



Europe's Search for Security After World War One

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Connectedness and Sustainable Security

1. Global connection and shocks, early 20th century and now.

Events of the past few years, and notably Covid-19 has forced us to confront some of the hazards inherent in our ever-more interconnected world. In the 21st Century world, the gravest challenge to our security seems to lie in the fact that our societies seem ever more interconnected.

We are told we face the real possibility of new waves of epidemic disease with potentially worse outcomes. These possible shocks are not limited to epidemics. Future shocks could be environmental, geo-political, technological, or social.

But our perception that the dangers presented by this sense of 'ever greater interconnected world' is far from new. One hundred years ago, Europeans similarly confronted the challenges of connectedness.

2. Challenging binary thinking about war and peace; stability or crisis; equilibrium and shock.

We tend to think of war and peace as absolutes; to see historical time as periods of crisis and stability, punctuated by moments when we tip from one state to the other. We organized the grand historical narrative of continental Europe in the Twentieth Century around the two total wars - the First and Second World Wars. We separate them by the crisis-filled inter-years.

The period between 1945 and 1990(is), is generally characterized as a period of apparent stability for a continent divided and ordered by the Cold, even as Europe's leading imperial states shed their empires.

Since the late 1990s, and certainly since the impact of the credit crunch in 2008, it feels as if we're revisiting the turbulent years of the 1920s.

In this lecture, I want to challenge this binary thinking: stability or crisis; equilibrium and shock, by revising the history of Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, focusing particularly on the 'roaring twenties.

Contemporaries described the nature of these inter-connected challenges as one of effecting sustainable security for Europe. They understood to mean the creation of a durable peace within, and beyond the continent's frontiers.

3. Setting the scene in 1920s Europe: unfinished peace of Paris 1919; unresolved Franco-German tensions; 'shatter-zones in Central and Eastern Europe'.

For many historians, notably those writing after 1940, described Europe, and its place in the world, was far from secure from the moment the First World War came to an end. The unfinished peace of Versailles, notably in relation to unresolved Franco-German rivalries. More recently, historians' gaze has moved further east and to the history of less conventional wars. They underscored how the violence of the First World War bled into revolutionary wars in Russia, and along its borderlands.

4. New theories and practices intended to promote cooperation.

At the same time as this conflict, the 1920s witnessed major advances in the theories and practice of

international relations. Men, women, many of them young people, founded a raft of new international and non-governmental organizations. The peace-making process of the Paris Peace Conference, and its aftermath generated a major new corpus of international law.

5. Questions the lecture seeks to explore:

- a. What should we make of the twin-tracks on which Europe found itself: conflict *and* cooperation?
- b. And what can this history tell us about managing future shocks in Europe's search for sustainable future?

6. Introducing case studies: Austro-Hungarian and British Empire.

I will spend some time looking at the effects of shocks that hit the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in the first years after the First World War - notably what became the republic of Austria, and how this experience shaped the new international order, dominated by Britain and its allies.

7. Understanding global order

Global order (Hurrell) comprises the changing constellation of relationships between states, civil society, and markets. These are sometimes arranged and, to some degree, made stable in international institutions - international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) - that oversee and promote a particular view of global order.

This section concludes with signposts indicating the next three parts of the lecture: food shock; financial shock; trade shocks, and their implications for the composition of global order, and the meaning and purpose of international cooperation.

Democracy, Public Opinion, International Organization

8. States increasingly accountable to public opinion when it comes to foreign policy. New bodies created to help manage this

These bodies include the British Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House); US Council of Foreign Relations; Graduate Institute in Geneva; university chairs in International Relations. They link representative opinion (politicians) with expert opinion (academics, scientists, civil servants), and seek to bridge across to the public.

9. Discussion at the very first meeting when Chatham House is created sets out **Perceived dangers of public debate** - fear governments too responsive to its whims while recognizing its positive sides as a result of the war, and end of empire.
10. We look at the views of **Lionel Curtis** at Anglo-American meeting in Paris. He was instrumental in setting up Chatham House: *'the settlements being made in Paris were mainly the resultant of the **public opinion the various countries concerned, which public opinions were often in conflict.** The future molding of those settlements would depend upon how far public opinion in these countries would be right or wrong. **Right public opinion was mainly produced by a small number of people in real contact with the facts who had thought through the issues involved...** national policy ought to be shaped by a conception of the interests of society at large; for it was in the advancement of that universal interest that the particular interest of the several nations would alone be found'.ⁱ*

Curtis' perspective reflected a commonplace view among statesmen of the former wartime allies. On the one hand, the democratization of foreign policy was to be welcomed; on the other, the plurality of voices needed to be controlled, for the sake of their national and imperial interests. While the new world order after 1919 made claims to universalism, the victorious powers which dominated it had the interests of particular states and groups in mind.

11. Creation and purpose of the League of Nations: establish *rules* and bureaucratic procedures on which stable and legitimate cooperation in the world would depend.

The creation of a new inter-governmental organization to promote international co-ordination and co-operation was point number 14 of President Woodrow Wilson's, 14 points. These were the basis of the

Armistice agreed in November 1918. Wilson famously ran into difficulties, of course, with the US Congress and never joined the League. With the USA's departure, Britain's dominance in the League of Nations emboldened it to regard the new inter-governmental organization as a multilateral hub to manage its relations with Europe and with its empire.

12. League of Nations. Multi-purpose inter-governmental organization. European powers and concerns dominate.

The League of Nations was part of an attempt to establish *rules* and bureaucratic procedures on which stable and legitimate cooperation in the world would depend. It was not intended to do away with balance of power politics, which remained inherent to the League of Nations. What the League did signal was that the world's most powerful states should be accountable to others through international institutions and international law.



1 Open covenants
openly arrived at ...
no private
international
understandings of
any kind ...
diplomacy shall
proceed always
frankly and in the
public view.

Figure 1 Wilson's Fourteen Points

13. Traditional security: protecting borders; controlling weapons.

Many political leaders sought to play prominent roles internationally as a way to build domestic support. They included figures such as Austen Chamberlain, Antony Eden, Gustav Stresemann, Mahatma Gandhi, and, more problematically perhaps, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. Through the League of Nations, they articulated a commitment to open-diplomacy, and a wish to engage civil society in the project of world-making. Meanwhile, the League of Nations bureaucrats sought to promote co-ordination and co-operation between states in simple, but significant ways: by collecting and exchanging information, and developing a shared language around terms and standards as to what Europe and the world comprised.

14. Future shocks means some elements of the League built from the bottom up: introducing health and hunger; economic and financial relations.

Hunger and Health - Human and Strategic Resources

15. Blockades during and after the First World War and their impact on central and eastern Europe.

Britain's blockade of Europe, devised in anticipation of the First World War, was central to its strategy to contain, and then defeat Germany and the central powers.

16. Hunger and disease. The case of Austria-Hungary; German-Austria and Austria 1919-1920.

The circumstances of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were a little different to Germany. When it came to food, in theory, Austria-Hungary was self-sufficient. In practice, fierce ethno-national rivalries, fueled by expectations of self-determination, carved up its previously integrated and sophisticated food-markets. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire imploded in 1918, and a new provisional state, first called -German-Austria emerged, it experienced an immediate and visceral future shock.

It remained under Allied blockade – Britain, France and the Associated Power the United States intended to keep the blockade in place until the terms of the peace treaties at Paris were agreed and signed.

17. William Beveridge, Ministry of Food, on the Austrians, Dec 1919:

'beggars... sans food, sans country, sans money, sans everything'.ⁱⁱ

The new state of German -Austria, or Austria as it formally recognized in on 1 October 1920, comprised the world city of Vienna, with a population of over 2 million – with numbers rising significantly thanks to an influx of German-speaking migrants - and a mountainous, in hospitable hinterland.

18. Food quality as well as quantity; the impact of food supplements - example of Vitamin D.

Preoccupation with quality of food, as well as its quantity, reflected the importance the new field of nutritional science gained in the war. (Disease of malnutrition affected both military recruitment and the efficacy of soldiers and sailors in the field.) There was also new work emerging on the relationship between epidemic disease among soldiers, and its contagious effects on civilians

19. New agencies - League of Nations Health Organization built from the ground up. Cooperation with former enemy states and experts, e.g. Pediatrician Clemens Peter Freiherr von Pirquet.

Austria was not the only place that was desperately hunger. Deprivation was acute across much of central and eastern Europe. The Americans were mobilized to help, and they set up the American Relief Administration under the direction of Herbert Hoover. Over time, children's health recovered thanks to food aid. Countries also received aid supplies of shoes, and clothing. Together, this experience prompted a series of campaigns and initiatives that extended beyond the field of nutrition that would shape new international bodies, notably the League of Nations. Aid efforts spread from Vienna out across central Europe, and led many of the actors involved to Geneva, and the League of Nations.

20. Rise of the modern Non-Governmental Organization: Save the Children Fund founded by Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton.

Evidence emanating from Austria regarding the scale of infant and child hunger proved sensational. It prompted British women, led by sisters Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton to launch a campaign against Hunger and the continuation of the Allied Blockade.

Widening the definition of Security to Finance and Trade

21. Effects of related 'shocks': hunger, epidemic disease, financial crash, and significant geo-political change.

The effect of this international aid on the ground was to create new agencies inside the League of Nations that broadened the meaning of security from an association with borders and weapons. Women and youth groups, such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in particular, advanced a broad definition of security that focused on the social and economic elements needed to sustain the peace. Inflation and Hyperinflation, and League of Nations intervention to stabilize the currency and return it to the gold standard.

22. Widening remit of the League of Nations

The League's machinery for public engagement, established to promote democratically accountable foreign policy, put its shoulder to the wheel of sound money. League officials put the Austrian economy under international supervision, and forced it to cut costs dramatically. International officials were also empowered

to gather intelligence and take ‘practical steps’ to facilitate communication and cooperation regarding world markets.ⁱⁱⁱ This had not been part of its original brief. The supervisory regime pioneered by the League set the mold for the practices of financial oversight subsequently adopted by the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.

23. Complex ethno-national dynamics on the ground that shape national responses to international cooperation.

In contrast to the complex relationship between ethno-nationalism and state sovereignty in many of the successor states of the former European empire, Austria was a relatively straight-forward. It was predominately German and much more ethnically homogenous than the new states of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, say. But this apparent homogeneity harboured different dangers.

There was a deep divide between Red Vienna, and the conservative Catholic countryside, which reinforced the sense of separation between the city of Vienna, and the surrounding rural territories.

24. Threats to Austrian Jews because of international aid - Bertha Pappenheim, founder of German League of Jewish Women:

International aid exposed Jews to charges of ‘*unfair distribution and unjustified favours*’.^{iv}

Cooperation and Conflict

25. Uneven operation of free trade after 1919. Germany, Austria, Hungary ‘forced to be free’; Legal formulation of free trade created legal latitude for Britain and US to offer special preferential deals to their historic’ trading partners in the Empire and central and South America respectively.

Article 23(e) of the Covenant of the League of Nations

to secure ... **equitable treatment for the commerce** of all Members of the League.



Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, Chief Economic Advisor of HMG, 1919-1927

Treaty of St Germain-en-Laye

If the Austrian Government engages in international trade, it shall **not** in respect thereof have or **be deemed to have any rights, privileges or immunity of sovereignty.**

Four extended articles regarding restrictions re. use of trade-marks etc.

Figure 2: League of Nations Covenant on Trade compared with Allied Treaty with Austrian Republic

26. Richard Riedl, Austrian trade expert, 1920:

A byproduct of the American-led process of national emancipation seems to be the commercial atomization of Central Europe and the suppression of German economic expansion to the benefit of England and America.^v

27. Austria wanted to effect ‘Anschluss’, or union, with Germany to make its ethnic German people feel more secure.

The Allies prohibited this in 1919, and the terms reinforced in the financial aid to Austria by international lenders facilitated by the League of Nations after 1920. This seemed unfair given the same legal provisions (article 23e) provided sufficient wiggle room for Britain to reinforce its connections with its empire by adopting imperial preference in 1931.

28. Moritz Bonn German Liberal politician and exile:

‘The historical, geographical and national connection between Germany and Austria is much closer

and older than the ... connections of the British Empire. Your historical connection with the Dominions is a thing of yesterday; our connection with Austria goes back to times of Magna Carta^{vi}

29. Impact of the Great Depression and the rise of economic nationalism.

George Lloyd, 1st Baron Lloyd and Conservative MP:

things were at a turning point and in transition from one stage to another. It seemed to be either of unscrambling the omelette and going back to individual markets, or going forward and completing on a far large scale' some sort of 'organisation' or 'control'^{vii}

30. Development of new economic and financial tools and ideas by the League of Nations in 1930s

This was intended to address social and economic aspects of security. Language of common problems and shared solutions.

Concluding Remarks

31. **Importance of women and youth** activists for widening interpretation of security - and role in international institution building.
32. International cooperation faltered, and then failed. **While the need for international cooperation appeared self-evident in 1919, the meaning and purpose of international cooperation was contested.**
33. Example of Austria illustrated **need for states to be able access resources beyond national frontiers**, and the challenges this posed. In this period, too, resources were viewed as finite. Overtime, international solutions became unattractive, while after 1930, unification with Germany seemed way out of resource dilemma in world of closed markets and limited opportunities. As we have seen, it was a view echoed by British conservatives too.
34. **International arrangements in 1945, in contrast to 1919, gave primacy to economic and financial questions within Western Europe and globally:** IMF, World Bank, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, EEC. But, at the same time, it separated them into **discrete domains:** health, finance, trade, geopolitics & hard security (NATO/UN Security Council) etc. The history of 1919-1939, and the world since 2008-reveal some of the ways in which financial, economic, health, environmental and geopolitical are linked.

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