge as an increastingly densely structured professionalized field. Thirdly, we have mapped how the Secretariat actually 'did' nationality' in its staffing practices

in the AC. Here we observed how it was an omnipresent concern predominant in all staff appointments and how, despite the lack of clearly explicated principles, staffing practices reproduced European power hierarchies and a certain civilizational order. Thus, while emerging as a new, independendat diplomatic actor, the Secretariat was also fundamentally shaped by the European and international order it formed part of.

We conclude that this particular mix of institutional autonomy and deep integration of state interests was crucial to the Secretariat's capacity to act as an efficient and legitimate diplomat agent as well as to the way in which the UN and other major international organizations after the Second World War approached the delicate balancing act between internationality and nationality in an international civil service.

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[1] 'Staffing practices' in the context of this article covers all employments except ad hoc hirings of experts on short term contracts.

[2] Peter Jackson, 'Pierre Bourdieu, the 'cultural turn' and the practice of international history', *Review of International Studies*, 34 (2008), 155-181, 163.

[3] Egon F. Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat. A Great Experiment in International Administration* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945); C. Howard-Ellis, *The Origin, Structure and Working of the League of Nations* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928); Frank P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (Oxford: OUP, 1952).

[4] Klaas Dykmann, 'How International was the Secretariat of the League of Nations?', *The International History Review*, 37:4 (2015), 721-744.

[5] Dykmann, 'International', 721(in abstract).

[6] Dykmann, 'International', 738.

[7] Jackson, 'Bourdieu', 156f; Kenneth A. Osgood and Brian Craig Etheridge, 'Introduction: The New International History Meets the New Cultural History: Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Relations', in Kenneth A. Osgood and Brian Craig Etheridge (eds.), *United States and Public Diplomacy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 7-8.

[8] Andrew J. Rotter 'Culture', in Patrick Finney (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in International History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 267-99; Jackson, 'Bourdieu', 156-8.

[9] David Reynolds, 'Culture, Discourse and Policy: Reflections on the New International History', in: David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War. Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 331-51. Jackson, 'Bourdieu', 159-161; Volker Depkat, 'Cultural Approaches and International relations – A Challenge?', in Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (eds.), *Culture and International History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 175-197.

[10] Jackson, 'Bourdieu', 163-4.

[11] For an exception, see: T. G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind.The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

[12] Alexander Loveday, *Reflections on International Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 21-2.

[13] Eric Drummond, 'The Secretariat of the League of Nations', in *International Public Administration*, 9:3 (1931), 228-35, 228.

[14] http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art6; http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art7 (6 July 2017).

[15] Arthus W. Rovine, *The First Fifty Years. The Secretary-General in World Politics 1920-1970* (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1970), 33-36.

[16] Drummond, 'Secretariat', 228.

[17] League of Nations Archives, Geneva (Henceforth LONA), R1455, Secretariat of the League of Nations. Draft of Provisional Organisation. – Villa Majestic, Paris, 31 March 1919, M. Hankey.

[18] Drummond, 'Secretariat', 229.

[19] Drummond, 'Secretariat', 230; LONA-R1455, First meeting of the Organisation Committee of the League of Nations – May 5th 1919, Hotel Crillon.

[20] LONA-R1455, Response to Wiseman's scheme 30 April 1919, E. Drummond; Memorandum – British Delegation, Paris, 6 May 1919, E. Sutherland Campbell Percy; The League of Nations: Organisation. Memo relative to its organisation […] – 7 May 1919, E. Drummond.

[21] Drummond, 'Secretariat', 232.

[22] Drummond, 'Secretariat', 235.

[23] LONA-R1455, The Organisation of the League of Nations – 30 April 1919, E. Wiseman.

[24] LONA-R1455, Response to Wiseman's scheme 30 April 1919, E. Drummond

[25] LONA-R1455, First meeting of the Organisation Committee of the League of Nations – Hotel Crillon, 5 May 1919.

[26] LONA-R1455, Response to Wiseman's scheme, 30 April 1919, E. Drummond.

[27] Eric Drummond, 'Foreword', in *Ten Years of World Co-Operation*, (Geneva: Secretariat of the League of Nations, 1930), vi.

[28] LONA-R1455, The Secretariat of the League of Nations – 09 April 1919, E. Drummond.

[29] Drummond, 'Secretariat', 229.

[30] Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *Administration*, 56, 62, 68; Howard-Ellis, *The Origin*, 185.

[31] See for instance Rovine, *Fifty Years*, 41-43**.**

[32] LONA-R1455, Organisation Committee of the League of Nations. Memorandum for Council – June 1919, E. Drummond.

[33] LONA-R1455, Draft Resolution for submission to the Organisation Committee – 9 July 1919.

[34] Fosdick *League*, (Newton Connecticut, 1972), 24.

[35] LONA-R1460, Under Secretaries and Directors – 3 December 1920, E. Drummond.

[36] LONA-R1460, Appointment of Personnel – 26 June, 1919, E. Drummond.

[37] Quoted from Rovine, *Fifty Years*, 36.

[38] Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *Administration*, 318-319. Memorandum by the Secretary-General, dated 22 December 1920.

[39] C.E./1-27, 1921 – Minutes: Fourth Committee. Second Meeting, 19 November 1920. *Our Italics.*

[40] Confirmed in the Noblemaire report: *Organisation du secretariat et du bureau international du travail. Rapport de la commission d'Experts constituée en vertu de la decision prise par l'Asemblée de la Société des Nations dans sa séance du 17 décembre 1920*, Geneva, 1921. *Our italics.*

[41] LONA – *Directors Meetings* (*DM*), Minutes, 16 February 1921.

[42] LONA-R1460, Provisional Statutes for the Staff of the International Secretariat, Geneva, 1 June 1921.

[43] LONA-R1460, Staff Regulations 1st Edition, Art. 10, Geneva, 1 June 1922.

[44] LONA-S954, File 1, Minutes: 1st Meeting, AC, 20 January 1922.

[45] LONA-S954, File 1, Minutes: 8th Meeting, AC, June 27, 1922; Noblemaire Report, p. 63 https://archive.org/details/organisationofse00leag (25 May 2017).

[46] LONA-S954-958.

[47] Drummond, Fourth committee 15 September 1921, The League of Nations, *The Records of the Second Assembly, Meetings of the Committees II,* Geneva 1921, 35, cf. also Drummond, 'Secretariat', 235.

[48] 17 League of Nations O.J. Spec. Supp. (1923) - Minutes of the Fourth Committee. 109. Method of Appointing Officials of the Secretariat, 58.

[49] Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *Administration,* 318-319.

[50] Loveday, *Reflections*, 53.

[51] LONA-R1460, Statutes for the Personnel of the Secretariat – Office Circular – Erik Colban, Chairman of the Staff Committee, Geneva, 21 March 1921.

[52] LONA-R1460, Statutes for the Personnel of the Secretariat - Provisional Statutes for the Staff of the International Secretariat, Geneva, 1 June 1921.

[53] Frangulis (Greece), Fourth committee 17 Sept 1921, League, *Records*, 48.

[54] "Organisation of the Secretariat and of the International Labour Office", League of Nations: *The Records of the Second Assembly. Meetings of the Committees II*, Geneva 1921, Annex 2, 174-222.

[55] League, *Records*, 188.

[56] League, *Records*, 230-1.

[57] Sir William Meyer, Fourth Committee, 15 Sept 1921, League, *Records*, 33-4; see also, Mr. Sastri in the 10th Plenary Meeting 13 Sept 1921, League, *Records*, 215-6.

[58] 'Resolution proposed by Sir William Meyer (India) on the National Composition of the Secretariat', League, *Records*, 230.

[59] Drummond, Fourth Committee, 15 Sept 1921, League, *Records*, 34.

[60] Drummond, Fourth Committee, 15 Sept 1921, League, *Records*, 36.

[61] Sir George Perley, Fourth Committee, 15 Sept 1921, League, *Records*, 37.

[62] LONA-R1460, Staff Regulations 1st Edition, Geneva, 1 June 1922.

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