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The Influence of Marxism
in the Disciplinary “Idealist” Origins of IR:
A Revisionist Study through the Prism of Imperialism

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Marxism is largely absent from the historiography of the discipline of International Relations (IR). This is striking because the formative years of the discipline coincide with a vibrant period in Marxist political thought. This was, after all, the era of, among others, Lenin, Kautsky, Bukharin and Luxemburg. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate to what extent and in what ways Marxist writings and precepts informed the so-called idealist stage of the discipline. Building on the work of revisionist scholars, the thesis reconstructs the writings of five benchmark IR thinkers. The cases of John Hobson, Henry Brailsford, Leonard Woolf, Harold Laski and Norman Angell, are analysed in order to explore the influence that Marxism might have played in their thinking, and in the “idealist years” of the discipline more generally. The thesis demonstrates that although Marxist thought has been neglected by mainstream IR disciplinary historians, it played a significant role in the discipline’s early development. As such, this thesis both challenges the exclusion of Marxist thought from the mainstream disciplinary histories of IR and contributes to a deeper understanding of the role it played in early 20th century IR theory.
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Dedication

To my parents and my beloved wife Melina

To my beautiful children, Eli and Naomi

And to my everything, Elohim
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I have been fortunate to be surrounded by talented academics and fellow PhD students at Glasgow University who have enriched my intellectual experience during my studies. Here again, my supervisors have played an important role in my professional development, particularly in the teaching of “International Relations” at Glasgow University. Georgios Karyotis has also provided me with significant inspiration and support to develop my teaching skills of that particular subject. Additionally, I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Kate Spence and Beth Pearson, who besides being outstanding individuals in a personal level, they kindly helped me to proof-read a couple of chapters of this thesis. My friends Ian Straub, Alex Smith and Gayle-Lynn Brown, were also helpful on this regard and I am sincerely appreciative for that.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their invaluable support throughout my studies. I cannot be thankful enough to my parents, who have always loved me and encouraged me to develop myself as a person and professionally. Crucially, I would like to thank the love of my life, Melina, who has always supported me in every single aspect of my life. Most importantly, I would like to thank Elohim for their patience and love.
Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed Name: Jose Ricardo Villanueva Lira
**List of Abbreviations**

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<tr>
<td>ACIQ</td>
<td>Advisory Committee on International Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPGB</td>
<td>Communist Party of Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>Independent Labour Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPE</td>
<td>International Political Economy</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>LP</td>
<td>Labour Party</td>
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<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Executive Committee</td>
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<td>UDC</td>
<td>Union of Democratic Control</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<td>WWI</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Traditionally, the origins of International Relations (IR) as a stand-alone academic discipline have been traced to 1919 and the inspiration of a generation of so-called liberal idealists. Since the 1990s, however, a growing revisionist literature has challenged both of these assumptions. First, revisionists claim that the roots of IR may lie at the turn of the twentieth century. Second, they contend that the emphasis on liberal internationalism is over-stated. One issue that has not been treated by either traditional or revisionist scholars is the role of Marxist thought in the formative years of IR. This is striking because the first four decades of the twentieth century were not only crucial for the development of IR, they were also an exceptionally fertile period for Marxist political thought—this was, after all, the era of Vladimir Lenin, Karl Kautsky, Nikolai Bukharin and Rosa Luxemburg. Is it really possible that these Marxist intellectuals had negligible impact on early IR, as the historiographical literature would have us believe? Contra this position, this thesis argues that Marxism played a significant role in the early development of IR. Why does this matter? Retrieving the role of Marxism in early IR is important because it promises both a deeper understanding of the discipline and the potential of a Marxist inspired theoretical approach as an alternative to realism and idealism.

1.1 Delineating the Concepts: Marxism and Idealism

Marxism is the tradition of thought initiated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels roughly from the mid 19th century, and subsequently developed by a diverse array of actors, including, perhaps most notably, Lenin, Bukharin, Kautsky and Luxemburg. According to Harold Laski, one of the thinkers examined in this thesis, the essence of Marxism can be considerably captured in two broad principles:

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The first is that as Marx said, “the mode of production in material life conditions the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life.” The second principle is that so long as the instruments of production are privately owned the class which owns them uses the state-power as a coercive weapon by which to maintain its ownership.4

Thus, one of the fundamental characteristics of Marxism is its historical materialistic perspective which emphasises the importance of economics as determinant factor of other issues, such as politics, ideas and culture. Second, Marxism holds an instrumentalist view of the state, as it is perceived as a device utilised for the benefit of a privileged class. In addition to this, Laski identified the Marxian perception of human history determined by class struggles as another core tenet of the theory.5 Moreover, Laski also identified the Marxian criticism of capitalist exploitation and its proposal of a socialist classless more equal society to be achieved through revolutionary means, as part of ‘the ethos’ of Marxism.6 In brief, this thesis embraces Laski’s understandings of Marxism as a theoretical approach which holds historical materialism, instrumentalism, class struggles, anti-capitalism, socialism and revolution, as core concepts/elements of the theory.

In a similar way to the main thinkers analysed in the present study, the thesis distinguishes between Marxism and Socialism, understanding the latter as a broader tradition which includes the former but which also embraces other perspectives.7 Most importantly perhaps for this thesis, some socialist approaches stress democratic values as an essential part of socialism.8 Additionally again in common with the understandings of the thinkers considered in this research, the thesis makes a distinction between classical Marxism and Leninist Marxism/Communism.9 The former refers to the theoretical insights put forward by Marx and Engels. And the latter alludes to a variation in Marxist thought epitomised particularly by a sharper repudiation of parliamentary means based on a ‘praxis’ politically ‘orientated thought’, and by a stronger “economic determinism” in their analyses.10

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5 ibid., p. 90.
7 Engel described his and Marx’s thought as a ‘scientific socialism’. See for instance, K Marx and F Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1948, Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf [17/07/2015].
9 This will be clear in following chapters. See for instance, Laski, p. 97.
10 Given the lack of another term, throughout the thesis ‘economic determinism’ (which is often used by critics of Marxism) is employed in a less pejorative way to refer to how Marxists privileged economics as a determining factor to explain political, juridical, religious and other ‘elements of the superstructure’. V Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975 [1917], pp. 15-16; V Lenin, “All Power to the Soviets”, Marxist Internet Archive, 1917, Available at:
Based on Carr’s influential understandings, the thesis treats liberal idealism/utopianism/internationalism as conventionally a school of thought in early IR which had four essential characteristics. First, according to Carr, early IR intellectuals paid ‘little attention to existing facts or to the analysis of cause and effect...’ Second, Carr considered these intellectuals unappreciated the role of power, and conversely overestimated the power of morality, cooperation and ideas/reason. Third, idealists ‘devote[d] themselves wholeheartedly to the elaboration of visionary projects’ for the eradication of war. Most importantly, they enthusiastically supported the League of Nations for this purpose. Fourth, utopians were wishful/naïve and had too much faith in progress.

1.2 Literature Review: Orthodox and Revisionist Historiographies of early IR

Two narratives have dominated the traditional IR historiography for the past forty years or so. The first account focuses on successive stages of development, with each one dominated by a particular theoretical approach. Thus, according to Hedley Bull the history of the discipline resembles consecutive phases in which ‘the “idealist”… predominated in the 1920s and early 1930s, [and] the ‘realist’… in the late 1930s and 1940s...” For Bull, the distinctive characteristic of idealist thinkers in the discipline was ‘their belief in progress’, specifically in the possibility of a ‘more peaceful and just world order.’ This


[14] ibid. p. 34.
point of view has subsequently been endorsed by a wide range of scholars in the field, and has become a commonplace in textbooks.  

The second narrative presents the early years of the field through the prism of the so-called ‘first great debate’. As said by this orthodox account, the major initial intellectual confrontation within the discipline took place between idealism and realism during the 1930s and 1940s. It is also maintained that there were several issues of disagreement between these two schools. Whereas idealists emphasised international law, cooperation and peace; realists stressed the importance of power politics, self-interest and war. This debate, we are told, ‘was clearly won by’ realism.

These narratives share much in common. Both suppose that the carnage of the Great War and the fervent desire to avoid another major international confrontation precipitated the birth of the discipline, and that liberal internationalism was key to this development. As E H Carr put it in 1939, ‘the passionate desire to prevent war determined the whole initial course and direction of the study. Like other infant sciences, the science of international politics has been markedly and frankly utopian. It has been in the initial stage in which wishing prevails over thinking…’ As a result, it is commonly suggested that ‘utopianism, or wishful thinking… characterised the study and practice of international politics between the wars’. This framing is conducive to associating the emergence of IR with the conclusion of the First World War and the conception of the League of Nations in 1919, an institution supported by “idealist” intellectuals of the time to ameliorate the problems of international anarchy.

Although these conventional narratives remain pervasive in popular IR textbooks, the last two decades have seen their authority challenged by the emergence of a revisionist school.

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17 Jackson and Sorensen, p. 44.


20 Besides being connected with the creation of the League of Nations, the birth of the discipline has been conventionally linked with the establishment of the first department dedicated to International Politics at the University of Aberystwyth in 1919. See for example: Burchill and Linklater, p. 6.

of thought. Leading scholars in the subject such as Brian Schmidt, Lucian Ashworth, David Long, and Peter Wilson, have called into question a number of assumptions and claims that underlie the standard accounts. In particular, they have argued that 1) the topics researched by early IR went well beyond those related to internationalism; 2) the selection of 1919 as the year in which the discipline was born is tendentious; 3) the labelling of early IR intellectuals as idealists is unhelpful; and 4) the first great debate, if it did happen, did not happen in the way it is usually portrayed.

First, this body of literature has shown that to limit the so-called utopian period of the discipline with the study of themes related to liberal idealism/internationalism is imprecise. In Thinkers of the Twenty Years’ Crisis (1995), David Long concludes the book saying that after reviewing a number of IR intellectuals from the interwar period, such as Norman Angell, Alfred Zimmern and Leonard Woolf, it was clear that “the dominance of something called idealism in inter-war international theory turns out to be an exaggeration…”22 and that instead, the study of a diversity of themes on international affairs was present at the time. In particular, some of the subjects identified by the contributors of this book are ‘international organisation’, ‘international political economy’, ‘interdependence’, ‘imperialism’, among others.23 More recently, David Long, Brian Schmidt and other distinguished IR critical historians such as Peter Wilson, argued in Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations (2005) that the two main subjects in early IR were imperialism and internationalism.24

Second, revisionists have argued that the beginnings of IR are not rightly established in 1919. For example, Robert Vitalis proposes that 1919 is too late, and that we should instead date the foundation of the discipline ‘to 1900-1910’.25 According to him, this is advisable because by the early 1900s Paul Reinsch began teaching IR courses in the United States (US) and because in 1910 the first IR journal in the US, the Journal of Race Development, began its life.26 Schmidt has also claimed that the institutional launch of IR

25 Vitalis, p. 163.
26 ibid., p. 161.
should be placed near the onset of the 20th century. Specifically, Schmidt has shown that a significant part of the early work of the American Political Science Association, formed in 1903, was carried out on issues related to international affairs, ‘such as imperialism and colonial administration’.  

Other important revisionist studies have also criticised the conventional starting date of IR on the grounds that the works of influential intellectuals in the discipline predate 1919.  

Third, this critical scholarship has shown that it is not accurate to label the IR intellectuals theorising during the interwar years as idealist. In 2006, for example, Lucian Ashworth reviewed five thinkers conventionally labelled as ‘utopians’ (Norman Angell, Leonard Woolf, Henry Brailsford, David Mitrany and Philip Noel-Baker) and concluded that the attributes usually associated with ‘idealism’ do not properly apply to them. As a result, he maintained that describing the interwar period as ‘idealist’, is an oversimplification of the disciplinary history of the field. Additionally, there have been remarkable book length contributions such as Peter Wilson’s *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf* (2003) and Peter Lamb’s *Harold Laski* (2004), which have shown that the international thought of the thinkers reviewed is wrongly characterised as utopian.  

Finally, some revisionist scholars have depicted the first great debate in the discipline as quasi-mythological. In a compelling 1998 article, Peter Wilson provocatively argued that ‘the first great debate never actually occurred.’ For Wilson, a school of idealism and its supposed contestation with realism was merely a device crafted by Carr to legitimate his

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28 This has been the case of Peter Lamb who pointed out the importance of Brailsford’s *The War of Steel and Gold* (1914) for early IR, and also of Martin Ceadel’s article on Norman Angell in which it is argued that *The Great Illusion* (1909) launched IR as autonomous discipline. See, P Lamb, “Henry Noel Brailsford’s Radical International Relations Theory”, *International Relations*, vol. 25, issue 4, 2011, p. 479; M Ceadel, “The founding text of International Relations? Norman Angell’s seminal yet flawed *The Great Illusion* (1909-1938)”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 37, 2011, p. 1671.  
29 Ashworth, “Where are the Idealists in Interwar International Relations?”, pp. 291, 301.  

14
“realism”. Similarly, in 2002, Ashworth claimed that the interactions between ‘idealists’ and ‘realists’ during the 1930s and 1940s were so insignificant that it was reasonable to conclude that ‘…the realist-idealist debate never happened’. Instead, Ashworth found significant discussions between IR intellectuals on the relation between capitalism and war. Likewise, a decade later Schmidt also argued that the first great debate was something ‘…little more than a disciplinary myth.’ Yet, he found evidence of a ‘great debate’ between idealism and realism; but after the Second World War, and around the issue of US national interest.

On the other hand, a couple of recent studies have claimed that a form of great debate did happen. Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran have argued, for instance, that the first great debate ‘…is best regarded as a “half truth”… rather than a complete fiction’—a point of view later endorsed by Jeremy Weiss.

The present thesis builds upon the contributions of prominent revisionist scholars in IR such as Wilson and Ashworth by filling in one important but overlooked gap in our knowledge of the disciplinary foundations of IR. It examines the importance of Marxism in the early stages of IR. Marxism does not feature in the historiography of the formative years of the discipline; and yet, as this thesis will show, it played an important role in the output of the period.

1.3 Research Question, Central Argument and Main Contributions

This thesis addresses the following question: Can it really be the case that Marxism did not have an impact on early IR?

The central argument of the thesis is that Marxism was an underlying theoretical force in the formative disciplinary years of IR which has been obscured by the conventional historical accounts of the field. To support this claim, the thesis advances three arguments.

First, it claims that early accounts in IR were significantly indebted to Marxism. Second, it argues that labelling the IR thinkers of the interwar years as liberal idealists/internationalists limits our understandings of their output because several paramount IR intellectuals of the time perceived themselves to be within a socialist tradition. Third and as a result of the above points, it maintains that an alternative to realism and idealism, a socialist based international theory during the denominated idealist stage of the discipline, has been neglected in IR. It is shown that the alternative, however, is not orthodox Marxism, but a more flexible socialist approach which tried to reconcile Marxist principles with some liberal tenets.

The contribution of this thesis is threefold. First and foremost, by uncovering the significance of Marxism in the formative years of IR as a discipline, the thesis contributes to the recent critical historiography of the discipline that challenges traditional narratives in IR. In this way, the thesis considerably enhances current historical understandings of the formative period of the discipline. Second, the thesis presents the approach of the theorists in this chapter as an alternative to realist, liberal and even Leninist theorisations. Finally, this study helps to establish solid grounds for future research on the IR intellectuals around the interwar period who embraced Marxist inspired understandings. As it will be seen in the conclusion of the thesis, this gap could be filled in by revisionist accounts in IR and in International Political Economy (IPE).

1.4 Focus, Selection of Thinkers and Methodology

Focus

This work is mainly about the early disciplinary stages of IR. As such, it is primarily about what is often referred to as the idealist stage of the discipline (1919-1939). However, as already stated, this thesis joins several revisionist studies in arguing that the intellectual origins of the discipline can go back to the early 1900s. This thesis confirms that since the turn of the twentieth century there were already intellectuals specialising in international relations. John Hobson, for example published his Imperialism in 1902, which was considerably influenced by Henry Wilshire’s pamphlet The Significance of the Trust (1901), as it will be shown in the next chapter. Moreover, there were already specialised courses in ‘International Politics’ at the onset of the twentieth century. In the article “Political Science in the International Field” (1929), Pitman Potter asserts that a ‘…course
in international politics was [already] established at [the University of] Wisconsin by Professor Reinsch in 1899, and world politics began to be studied at Columbia in 1910. In addition, the ‘…subject was taught in nine other institutions by that time.’ As a result, this thesis takes the turn of the 20th century as its starting point of enquiry.

Interestingly, the onset of the twentieth century also coincides with a theoretical revival of Marxism after a momentary impasse it had as a result of the death of Marx (1883) and Engels (1895). Indeed, it was only until the very last years of the nineteenth century that the Social Democratic Party of Germany embraced a clearer Marxian position, and that the Russian Social Democratic Party (1898) and the Second International were created (1899). These three institutions provided propitious environments for the enrichment of Marxist theorisations, among which imperialism occupied a special place.

Given that most of the theorists under scrutiny in this thesis continued theorising beyond the Second World War (WWII), the thesis is also flexible in considering their post WWII writings.

The other focus of the present work is the theme of imperialism. In *Marxist Perspectives on Imperialism* (1991), Polychroniou described imperialism as ‘the hallmark of the twentieth century.’ The history of the 20th century lends support to this view. Imperialism subsequently became perhaps the major avenue of research for the most respected Marxist theorists of the time—scholars and thinkers such as Hilferding, Bukharin, Lenin, and Luxemburg. The same happened to IR specialised theorists, which generally made imperialism one of their two main subjects of study. This has been significantly obscured by the conventional historiography of the discipline that overgeneralises the writings of the time as merely internationalist/idealist. Yet, as already shown, since the late 1990s revisionist studies have stressed the significance of the theme of imperialism for IR studies during the early twentieth century. Vitalis, for example, argues that the context that mattered most for IR during its formative stage was around the

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39 ibid., p. 1.
40 According to the distinguished cohort of revisionist IR scholars which elaborated *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* (2005), the two main themes that drove early IR were internationalism and imperialism. Long and Schmidt, p. 1.
issue of ‘empire’.\textsuperscript{41} Interestingly, while not a revisionist study, since 1991 Olson and Groom’s \textit{International Relations Then and Now} had already noticed the importance of imperialism in IR’s intellectual history. It suggested that the ‘discipline of international relations had its real beginnings in studies of imperialism…’\textsuperscript{42} Thus, imperialism was a paramount subject that drove early IR work.

While not to the same degree, the theme has continued to generate research/interest in IR after the Second World War. Most prominently, Wallerstein’s understandings of imperialism based on his world-systems approach gained considerable traction during the 1970s and 1980s.\textsuperscript{43} In addition, the discourse of imperialism regained attention in IR at the turn of the 20th century with the publication of Hart and Negri’s \textit{Empire} (2000), which generated some debate on the relation between imperialism and globalisation.\textsuperscript{44} On a practical level, the subject of imperialism seems to regain relevance at the onset of the new century after the United States’ military interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), as well as Russian’s actions in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014).\textsuperscript{45}

Given that Lenin was perhaps the main populariser and synthesiser of the classical Marxist theory of imperialism,\textsuperscript{46} his five features of imperialism are the main elements analysed in the thesis when considering any Marxist influence on the IR writing.\textsuperscript{47} As it will be shown, not all the theorists considered in the thesis were in tune with all of Lenin’s basic understandings of imperialism; but all of them theorised around these tenets. Additionally, since economic determinism is embraced in Lenin’s \textit{Imperialism} (1917) right from the beginning, this is another element explored in the thesis. Moreover, given that early IR

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{41} Vitalis, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{43} Griffiths, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{44} Within the context of the debate on the relation between globalisation and imperialism and more specifically on the question of whether or not capitalism needs a state system, several articles were published by the journal Cambridge Review of International Affairs in 2007. See for example, A Anievas, “Global Capitalism and the States System: Explaining Global Conflicts in Contemporary World Politics”, \textit{Cambridge Review of International Affairs}, vol. 20, no. 4, 2007, pp. 531-532.
\textsuperscript{45} While there have been several studies relating imperialism to the actions of superpowers, these have usually been carried as independent studies outside the disciplinary boundaries of IR. See for example, D Harvey, \textit{The New Imperialism}, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003; M H Van Herpen, \textit{Putin’s war: The Rise of Russia’s New Imperialism}, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Plymouth, 2014. The lack of recent theorisation in IR on the issue of imperialism, has already been identified as an important lacuna by some IR scholars. See for instance, Anievas, p. 531; Long and Schmidt, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{47} Briefly, Lenin conceived the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the beginning of the 20th as a new aggressive and exploitative era of capitalism characterised by 1) an unparalleled concentration of capital, 2) the increasing importance of ‘finance-capital’ and thus financiers, 3) a shift from the export of commodities to the export of capital, 4) the growth of monopolies/trusts, and 5) the division of the entire globe among the major capitalist states. Lenin, \textit{Imperialism}, p. 83.
\end{footnotesize}
writings gave prominence to the question of how to solve the issue of imperialism, the thesis also considers their remedies as an important part to be analysed.\(^{48}\)

*Selection of thinkers*

Five benchmark thinkers of early IR were selected for the thesis. According to Alan Bryman, the principal strength of having several cases instead of one ‘…is that it improves theory building.’\(^{49}\) In other words, considering multiple theorists helps to strengthen the core claim of this thesis which stresses the important role that Marxism played in early IR intellectuals. Certainly a single (or even a dual) case study would be insufficient to support the central argument of the thesis. Yet the selection of too many cases risks analytical overstretch. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on a hopefully fruitful medium of five IR thinkers.

Because the main purpose of the thesis is to explore the influence of Marxism on the writings of prominent IR “idealist” thinkers, it was decided that the theorists to be analysed had, first of all, to be prominent IR intellectuals of the time. Secondarily, the selected thinkers should have 1) been called liberal idealists/internationalists, 2) been engaged with prominent IR-related intuitions of the time, and 3) have extensively written about imperialism, as this is the key focusing device of the thesis. Consequently, John Hobson, Henry Brailsford, Leonard Woolf, Harold Laski and Norman Angell were selected as the five cases of the thesis. As the next five chapters demonstrate in their first respective sections, all of these five thinkers were prominent IR intellectuals in their epoch who have been at one time or another called idealists. In addition, some of the most important revisionist scholars in the discipline have also recognised these five thinkers as prominent IR intellectuals who have been labelled as utopians.\(^{50}\) Moreover, they all participated in well known IR-related institutions of the time. For example, they were all part of the Advisory Committee on International Questions (ACIQ) of the Labour Party in Britain, which revisionist studies have proved to be one of the main ‘quasi academic’ forums of early IR.\(^{51}\) Additionally, in an effort to denounce the secret diplomacy carried out by the

\(^{48}\) Most of these features also coincide with the already discussed characteristics that most essentially define Marxism according to Laski.


\(^{51}\) Sylvest, pp. 413; Ashworth, *International Relations and the Labour Party*, pp. is, 33-34.
great powers, they all shared membership in the Union of Democratic Control. Further, as highlighted in the following chapters of the thesis, they all widely engaged with the theme of imperialism.

Inevitably important cases were left out. Most notably perhaps David Mitrany and Alfred Zimmern. Both largely fit in the criteria. Yet, they were ruled out because while they did engage with IR-related associations, in the case of the ACIQ which was a key IR institution of the so-called idealist stage of the discipline, their association was temporary. Zimmern joined the Committee until 1924, while Mitrany left it in 1931. Moreover, they were not chosen because even though they did write about imperialism, their writing was not as extensive as that of the thinkers selected. Furthermore, while Woolf, Laski, Brailsford and Angell debated among themselves the relation between capitalism and imperialism, Mitrany and Zimmern did not. Although Hobson did not participate in this debate, his prominence on the topic is unquestionable.

Because the cases selected were all prominent IR thinkers in their time, they have already received some attention by revisionist studies. Yet their treatment in this thesis is distinctive in significant ways. The thinkers in consideration are used to enhance our understandings of the formative years of IR and to challenge conventional narratives by 1) highlighting the indebtedness of their writings to Marxism, 2) by showing their socialist tendencies and 3) by illustrating how their theories represent an alternative to orthodox Marxian understandings. Proving these points is important because they reveal Marxism as an underlying force in the formative years of IR.

Methodology

This thesis is a revisionist historical work on the formative years of IR. As such, it resembles the approach used by prior revisionist studies. In particular, it follows in some

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54 For instance, Hobson had a significant impact on the writings of prominent Marxist theorists of imperialism, such as Lenin, Hilferding and Luxemburg. See, Milios and Sotiropoulos, pp. 12-14.
ways Schmidt and Dunne’s ‘internal’ historical approach. According to Dunne, this method takes into consideration ‘internal debates…, retracing the footsteps of academics who self-consciously and institutionally understood themselves as carrying on a distinctive conversation about International Relations.’ Similarly, Schmidt asserts that the main aim of this technique ‘…is to provide a detailed account of the history of the academic field of international relations by reconstructing its internal discursive development.’

As discussed below, the present thesis significantly builds its methodology on Schmidt’s and Dunne’s method. Yet, being aware that many of the early recognised IR intellectuals were not all scholars, the approach of this thesis is more flexible than of Schmidt and Dunne’s which limits itself to the study of academic IR. While neither Angell, Hobson, Woolf nor Brailsford were full time academics, they did however perceive themselves as specialists in international affairs. In addition, they frequently worked in other IR specialised institutions. For example, as previously stated, they all belonged to ACIQ, which Sylvest has called ‘a quasi academic forum’ for the study and debate of international issues. Moreover, as already demonstrated, they have been widely acknowledged by other revisionist studies as part of the intellectuals in the formative disciplinary years of IR. Further, albeit wrongly labelled as idealists, even mainstream historical accounts recognise them as important thinkers during the denominated first theoretical stage of the discipline.

Inspired by Dunne and Schmidt’s approaches, the method of this thesis is called a ‘critical internal (con)textual history’. It is internal because it presents an awareness of the intellectual environment in which the authors in consideration wrote. Thus, it takes into account the institutions and debates in which the thinkers were immersed when related to IR. Moreover, as already explained, it focuses on those intellectuals who perceived themselves as specialists of the study of international relations. It is textual because it is an exhaustive analysis of books, pamphlets, monographs, correspondence, articles, reviews, conference papers, autobiographies, and other relevant written sources. As a result, it

58 As it will be seen in the following chapters, of the five theorists in consideration, only Laski was a full time academic.
59 Sylvest, p. 413.
60 Headley Bull for example among others considers Woolf and Brailsford being ‘idealists’ and part of the first theoretical wave of the discipline. Bull, pp. 33-34.
61 Here the author of the thesis is mostly indebted to the terminology used by Schmidt, who similarly baptises his method as a ‘critical internal discursive history’. Schmidt, “Lessons from the Past”, p. 435.
requires the examination of secondary and primary sources via extensive interlibrary loans. An important supply of the documents requested came from the British Library; but other university libraries primarily in the United Kingdom and the US were utilised through the support of Glasgow University’s library. Through the University’s library, the thesis also took advantage of several digital databases, such as ProQuest and JSTOR, which contain extensive digitalised material of journal-magazines where the thinkers in consideration extensively wrote. Additionally, an important part of the thesis is based on archival work. The work on this was mainly done through online resources. Most significantly, the thesis benefited from the wide range of relevant collections contained in the Marxist Internet Archive Library, and in the Internet Archive’s library. The author also employed the Special Collections at Glasgow University.

The method is contextual firstly because the approach does not ignore the overall international environment in which the thinkers in consideration were writing. If individuals are partly the product of the historical situation they are living in, then considering the most pressing issues in which they were immersed is important to understand their thinking. Secondly, the method is contextual because it delves into the intellectual influences under which these theorists were writing. As Peter Wilson has stressed, ‘discovering how any given work was received at the time, [under what influences] and what debates it engendered is a vital first step in reconstructing the intellectual milieu in which it was written…’ This, he adds, ‘…can throw a tremendous amount of light on the author, her times, and her work.’ Quentin Skinner has also shown that one important way to have a better grasp of historical texts is partly obtained by considering the professed principles of the author under scrutiny. Thus, examining the dominant influence under which the author in consideration perceived himself/herself to be immersed is important to understand his/her writings. This is why each of the central chapters of the thesis contains a section to explore the prevailing international thought of the thinker analysed. The approach is also historical and critical because it aims to reconstruct in detail disciplinary narratives of the past, being suspicious of mainstream accounts. After all, as Margaret MacMillan has argued, one of the primary duties of

62 Marxist Internet Archive Library, Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/ [11/08/2015];
historians is ‘to challenge accepted versions of the past… even if it upsets some lovely theory…’

While historians are unavoidably selective in the evidence they present and interpret, what this revisionist study aims to do is to add (as accurately as possible) one key piece to enhance our understandings of the disciplinary origins of IR. Having an accurate historical knowledge is important for several reasons. First, because it offers the possibility of learning lessons. Although it is true that the conditions in which past thinkers lived at were unique and thus not always applicable to the current reality, this does not mean that we are precluded from learning from their writings. As Schmidt and Long point out, deficient historical knowledge ‘…would not only contribute to the general propensity to reinvent the wheel, but possibly lead to the same embarrassing mistakes that some of our ancestors unknowingly made.’

Besides bestowing the possibility of gaining lessons from the past, an accurate revisionist historical approach is meaningful at least in two other ways. First, this approach helps us to ‘understand ourselves’ more thoroughly. One of the reasons why it is important to have more thorough historical understandings is because entire traditions of thought have been affected by a poor knowledge of the past in IR. Ashworth, for example, has illustrated that simplifying the initial stages of the discipline as a debate in which idealism was crushed by realism marginalises the tradition of liberal internationalism. This thesis shows that the traditional narrative of the first great debate has not only marginalised liberal internationalism; but it has also wiped out the important theoretical role that Marxism played during the early stages of IR. Second, as Miles Kahler affirms, historical accounts are crucial because ‘…how we understand the history of international relations will also influence the future contours of the field.’ In IR, for instance, the victory of realism over idealism described in conventional narratives of the field legitimised the dominance of realism at least until the 1980s. Conversely, revealing the role of Marxism in the

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66 M MacMillan, "Writing History, in C Rooke (ed.), Writing Life: Celebrated Canadian and International Authors on Writing and Life, McClelland and Stewart Ltd, Toronto, 2006, p. 239.
67 Carr, What is History?, pp. 12, 26-27.
68 Skinner, p. 88.
69 Long and Schmidt, p. 2.
70 MacMillan, pp. xi, 146.
71 Ashworth, “Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen?” , p. 34.
intellectual origins of IR might kindle future research on the IR intellectuals utilising Marxist based approaches.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Following this introduction, there are five substantive chapters each centred on one of the selected thinkers. Each of them contains four sections. The first section evaluates the theorist’s impact and engagement in early IR. The second aims to show the dominant (international) political thought(s) in which the thinker analysed was immersed, as well as his relation to Marxism/Socialism. By analysing four to five key tenets of the theory of imperialism of the IR thinker in consideration, the third section aims to show whether or not there is a clear Marxist influence on those IR writings. If so, the chapter provides a fourth section which considers the ways in which the theoretical insights of the theorist under study might be distinctive from Marxist-Leninist accounts.

The second chapter of the thesis is devoted to John Hobson. It shows that while it is true that a considerable part of his writings can be framed as liberal internationalist, there are others which can be also ascribed to a socialist tradition. This chapter, in particular, evaluates the impact the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Henry Gaylord Wilshire had on Hobson. Chapter three analyses Brailsford’s international thought. Those familiar with his insights on imperialism, should be aware of his indebtedness to Hobson. Yet, a further examination of his output also reveals that key tenets of his theory are rooted in the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Kautsky. The chapters also show a couple of important ways in which the theories of Brailsford and Hobson considerably deviated from Marxist orthodoxies.

The fourth chapter examines Leonard Woolf’s international thought and its relationship with Marxism. In particular, his understandings of instrumentalism, economic determinism, anti-capitalism, and socialism as a remedy to imperialism, are explored to investigate the extent to which they are related to Marxism. Chapter five analyses the figure of Harold Laski. It reveals that his relationship with Marxism was extensive throughout his career and that during the last two decades of it, he perceived Marxism as
the most valuable theoretical tool in IR. However, these chapters also show that both Laski and Woolf had flexible interpretations of Marxism.

Norman Angell is the centre of enquiry in the sixth chapter. While he was emphatically against Marxist understandings of imperialism, the chapter shows that his work on the subject corroborates the importance of Marxism/Socialism in early IR in two main ways. First, through his outstanding engagement with Marxist figures by debating their interpretations of imperialism. And second, through his little acknowledged socialist inclinations during the specified idealist period of the discipline.

The concluding chapter summarises the main findings of the thesis and questions conventional interpretations neglecting the IR Marxist-inspired output around the interwar years. It also provides some plausible explanations as to why the role of Marxism in accounts of early IR is currently overlooked, despite its significance. In addition, it reflects on some possibilities of future research along the lines of this thesis.
Chapter 2: Hobson’s Theory of Imperialism and its Unacknowledged Indebtedness to Marxism

2.1 Introduction

John Atkinson Hobson is frequently considered to be one of the most important theorists of the discipline of International Relations (IR) during its early stages. According to Martin Griffiths, he is among the fifty most important thinkers in the history of the discipline.73 Additionally, the importance of Hobson’s thought has surpassed the boundaries of IR, as he has been widely recognised as a paramount influence in the Marxist theorisations of renowned thinkers such as Lenin, Hilferding and Bukharin.74 Thus, the impact of Hobson’s writings has been noteworthy.

At the same time, however, because most of his writings were made prior the Second World War, he has been at times labelled in IR historiography as a liberal idealist.75 David Long, the current leading IR expert on Hobson, has elaborated useful revisionist efforts for a more thorough picture of the thinker in consideration. Yet, while Long’s efforts have been valuable, his research has frequently aligned Hobson’s thought within liberal idealism/internationalism by emphasising for example his support of a supranational authority above states, his belief in the possibility of harmony of interests, and the faith in progress in international affairs.76 As a result, retrieving Hobson’s contributions outside of the themes traditionally identified with idealism in IR is important and necessary to successfully challenge traditional IR narratives. In fact, a careful reading of his writings reveals a considerable Marxist influence in some of his central theorisations.

The chapter claims that while it is true that a part of Hobson’s theoretical insights can be framed within the liberal internationalist’s tradition,77 a close examination of his writings

73 He is among the fifty most important IR theorists according to M Griffiths, Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations, Routledge, London, 1999.
77 The contributions of Hobson to liberal idealism will not be covered in this chapter in any detail, as the aim of this piece of work is to show that Hobson’s primary contribution to IR (i.e. with regards to imperialism) has considerable Marxian/Socialist influence. For an excellent book on Hobson’s liberal internationalism
reveal that although Hobson did not acknowledge a Marxian influence, he borrowed considerably from this tradition. In particular, this chapter argues that he embraced a classical Marxist instrumentalist view of the state, portrayed class interests as a key root of international conflict, used the concept of concentration of capital in accordance with Marxist theory, and borrowed radical socialist insights on trusts to elaborate central elements of his theory of imperialism. On this basis, it is a mistake to label Hobson a simple idealist as this obscures the Marxian aspects of his thought, and indeed his contribution to Marxist international theory as an alternative to orthodox revolutionary schemes.

To be certain that some significant parts of Hobson’s theory are indebted to Marxism is important for several reasons. Firstly, because even though there have been countless studies showing how Hobson has been a paramount influence on Marxist analyses on imperialism, the theoretical persuasion from the latter on the former, which was considerable, has been almost completely unexplored. Secondly, being aware of the Marxian influence on the English theorist helps us to challenge the traditional IR historiography that limits Hobson’s and all early IR writings as merely idealist, or at best as liberal internationalists. Finally, Hobson’s insights help us to enhance our disciplinary knowledge by uncovering the underlying importance of Marxism in early IR.

The chapter will proceed via four main steps. The first introduces the reader to Hobson’s importance and engagement with IR-related issues, intellectuals and institutions. In the second section, Hobson’s theoretical standpoint and his relation to Marxism are explored. The third segment addresses his indebtedness to Marxian accounts on imperialism and focuses on the intellectual impact that Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Henry Gaylord Wilshire had on Hobson. In particular, Hobson’s treatment of the concentration of capital, the role of capitalists and the aristocracy of labour, and his perceptions on the state and trusts, are analysed. Finally, the fourth section considers economic determinism and the which also includes his insights on imperialism see: D Long, Towards a New Liberal Internationalism: The International Theory of J A Hobson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.


79 The exception is Norman Etherington who has highlighted several similarities between Wilshire and Hobson on the theory of surplus capital. N Etherington, “The Capitalist Theory of Capitalist Imperialism”, History of Political Economy, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 38. Unfortunately, it seems that Professor Etherington focused his research on Hobson’s Imperialism: A Study (1902), and as a result passed over Hobson’s previous works (most importantly Free Trade and Foreign Policy [1898]) that had already put forward key elements of the surplus theory before Wilshire’s Significant of the Trusts (1900).
overthrowing of the capitalist state and imperialism as likely elements in which Hobson significantly deviated from Marxian accounts of imperialism.

2.2 Hobson’s Engagement with and Impact on IR

While Hobson’s engagement with IR-related institutions, intellectuals and issues seems to reveal some internationalism in his work, his major impact (inside and outside of IR) is at odds with traditional interpretations of the early stages of IR. This is in particular manifested by the significance of his writings on imperialism and by his association with organisations and thinkers with socialist leanings.

Some of Hobson’s associations and workplace relationships with other important IR intellectuals reflect that liberal internationalism was part of his career. Hobson’s formative years were spent in Derby surrounded by a liberal atmosphere in which “…free market capitalism and the Gladstonian state were largely taken for granted as guarantors of individual freedom.”

He was a member of the Liberal Party from the early 1900s, although he left it during the First World War (WWI) because he thought that party had abandoned free trade policies. Before the eruption of WWI he was a member of the International Arbitration League, an organisation which promoted disarmament and arbitration, and supported the League of Nations. Hobson joined other internationalists of the time, such as Philip Noel-Baker and Alfred Zimmern, as an advocate for the League of Nations, although he became a more cautious supporter during the 1930s as the organisation’s weaknesses regarding security issues became more evident. Just after the outbreak of WWI, together with other recognised IR intellectuals of the period such as Norman Angell, Henry Brailsford and Leonard Woolf, Hobson became a member (and was part of the inaugural meeting) of the Union of Democratic Control, which sought to denounce the secret diplomacy carried out by the great powers at the time.

While Hobson had a close relationship with liberal internationalist organisations, he also had significant links with other left-orientated institutions. Increasingly disappointed by the

politics of the Liberal Party in Britain during the Great War, Hobson joined the British Labour Party (LP) in 1924. Consequently, he had the opportunity to become part of the LP’s Advisory Committee on International Relations.\textsuperscript{84} This group was one of the most influential agencies involved in international relations, which comprised almost all the major British IR intellectuals of the interwar period.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, there Hobson had the opportunity to work closely with other distinguished IR theorists with socialist inclinations, such as Norman Angell, Henry Brailsford, Harold Laski, and Leonard Woolf, as it will be shown during the following chapters of the thesis. In addition, Hobson enjoyed close links with Brailsford and Woolf in the 1917 Club, a group where he was an important member together with other well-known socialist-leaning personalities such as Virginia Woolf and Ramsay McDonald.\textsuperscript{86} The club began life as a left-wing group, as a result of the Russian Revolution of 1917.\textsuperscript{87} Hobson’s inclinations towards the left, at least in the spectrum of liberalism, are also evident through his association in 1894 with the Rainbow Circle of which he was one of the founding fathers along with other important Liberals like Herbert Samuel, Fabians such as William Clarke and Sydney Oliver, and (then) socialists like Ramsay McDonald who would become the first Prime Minister of the LP.\textsuperscript{88} The organisation was a cradle of New Liberalism which became a middle ground between liberal and socialist values.\textsuperscript{89} Therefore, Hobson’s associations and intellectual relations reveal him taking a mid-position between liberalism and socialism.

Hobson wrote extensively and was read widely in his own time, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States.\textsuperscript{90} He published more than fifty books and hundreds of articles in journals and newspapers from the 1880s until 1939.\textsuperscript{91} Among the many journals to which he frequently contributed were the Manchester Guardian, Foreign Affairs, the Nation and the New Leader.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{84} Long, “Hobson and Economic Internationalism”, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{89} Rathbone, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{92} For a selected list of the most important books, pamphlets and articles written by Hobson, see M Freeden, J A Hobson: A Reader, Unwin Hyman, London, 1988, pp. 204-206.
Collective security was an important part of Hobson’s writings. His insights on internationalism have been appropriately retrieved by David Long. Yet, Hobson’s greatest impact on IR and beyond came as a result of his writings on imperialism, which were primarily elaborated circa 1900. Although he had already expressed important tenets of his theory of imperialism in 1898 in an often overlooked article called “Free Trade and Foreign Policy” (in particular with regards to establishing the skeletal form of his underconsumptionist theory), his theoretical views were not written in a coherent, supported and systematised way until Imperialism: A study (1902), which is the source of his reputation in the discipline.

Hobson’s greatest contribution to IR theory is condensed to a large degree in the fourth part of Imperialism, ‘the Economic Taproot of Imperialism’, which according to Michael Freeden and Bernard Porter is his most famous contribution and the only widely-known chapter of the book. Within this chapter it is possible to discern the key elements of Hobson’s theory of imperialism. First, his belief that economics was the root of the problem of imperial rivalry. Second, his emphasis on the accentuated accumulation of capital by a few capitalists, which was unmatched by the consumption capacities of their domestic markets, and as a result they were compelled to look abroad for the investment of their surplus capital. Third, his depiction of the capitalist class as a fundamental and primary source (and indeed beneficiary) of international conflict and imperialism. Fourth, his understanding of the state as an instrument of the privileged classes. Fifth, his emphasis on the importance of trusts in the process of accumulation of capital and pressure to go abroad. And finally, his concern with the economic mal-distribution that could nevertheless be reformed through increasing the salaries of the working classes and by rising taxes to improve public benefits. As will be seen below, with the exception of the final point, the remainder of the key tenets of Hobson’s theory of imperialism are substantially close to Marxian theory. At any rate, the most important aspect to note at this time, is that Hobson’s greatest impact was achieved through his insights on imperialism,

93 See chapters seven, eight and nine of Long’s Towards a New Liberal Internationalism.
96 For a good summary of Hobson’s main points on imperialism, which include the six points suggested here as tenets of the Hobsonian theory, see Brewer, pp. 73-87.
98 ibid., p. 73.
99 ibid., p. 77.
100 ibid., p. 77.
101 ibid., pp. 75-76.
102 ibid., pp. 85-86.
not on internationalism. This is at odds with the mainstream IR historiography, which oversimplifies the writings of the period as being only on issues related to internationalism.

Hobson’s writings on imperialism made a significant impact. His insights on the subject were so influential in the LP, that according to Stuart Macintyre, most of the anti-imperialist stance of that party during the first decades of the twentieth century drew its ideas from Brailsford and Hobson. In fact, Brailsford acknowledged that he ‘owed too much’ to Hobson’s insights. Yet, his impact was felt beyond IR specialists and the LP. One of the most important contributions of Hobson’s theory was his substantial influence on the classical Marxist accounts of imperialism that were elaborated during the first half of the 20th century. Vladimir Lenin, who is generally regarded as the main radical Marxist contributor towards the theory of imperialism in IR, acknowledged his indebtedness to Hobson’s insights when he elaborated his popular outline of the Marxist theory of imperialism. In common with Hobson and Marxism, Lenin emphasised the importance of economics and class interests as primary motors of imperial rivalries, the significance of the accumulation of capital, the paramount impact of monopolies/trusts, and how the capitalist class used the state as an instrument to advance their imperial adventures. Hobson’s impact on Marxism can also be seen in the writings of key Marxists scholars such as Hilferding, Luxemburg and Bukharin. Moreover, Hobson’s insights continue to be acknowledged in most current surveys of Marxist leaned theories of imperialism.

2.3 Hobson’s (International) Political Thought and Marxism

It has been conceded by Long that Hobson’s thought can be described as idealist in IR. This is correct because Hobson stressed the possibility of the harmony of interests and progress, and he maintained that it was possible to overcome international anarchy through

104 Brailsford, p. 3.
109 See for instance, ibid., pp 10-12; Brewer, pp. 73-87.
110 Long, “Hobson and Idealism in International Relations”, p. 304. David Long, however, stresses that there are three types of idealism: traditionalist, non-interventionist, and new liberal. Long, p. 293.
the creation of a supranational body above states. Yet, portraying Hobson’s thinking solely as such is deceptive, as it obscures his dominant theoretical perspective.

From the late nineteenth century, Hobson challenged widely-accepted tenets of classical liberalism. This is reflected in his first book coauthored with A F Mummery, *The Physiology of Industry* (1889). The work was very unpopular and a target of harsh criticism from orthodox economists, since it criticised the widely-embraced liberal belief that ‘…the saving of the individual must always and necessarily enrich the Community, [and] that the individual seeking his own advantage necessarily works for that of the Community.’ On the contrary, the authors argued that thrift should be an undesirable practice as it was the root of several economic maladies, such as unemployment and low salaries for the working class.

Rather than a liberal idealist, Hobson identified himself as a new liberal, at least within his most creative intellectual period. As already shown, since 1894 Hobson was a prominent member of the Rainbow Circle, an organisation which was the centre of New Liberalism. Hobson described this tradition as ‘socialism in liberalism’. This line of thinking affirmed that neither liberalism nor socialism/communism was able to successfully tackle world economic problems. In particular, new liberals stressed the importance of aiming for more ‘equality’ and rejected the practice of Gladstonian liberalism, favouring instead the intervention of the state in economic and social matters for the benefit of society. Moreover, they criticised orthodox liberalism for seeing society as a mere collection of individuals whose interests were not in any meaningful way determined by the society in which they were living at. In contrast, new liberalism tended to take into account the importance of the community in shaping individual actions. Thus, Hobson’s new (or socialist) liberalism drew him closer to socialism.

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114 ibid., p. iv.
115 John Allett situates this period primary at the very end of the 19th century and the first decade of the twentieth. Allett, p. 15.
117 Rathbone, p. 25.
The proximity of Hobson to socialism led some of his contemporaries to recognise a clear socialist part in his thought. John Spargo, a fervent Marxist who attended Hobson’s lectures at Oxford, affirmed in an interview with Hobson that he thought the English intellectual would eventually declare himself to be a socialist. However, Hobson stressed that he did not have faith the in the political power of socialism. Moreover, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), Lenin described Hobson as a ‘social-liberal’.

Hobson did not openly recognise any meaningful influence from Karl Marx or any other radical socialist. There are no prominent radical Marxists (such as Marx, Engels or Kautsky who wrote before him), in any of the bibliographies of the three editions of *Imperialism* (1902, 1905, 1938) and he does not acknowledge a Marxist influence within his autobiography. In fact, even though Hobson rarely referred to Marxism, when he did, he often criticised it. His friend Henry Brailsford even affirmed that ‘Marx repelled him’. On a practical level, Hobson criticised Marxism for its appeal to revolution and for not being an achievable possibility in Britain, as well as for being guilty of ignoring the significance of individual incentives for work. With regards to theory, he claimed that ‘adherents of the Marxian school’ suffered from economic determinism by reducing most world phenomena to economics. Yet, even though Hobson detached himself from the Marxian tradition, we know that he read Marx before the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, when his insights on imperialism are scrutinised, it is possible to recognise some key socialist/Marxian elements into his theory.

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120 Spargo, pp. 45-46.
121 Lenin, p. 86.
122 There is only one reference to an American socialist (Gaylord Wilshire) in *Imperialism* which is within what is usually considered the key chapter of the book (i.e. “The Economic Taproot of Imperialism”). Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 84.
123 No reference to Wilshire, Marx or any other renowned Marxist of the time is found in his autobiography. Instead, more than any intellectual experiences he affirmed that his trips to South Africa, the US and Canada made the most significant impact on his thought. Hobson, *Confessions*, pp. 59-70.
125 Brailsford, p. 6.
128 ibid., p. 78.
129 Brailsford asserts that Hobson ‘made an early study of [Marx’s] *Capital*’. See Brailsford, p. 6. It is possible to corroborate this in the *Evolution of Modern Capitalism* in which Hobson cites (in this case quite benevolently, but with little relation to the issue of imperialism) Karl Marx’s *Capital* at least three times. The use of Marx’s work was mainly done with regards to ‘machinery’. See, J A Hobson, *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, Scott, London, 1894, pp. 45-46.
2.4 Hobson’s Indebtedness to Marxist Accounts

Concentration of Capital

Karl Marx did not develop a theory of imperialism. However, in his last work, *Capital* (volumes two and three posthumously published in 1882 and 1894), he had predicted a tendency towards the concentration of capital [i.e. 1) the increasing accumulation of capital by the bourgeoisie due to the surplus value, and 2) a transition from competitive capitalism into more monopolistic practices]. Although Hobson did not acknowledge a Marxian influence on him on this, he had nonetheless read *Capital* before the turn of the twentieth century and he embraced a Marxian position on this regard.

With regards to the second aspect of the concentration of capital, in alignment with Marx, Hobson affirmed in *Imperialism* (1902) that the last years of the 19th century had witnessed a remarkable shift from free trade to more protectionist practices. Further to this, and in reference to the first feature of capital concentration, he claimed that due to new technology, an enormous amount of capital had been generated during the last decades of the 20th century which was being increasingly accumulated by a small number of ‘captains of industry’. However, Hobson added that because the increasing capital produced could not be consumed at home, due to the restricted purchasing power of the proletariat and because the bourgeoisie had already satisfied their limited personal consumptionist desires, capitalists were compelled to save considerably and then look abroad to invest their surplus capital.

Two years before Hobson’s *Imperialism* (1902) was published, the American socialist Henry Gaylord Wilshire had already delivered an address before the Economic Club of Los Angeles that contained remarkably similar views to Hobson’s theory of surplus capital. The speech would become the basis for the pamphlet *The Significance of the Trust*,

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134 ibid., pp. 74, 76.
135 ibid., pp. 77-78, 84.
published a year later. Wilshire argued that during the last years of the 19th century, capitalism had experienced a transition ‘from competition under private ownership to monopoly under private ownership…’

Moreover, Wilshire claimed that ‘overproduction arises because our productive capacity has been developed to the highest degree…’ through technological innovation, ‘…while our consumptive capacity remains stunted by the competitive wage system.’

In his view, the product of labour had two main channels: 1) the proletariat and 2) the capitalists. The workers were limited by their low salaries and consumed barely more than their basic needs. The ‘captains of industry’, on the other hand, could not spend all their vast profits on their own pleasures and as a result were compelled to save appreciably, giving birth to an enormous surplus of capital. Thus, ‘Mr. Rockefeller with his $100,000,000 spends over a thousand dollars per day on himself and his household.. [and] finds it both pleasanter and easier to save the remainder…’

Wilshire perceived that there was no place ‘…in which the industrial machinery is so much over-built as in the United States. We are saturated with capital and can absorb no more.’ He further argued that because magnates could not find opportunities to invest their excessive income domestically, they were compelled to look abroad. Consequently, ‘American capitalists are today more in need of foreign fields for investment of their capital…’ Wilshire explains that this is the reason why certain elites consider it as necessary to ‘…have an outlet for our productions abroad as the domestic market no longer suffices.’

The similarities between Hobson’s and Wilshire’s theories of surplus capital are striking. Theorising about the case of the United States, Hobson asserted:

[In reference] …to the possibility of producing by modern machine methods more goods than can find a market. It is sufficient to point out that the manufacturing power of a country like the United States would grow so fast as to exceed the demands of the home market. Her manufactures are saturated with capital and can absorb no more… It is this sudden demand for foreign markets for manufactures and for investments which is avowedly responsible for the adoption of Imperialism.

138 ibid., p. 15.
139 ibid., pp. 15-17, 25.
140 ibid., p. 19.
141 ibid., p. 24.
142 ibid., p. 23.
143 Hobson, Imperialism, pp. 76-78.
The close resemblance between the writings of the two intellectuals leaves little doubt of a Wilshirian influence on Hobson. This uncertainty is removed when considering a letter the English theorist sent to the American approximately a year before the publication of *Imperialism: A study* in 1902. Hobson wrote to the Wilshire: ‘your article, “Significance of the Trust”, which I have just read, is the straightest, strongest, most convincing, and most scientifically accurate account of the relation between capital and imperialism that has yet appeared.’

It is true that, prior to *Imperialism* (1902), Hobson had already ‘laid out his own theory [of overproduction] in skeletal form in a *Contemporary Review* article of 1898, well before Wilshire...’

Two years prior to the American socialist, Hobson stated: ‘our surplus products, which the working classes cannot buy and the wealthier classes do not wish to buy, must find customers among foreign nations.’ However, as Peter Cain acknowledges, Hobson’s theory was still ‘in skeletal form’. Wilshire’s article had a significant impact on the clarity of Hobson’s views considering surplus capital as the root of imperialism. This is revealed by the flattering letter the English intellectual sent to the American and through the almost quasi identical lexicon utilised by Hobson in substantial parts of “The Economic Taproot of Imperialism” in *Imperialism* (1902), in comparison to Wilshire’s *Significance of the Trust* (1901).

Moreover, in viewing surplus capital as a major cause of imperialism, Hobson was indebted to Wilshire for the application of the theory to the case of the United States. In “Free Trade and Foreign Policy” (1898), Hobson had not addressed the significance of the American example to illustrate the power of the surplus theory. In fact, in a 1903 interview, Hobson frankly admitted: ‘I don’t know much about America’. Furthermore, it is likely Hobson was indebted to Wilshire in clarifying that the capitalist system was leaving its competitive stage and entering a more protectionist era.

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145 We are indebted to Peter Cain for this knowledge. See, P Cain, “Hobson, Wilshire, and the Capitalist Theory of Capitalist Imperialism”, *History of Political Economy*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1982, p. 456. In fact we could even go further since Hobson’s first book (co-authored with A F Mummery in 1889) shows a glimpse of Hobson’s under-consumptionist theory in arguing against the supposed virtues of the ‘accumulation of capital’/‘saving’ traditionally highlighted by orthodox economists. Mummery and Hobson, pp. v-viii.
148 He of course became very well acquainted with the American case later on as a result of several trips he made to the United States. Hobson, *Confessions*, p. 64.
150 Compare Wilshire, *Significance of the Trust*, p. 15 with Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 74. The other possibility, as already seen, is that Hobson acquired his understanding from Marx’s *Capital*, which had already read.
only when Hobson read Wilshire’s material that he incorporated these two elements into his theory in *Imperialism* (1902, 1905 and 1938 editions).

**The Paramount Function of Trusts in Imperialism**

There are two other key aspects in which Hobson’s theory of imperialism is indebted to Wilshire, insofar as they are not present in Hobson’s work before he read the American socialist and due to the close similarity of the lexicon utilised. In 1898 Hobson had already theorised that domestic overproduction pushed capital abroad.\(^{151}\) In addition, he had already sustained with some empirical evidence that the economic benefit obtained from imperial expansion was more an illusion than a reality.\(^{152}\) But this did not explain *per se* why capital was so fervently pushed to be exported accompanied by military methods in contrast with previous years in which capital was also significantly accumulated. Hobson was able to find a rational answer to this by adding two elements into his theory: 1) the rise of trusts and 2) the selfish desires of the capitalist class.

Although he had already written about trusts elsewhere as an important phenomenon in the evolution of capitalism,\(^ {153}\) Hobson had not linked this with imperial activities until *Imperialism* (1902). His linking of trusts with imperial practices became a reality only after he read ‘the straightest, strongest, most convincing, and most scientifically accurate account of… imperialism that has yet appeared.’\(^ {154}\) According to Wilshire and Hobson, big corporations through their monopolistic activities were greatly responsible for the undermining of the atomistic free competition that characterised previous capitalist years.\(^ {155}\) In addition, trusts were the living incarnation of the contemporary process of concentration of capital, in the sense that capitalist units (companies, enterprises, etc) were combining into (a) larger unit(s)\(^ {156}\) and because these large corporations were to a great extent responsible for the massive accumulation of capital in recent years.\(^ {157}\) Thus, while Wilshire asserted in 1900 that in the United States trusts are ‘saturated with capital and can absorb no more’,\(^ {158}\) Hobson affirmed in 1902 that large American businesses ‘were

\(^{151}\) Hobson, “Free Trade and Foreign Policy”, p. 178.  
\(^{152}\) ibid., pp. 171-172  
\(^{158}\) Wilshire, *Significance of the Trust*, p. 19.
saturated with capital and could absorb no more.¹⁵⁹ Trusts were thus fundamental catalysts for the exportation of capital in the new international reality and, as a result, an important cause of imperial adventures abroad.¹⁶⁰ This led the American socialist to argue that the paramount role of trusts in imperial activities ‘was a fact and not a theory’,¹⁶¹ and one year later Hobson concurred a la Wilshire asserting ‘this is no mere theory’.¹⁶²

The Role of Capitalists

Another element that Hobson incorporated into his theory of overproduction in order to rationally explain imperial adventures until the turn of the 20th century was the importance of the capitalist class pressurising for imperialism. Hobson conceived class (and in particular capitalist) interests as one of the fundamental roots of international conflict,¹⁶³ which is of course in line with the orthodox Marxian theorisation that ‘the history of all society up to now is the history of class struggles.’¹⁶⁴ Additionally, Hobson perceived that it was the capitalist class that was strongly pushing for imperial adventures in search of new markets,¹⁶⁵ which is also in close connection with the classical Marxian proposition that ‘the need for a constantly expanding outlet for their products pursues the bourgeoisie over the whole world.’¹⁶⁶ The increasing importance of capitalists seeking foreign markets as a key part of imperialism was also stressed by Wilshire before Hobson: ‘American capitalists are today more in need of foreign fields for investment of their capital...’¹⁶⁷

Notwithstanding the close similarity between Hobson’s ideas of the significance of the capitalist class as a major cause of imperial activities with Marx’s and Wilshire’s previous insights, there is evidence that neither Marx nor Wilshire was the key determinant for introducing the importance of this component into Hobson’s theory, but the Boer War (1899-1902). As Brailsford stated of Hobson, ‘more than any personal influence, a visit to South Africa on the eve of the Boer War was decisive in forming his outlook.’¹⁶⁸ Hobson himself asserted that the Boer War was ‘…an illumination to my understanding of the real

¹⁵⁹ Hobson, Imperialism, p. 76.
¹⁶⁰ ibid., pp. 76-77; Wilshire, Significance of the Trust, pp. 22-23.
¹⁶¹ ibid., p. 31.
¹⁶² Hobson, Imperialism, p. 75.
¹⁶³ ibid., pp. 96, 86, 356. The ‘capitalist class’ is nonetheless a simplification for Hobson, that he utilised frequently. Nevertheless, he conceived within the capitalist class several groups such as the industrialists and the financiers. ibid., pp. 87, 95.
¹⁶⁵ Hobson, Imperialism, pp. viii, 356.
¹⁶⁶ Marx and Engels, p. 4.
¹⁶⁷ Wilshire, Significance of the Trust, p. 24.
¹⁶⁸ Brailsford, p. 7.
relations between economics and politics which were to occupy so large a place in my future work. As a result, it has been suggested that it was this war in South Africa that gave Hobson the clarity to incorporate the bourgeoisie into his overproduction theory as a major cause of imperialism. However, when Hobson’s writing during the Boer War is verified, it can be seen that the incorporation of the element of the capitalist class into his theory lacked certain sophistication, as it reflected an apparent anti-Semitism.

Hobson went to South Africa as a correspondent of the Manchester Guardian for several months after the war erupted between the British and the Boers in 1899. After interviewing several chief figures from the Boer and British sides, Hobson concluded that there was a specific group that had vested interests in that region. In a report sent to the Manchester Guardian while still in South Africa, he stressed:

I am convinced that the Government under a free admission of Uitlanders will be as corrupt as this one. The bulk of the Uitlanders excepting the actual miners I believe to be Jews…German Jews who have been in England… The entire mining industry, with the particle exception of the Consolidated Gold Fields (Rhodes) is in their hands, they Dynamite Monopoly, the illicit Liquor Traffic are theirs, they… manipulate the lace market, and run the chief commercial businesses both in Johannesburg and Pretoria. These men will rig the politics when they have the franchise… I am not exaggerating one whit. I think I can prove this.

The main and immediate intellectual result after Hobson’s visit to the African continent was Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa (1900). The small book certainly contains a seed of the importance of capitalists for rationally explaining imperial actions in conjunction with the surplus theory, but its main argument was specifically blaming within that capitalist class the role of financiers Jews for the adoption of imperialism. Aggressive imperial activities were therefore understood as the product of private interests of this small group of people:

This little group of capitalists are the real “economic men”… who have been generally relegated to mythology. Most of them are Jews, for the Jews are par excellence the international financiers, and though English-speaking, most of them of continental origin. Their interest in the Transvaal has been purely economic; they went there for money…and as they are prepared to fasten upon

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169 Hobson, Confessions, p. 59.
170 See for example, Allet, p. 27.
any other spot upon the globe, in order to exploit it for the attainment of large profits and quick returns.\textsuperscript{173}

Hobson’s experience in South Africa did play a key role in incorporating into his thinking the importance of adding a conspiracy element in his theory of overproduction in order to rationally explain imperial actions. However, his intellectual clarity on the topic did not become a written reality until 1902 with the publication of \textit{Imperialism}, just after he read Wilshire’s account of the relationship between imperialism and capitalism. Consequently, Wilshire’s document made a considerable impact on Hobson’s clear incorporation of the capitalist class as a major cause of imperialism. For Wilshire, ‘Rockefeller, with his enormous surplus income, cannot find room to invest in his own confessedly overdone oil businesses’ and as a result he is ‘sighing for more worlds to conquer.’ This is why ‘President Roosevelt also declares that we must have an outlet for our production abroad as the domestic market no longer suffices.’\textsuperscript{174} Likewise, two years later Hobson asserted:

> The adventurous enthusiasm of President Roosevelt and his “manifest destiny” and mission of civilisation” party must not deceive us. It is Messrs, Rockefeller, Pierpont Morgan, Hanna, Schwab and their associates who need imperialism… because they desire to use the public resources of their country to find profitable employment for the capital which otherwise would be superfluous.\textsuperscript{175}

\textit{Instrumentalism and Privileged Workers}

The Marxist basis of Hobson’s understandings of the capitalist class is strengthened when considering the role of the state in imperialism. A key Marxian element that Hobson incorporated into his theory of imperialism was instrumentalism. The liberal tradition had assumed that capitalists did not perceive themselves as being benefited by the intervention of the state in economic matters. On the contrary, classical liberalism had argued that the less the state intervened the better it would be for the interests of the business classes.\textsuperscript{176} Nevertheless, Hobson contended that the capitalist class often used the state for their own benefit. According to him, in order to obtain greater gains, capitalists are ‘impelled to seek the help of the state’, and in particular for the opening up of new markets.\textsuperscript{177} Accordingly,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{174} Wilshire, \textit{Significance of the Trust}, pp. 22-23. \\
\textsuperscript{175} Hobson, \textit{Imperialism}, pp. 77-78. \\
\textsuperscript{176} P Costello, “Capitalism, the State and Crises”, \textit{Theoretical Review}, no. 20, January-February 1981, in Marxist Internet Archive. Available online at: \url{http://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/19812001.htm} [Accessed 20/08/2015]. \\
\textsuperscript{177} Hobson, \textit{Imperialism}, p. xiii.
\end{flushleft}
Hobson sustained that imperial capitalism ‘…implies the use of the machinery of
government by private interests, mainly capitalists, to secure for them economic gains
outside their country.’\footnote{ibid., p. 94.} In this way Hobson was rejecting the classical liberal view of the
state as an institution that capitalists wished not to be involved in economic affairs. Instead,
he adopted an orthodox Marxian instrumentalist perspective, which sees the state as ‘…a
device for administering the common affairs of the whole bourgeois class’\footnote{Marx and Engels, p. 3.}, a privileged
group that had ‘the need for a constantly expanding outlet for their products… over the
whole world.’\footnote{ibid., p. 4.}

Another component that Hobson embedded into his theory was the Marxian view of the
aristocracy of labour. Nonetheless Hobson stressed that even though the main beneficiaries
of imperialism could be labelled under the general term ‘capitalists’, there was a portion of
the working class that was also obtaining benefits from imperial profits. The seed of this
idea can be found in a brief passage of *Imperialism* (1902) that each of the advanced states
that were practicing imperialism ‘…used its provinces, colonies and dependences in order
to enrich its ruling class and to bribe its lower classes into acquaintance.’\footnote{Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 194.} In other words,
the proletariat of imperial states was also obtaining benefits from imperialism. Although
this notion has sometimes been believed to have been incorporated into Marxism by Lenin,
who in turn took it by Hobson’s *Imperialism*;\footnote{See for instance, Milios and Sotiropoulos, p. 22.} it actually has longer Marxian historical
roots.

By 1901 Kautsky had already talked about the ‘aristocracy of labour, which has turned
from an exploited person into an exploiter’ and which ‘had its own interest to help the
advancement of capitalist politics at home and abroad’.\footnote{K Kautsky, “Trade Unions and Socialism”, *International Socialist Review*, volume 1, no. 10, 1901, in *Marxist Internet Archive*, Available online at: \url{http://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1901/04/unions.htm} [Accessed 20/08/2015].} Moreover, the idea can be traced
back to the originators of orthodox Marxism. In a letter that Engels wrote to Marx in 1858,
he stated:

…the English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so
that the ultimate aim of this most bourgeois of all nations would appear to be
the possession, *alongside* the bourgeoisie, of a bourgeois aristocracy and a

\footnote{178 ibid., p. 94.}
\footnote{179 Marx and Engels, p. 3.}
\footnote{180 ibid., p. 4.}
\footnote{181 Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 194.}
\footnote{182 See for instance, Milios and Sotiropoulos, p. 22.}
bourgeois proletariat. In the case of a nation which exploits the entire world this is, of course, justified to some extent.\footnote{184} More than two decades later in a letter to Kautsky, Engels wrote that the English workers ‘…gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies.’\footnote{185} And in The Condition of the Working Class (1842), Engels reiterated the same idea: …during the period of England’s industrial monopoly the English working-class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of the monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most, but even the great mass had, at least, a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why… there has been no Socialism in England.\footnote{186}

It was out of Engels’ and Hobson’s insights that Lenin was able stress in 1917 that a section of the workers in the imperial states was being benefited from imperialism and that they were brought ‘into acquiescence’ as a result of this. But Lenin added that this was especially possible under the era of imperialism due to the enormous ‘high monopolist profits’ extracted from the undeveloped countries, ‘where lower wages are paid’.\footnote{187} This last new part stressed by Lenin was incorporated into Hobson’s theory four years after Lenin’s Imperialism (1917). In Problems of a New World (1921) Hobson added this short part into his conception stressing that:

Much, therefore, of these tropical and other overseas products will come in to the Western countries as rents of monopoly or high profits on low-paid native labour. A portion of this surplus gain can be utilised to support a relatively high level of comfort for the Western working classes…\footnote{188}

Thus, even though Hobson does not give references that enable us to trace his ideas on the general issue of classes in capitalist imperial practices, it seems highly likely that he took these ideas from Marxism, as the roots of them are situated within this tradition and are not part of the liberal school. By arguing that imperial capitalism was not benefiting the majority, but only certain privileged groups (i.e. capitalists and even a section of the workers within the imperial states), Hobson was adopting a Marxian standpoint. At the

\footnote{187} Lenin, Imperialism, pp. 96, 99.
\footnote{188} J A Hobson, Problems of a New World, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1921, pp. 185-186.
same time, he was breaking away from the classical liberal position that argued that capitalists’ actions unintentionally benefited all of society by an ‘invisible hand’ when seeking their own gain.\(^\text{189}\)

### 2.5 The Distinctiveness of Hobson’s Theory of Imperialism

In this section, two elements of Hobson’s theory of imperialism are explored which at first glance seem to be differentiated from Marxian accounts: economic determinism and reformism of the state and capitalism.

**Economic Determinist?**

It might be argued that one way in which Hobson’s theory of imperialism differs from Marxian accounts is in its treatment of economics. On the one hand, one of the common criticisms of Marxism is its supposed dismissal of non-economic matters.\(^\text{190}\) On the other hand, it has been argued that Hobson is unfairly criticised as economic determinist.\(^\text{191}\) There is an element of truth in this if we understand by Marxism the influential Leninist theorisations of imperialism. However, if classical Marxism is taken into consideration, then a close resemblance between Hobsonian and Marxian perspectives emerges.

Hobson condemned Marxist accounts for being economic reductionists.\(^\text{192}\) Ironically however, he claimed that the motor of history (and in particular of imperial activities) was to be found not in ethics, religion or politics, but in economics.\(^\text{193}\) Thus for Hobson, it is ‘idle to attack Imperialism or Militarism as political expedient or policies unless the axe is laid at the economic root of the tree…’\(^\text{194}\) Yet, this is not to say that other factors such as politics, prestige and morality were unimportant for Hobson; but that economics was the main force behind imperial actions.\(^\text{195}\) Thus, according to him:

\[^\text{192}\] Hobson, *Wealth and Life*, p. 78.
\[^\text{194}\] ibid., p. 93.
In claiming, therefore, that militarism and the domestic and foreign policy it serves are moulded and directed chiefly by definite and conscious business aims, I wish to make it clear that this claim does not exclude the operation of other impulses, desires and purposes.\textsuperscript{196}

While Hobson’s approach might be different to Leninist theorisations which are indeed economically reductionist,\textsuperscript{197} it is however not distinctive from the original Marxian approach of historical materialism. In the orthodox Marxist thinking, the ‘base’ (i.e. economics) is the one that determines the changes in the ‘superstructure’ (culture, religion, education, politics, the state, family, institutions, etc.).\textsuperscript{198} Therefore, in highlighting the crucial role of economics, classical Marxism and Hobson do not ignore that there are other important factors, but that the motor is to be found in that ‘base’. As Engels asserted:

…if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas — also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles.\textsuperscript{199}

Thus, although Hobson was at some point critical of the Marxian interpretation of the course of history, he himself adopted this approach to understand the phenomena of imperialism. In the twilight of his life he conceded ‘…the economic determination of history to lie not in the denial of non-economic factors but in the utilisation of these factors by the under-drive of the economic forces’.\textsuperscript{200} Further, while at times critical of this approach, two years before he died he confessed being guilty of the ‘advocacy of the economic determination of history’.\textsuperscript{201} Yet, as already seen, his position did not disregard economic matters, as arguably was the case with Leninist theorisations. Therefore, even though Hobson’s perspective on economics differed from Leninist insights, he closely resembled Marxian original understandings on the subject.

\textsuperscript{197} In \textit{Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism} (1917), Lenin recognised that his work was limited to economic matters. Here the tsarist censorship played an important restricting role. Lenin, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{199} F Engels, “Engels to J. Bloch in Konigsberg”, 1895, Marxist Archives, Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm [Accessed 20/08/2015].
\textsuperscript{201} Hobson, \textit{Confessions}, p. 63.
It is perhaps in the remedy offered to solve the problem of imperialism in which Hobsonian and Marxian accounts differ most significantly. As it has been shown, Hobson embraced a Marxian instrumentalist view. Thus, Marxists and Hobson were in agreement that a change in the role of the state was imperative. However, they differed in their view of how to do this. Marxists, including radical socialists such as Wilshire, generally supported the appropriation of the state apparatus.\footnote{202} This, Hobson admitted, would solve the problem of the surplus capital (which induced capitalists to push for imperial activities) by allowing the state to have extra-resources for enhancing the living conditions of the working classes.\footnote{203} Because of this, Hobson conceded that the surplus capital ‘demands a “socialism”’,\footnote{204} that ‘Trade Unionism and Socialism are thus the natural enemies of Imperialism, for they take away from the imperialist classes the surplus incomes which form the economic stimulus of Imperialism’.\footnote{205}

However, Hobson rejected Marxist and socialist propositions of an entire ownership of the state. Instead, his reformism visualised the state as an instrument for implementing a better economic redistribution domestically by raising public taxes and expenditure, and assuring the increase of labour wages.\footnote{206} Moreover, Hobson discarded radical socialist proposals on the issue because he thought they would represent a totalitarian government which would significantly restrict personal liberties.\footnote{207} For him, communism would present the ‘danger of an absolute state control… [ignoring] that the state exists for the individual, not the individual for the state.’\footnote{208} In contrast, ‘certain liberty and private property’ were essential in Hobson’s visualisation of a ‘“sound socialism”’.\footnote{209} In addition, democracy was indispensable.\footnote{210} It was thus only democracy that would guarantee the application of
‘public policy by the people [and] for the people’, which would in turn restrain capitalists from using the state for private gains.\textsuperscript{211}

Therefore, Hobson’s position can be differentiated from radical socialist postures in that he does not compromise liberty and democracy. Yet, despite these crucial differences, both projects accepted that inequality was a key issue to be addressed. As Hobson stressed, ‘it is not industrial progress that demands the opening up of new markets… but mal-distribution of consuming power.’\textsuperscript{212} Similarly, as Wilshire affirmed, ‘the earth produces wealth in plenty for all, the problem to be solved is not production, but distribution.’\textsuperscript{213} Moreover, Hobson’s theory embraced the socialist maxim popularised by Karl Marx: ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’.\textsuperscript{214} True, Hobson’s reformist solution to capitalistic imperialism deviated in important ways from Marxism; yet, he conceded that a sort of socialism was needed. That is, a democratic type, that would guarantee liberty, regulate consumption and production, and increase equality and employment.\textsuperscript{215} This kind of socialism for him would represent ‘the first condition of a full life for a human being’.\textsuperscript{216}

2.6 Conclusions

Hobson’s work poses a challenge to traditional narratives in IR, which portray the early years of the discipline as liberal idealist/internationalist. While Hobson contributed on the theme of internationalism, it was on the issue of imperialism in which he made a robust impact. However, even more importantly, this chapter has shown that scrutinising Hobson’s insights on imperialism reveals a considerable Marxian/socialist persuasion, which has been remarkably unappreciated.

Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Gaylord Wilshire are particularly reflected in Hobson’s insights. While Hobson emphasised that adopting Marx and Engels’ economic determinism restricted understandings of international affairs, he recognised his own guilt...
in following this approach. Moreover, Hobson followed Engels and Marx’s view of international conflict as determined by classes (in particular capitalists), and embraced the classical Marxian instrumentalist view of the state. In addition, he adopted Engels’ theorisation on the ‘bourgeoisie proletariat’, and Marx’s idea that capitalism was passing from atomistic competition to a more protectionist era characterised by monopolistic practices, a point also stressed by Wilshire.

Wilshire also significantly contributed to the addition and clarification of important elements in Hobson’s thought on imperialism. The importance of trusts in explaining imperial adventures, as well as the connection between capitalists, overproduction and imperialism, were key aspects of imperialism that Hobson incorporated into his theory after reading Wilshire’s material. Additionally, Wilshire provided significant clarity to Hobson on his underconsumptionist theory. While there is proof that Hobson did elaborate a theory of surplus capital before reading Wilshire, he had not identified a new protectionist stage in the international realm until after he read the American socialist. Moreover, Wilshire gave him the significance of the case of the United States (in conjunction with his underconsumptionist approach) to explain imperialism.

The chapter has provided considerable evidence to demonstrate Hobson’s indebtedness to Marxism in his theory of imperialism. First, it has shown that most of the key ideas he incorporated to his theory are not part of the liberal school, but instead are rooted within the Marxist tradition. Second, it has been proved that in spite of Hobson’s apathetic attitude towards radical socialism, he was nonetheless knowleable of it, as evidenced through his readings of Marx and Wilshire. Third, although Hobson only cited Wilshire once in his Imperialism (1902); he nonetheless sent a flattering letter to the American stressing that the writing of the latter had provided him with noteworthy clarity on the issue of imperialism. The significance of Wilshire’s work on Hobson is also corroborated by the fourth type of evidence supplied in this chapter, which relates to the almost quasi identical lexicon used by key parts of Hobson’s Imperialism in comparison with Wilshire’s Significance of the Trust (1901).

Consequently, this chapter has provided evidence to show that it is deceptive to categorise Hobson as a liberal idealist, as it obscures an important Marxian/socialist persuasion in key elements of his theory of imperialism. Moreover, this depiction is at odds with his dominant political thought. Even though Hobson engaged with intellectuals and
institutions related to internationalism, he was also involved with thinkers and associations with socialist tints. He thus frequently took a middle position between socialism and liberalism, which is consistent to how he described himself. Hobson perceived himself to be immersed within new liberalism, a line of thought which he described as ‘socialism in liberalism’. Therefore, while Hobson was not a Marxist, his depiction as a liberal idealist/internationalist obscures important socialist elements in his thought.

Because Hobson was not a Marxist, his theory of imperialism is distinct in some ways from Marxian accounts. While his conception of economics differs from Leninist postures, it does however closely resemble Marx and Engels’ approach which does not deny the (albeit secondary) importance of other factors, such as politics and ideas. Most importantly, however, Hobson’s theory deviates from Marxism in the means to overcome capitalist imperialism. Rejecting Marxist radical suggestions of the seizure of the state apparatus, Hobson favoured reformist measures without compromising liberty and democracy. Yet, in spite of these important differences, he recognised that a sort of socialism was needed to overcome imperialism.

This chapter has uncovered the underlying significance of Marxism in Hobson’s theory of imperialism. Can it be the case that other important IR figures of the so called idealist period were also influenced by Marxist ideas? The next chapter will explore the figure of Henry Brailsford, whose theory of imperialism was considerably indebted to Hobsonian accounts, but also engaged with Marxian arguments.

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Chapter 3: Brailsford’s Parliamentary Socialist Theory of Imperialism

3.1 Introduction

In his own time, Henry Noel Brailsford (1873-1958) was one of the most prolific, well known and respected intellectual authorities writing about international affairs. And yet today he is very much a neglected figure in the field. He was among the major IR intellectuals writing during the first half of the twentieth century, and he is one of those writers whose ideas have been labelled as idealist merely because he wrote during the so-called utopian stage of the discipline. As a result, Brailsford’s analyses of international affairs have commonly been dismissed and ignored in current IR. Hedley Bull, for example, catalogued him, together with Alfred Zimmern, Philip Noel-Baker, and others as an ‘idealist’. Moreover, referring to Brailsford’s seminal work The War of Steel and Gold (1914), Zimmern’s League of Nations and the Rule of Law (1936), and others; he claimed that ‘none of these works is at all profound, and none is worth reading now…’

However, three scholars have recently reminded us about the value of Brailsford’s writings on international relations. Fred Leventhal has contributed the most to recovering interest in Brailsford, and has done an impressive job compiling many details about Brailsford’s life. Indeed, he is perhaps the greatest expert on Brailsford still alive. Nevertheless, his valuable studies are mostly biographical and historical, not focused on IR. One major recent contributor that has illustrated the importance of Brailsford in the disciplinary origins of IR is Lucian Ashworth. His work has significantly contributed to the discipline by highlighting the inaccuracies of the traditional narratives of IR. Brailsford is thus one of

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219 Lucian Ashworth is an exception. He has made clear that it is inaccurate to label Brailsford as an idealist. See for instance, L M Ashworth, “Where are the Idealists in Interwar International Relations?”, Review of International Studies, vol. 32, 2006, pp. 291-308.
221 Alan Taylor, who died in 1990, was an important British historian who was considerably fascinated by Brailsford’s career. Although he did not elaborate a study specifically specialised on Brailsford, he did pay some attention to his writings. See for instance the fourth chapter of A J P Taylor, The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Polity 1792-1939, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1957.
the intellectuals that Ashworth has utilised to show that ‘idealism’ is a highly imprecise label to describe early IR. However, Ashworth’s material, while of great value and depth, is not exclusively focused on Brailsford.\footnote{See for instance, Ashworth, “Where are the Idealists in Interwar International Relations?”, p. 292. He however has contributed with an excellent book chapter considerably dedicated to Brailsford. See, L M Ashworth, \textit{International Relations and the Labour Party: Intellectuals and Policy Making from 1918-1945}, Tauris Academic Studies, London, 2007, pp. 39-76. In addition, he has explored Brailsford’s relation with International Political Economy. See, Ashworth, “Missing Voices”, pp. 9-26.} Peter Lamb has focused specifically on Brailsford’s international theory. Just as Ashworth, Lamb has also contributed considerably to emphasise the over-simplicity of the traditional disciplinary accounts, where almost everything outside the realist and idealist camps written in the first four decades of the 20th century has been appreciably ignored in IR.\footnote{P Lamb, “Henry Noel Brailsford’s Radical International Relations Theory”, \textit{International Relations}, vol. 25, issue 4, 2011, p. 479.} Additionally, Lamb has stressed that Brailsford’s philosophical thinking on human nature and international morality might be of value today for international theory.\footnote{ibid., pp. 480, 485, 493.}

The present chapter aims to build upon Ashworth’s and Lamb’s efforts employing the figure of Brailsford to challenge the orthodox narrative of the field that oversimplifies IR writing during the first four decades of the 20th century as merely idealist. It aims to do so by showing 1) that Brailsford’s intellectual relations and institutional engagements exhibit a socialist orientation, 2) that his primary theorisations were on the theme of imperialism and have fundamental Marxist tints, and 3) that he did not considered himself to be a liberal internationalist or an idealist, but rather a socialist.

As a result, the chapter claims that Brailsford is a prime case to challenge mainstream IR accounts because key tenets of his international theory have direct Marxian roots. Fundamental elements of his theory such as economic determinism, the concentration of capital, instrumentalism, anti-capitalism, and socialism as the panacea to international problems, were taken by Brailsford from Marxist accounts. Nevertheless, it is also stressed that Brailsford’s opposition to a revolutionary path and his support for a parliamentary route differentiate his output from Leninist theorisations. Brailsford’s clearly Marxist inspired international theory and his self depiction as a socialist, and not a liberal idealist/internationalist, provide the basis to argue that to label him as an idealist is highly misleading.
It is important to rescue Brailsford’s Marxist based theorisations of international affairs from the dustbin of history of IR. This is so because despite laudable revisionist efforts, he remains largely ignored in the discipline today, and however, in his own time was one of the most respected and recognised specialists in international affairs. Additionally, it is important to be aware of the Marxian elements of Brailsford’s theory because this contributes to expose the inaccuracies of the traditional IR historiography that portrays Brailsford as a mere idealist and writing only about issues related to internationalism. Moreover, knowing the Marxian influence on Brailsford adds an important more piece in our understandings of an underlying theoretical tool used by some of the most important intellectuals in the disciplinary origins of IR: Marxism.

Could it be the case that Brailsford’s thinking – conventionally understood as idealist – was heavily indebted to Marxism? The chapter aims primarily to answer this question via the following structure. It begins with a section to highlight Brailsford’s impact on IR, and some of his remarkable institutional and intellectual engagements. After this, his dominant thought is explored in relation to liberal idealism/internationalism, new liberalism, and Marxism. Then, aiming to show his indebtedness to Marxism, some of the central tenets of Brailsford’s international theory are reviewed. The final section investigates Brailsford’s uniqueness with regards to orthodox Marxist/Leninist understandings. Given that, as it will be demonstrated below, Brailsford’s major intellectual impact was done through his insights on imperialism, the chapter will be focused on his writings on this theme. Additionally, in order to exhibit a direct Marxian influence on Brailsford, particular attention will be paid to the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Kautsky, which were all paramount Marxists and are mentioned in Brailsford’s writings.

3.2 Brailsford’s Engagement with and Impact on IR

Brailsford’s relationships, associations and intellectual impact do not fit within mainstream IR conceptions of the so-called liberal idealist thinkers. While there is some liberal internationalism reflected in his work, his intellectual and institutional engagements are mostly socialist orientated. Moreover, his major impact on IR and elsewhere was not on the theme of internationalism, but on imperialism.

There are liberal principles clearly reflected in Brailsford especially during the formative years of his career. He was born in Yorkshire and raised on liberal values in Scotland. Under the tutelage of the humane liberalism of Gilbert Murray, he studied classics and philosophy at Glasgow University obtaining a Masters of Arts degree in 1894 with first class honours. In addition, Brailsford was a member of the Liberal Party during the 1890s and early 1900s. Since the start of the Great War, Brailsford joined other renowned internationalists such as Leonard Woolf and Norman Angell, in playing a prominent role within the Union of Democratic Control (UDC); which while not necessarily liberal, it was nonetheless a pacifist organisation which aimed to denounce secret diplomacy. Yet, his engagement with other institutions evidences his socialist leanings.

One of the earliest indications of Brailsford’s move towards the left is evidenced perhaps by his involvement with Fabianism. While doing his studies, he was one of the founders of the University Fabian Society at Glasgow in the early 1890s. He nonetheless left the society in 1899 as a result of its lack of determined criticism against British imperialism, particularly in South Africa. By 1907, he completely detached himself from the Liberal Party, joining instead the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The ILP, which was affiliated with the Labour Party (LP), gave Brailsford the opportunity to become a prominent member of the Advisory Committee on International Questions (ACIQ). In addition, his affiliation with the ILP provided him with another window of opportunity in 1922, when he became editor of the party’s weekly, the New Leader. His editorship made a considerable impact in socialist circles. After Brailsford’s resignation, in a farewell letter, he declared that during the four years of his work as an editor, his aim had ‘been to provide for thoughtful readers in the Socialist movement a paper which might rank… with the older political reviews.’ His aim although in a limited time, was to some degree accomplished. For example, Otto Bauer one of the leading figures of Austro-Marxism, considered the weekly newspaper to be simply ‘the best Socialist publication in the

227 Leventhal, Last Dissenter, pp. 20-21, 284;
230 Blazer, p. 10.
231 Leventhal, Last Dissenter, p. 95.
world.’ Other socialist leaned groups which Brailsford belonged to were the 1917 Club, and the Friends of Russian Freedom. Thus, Brailsford’s affiliations clearly reveal his socialist tendencies.

Brailsford’s relations also reflect his socialist leanings. It is certain that he had close relationships with IR specialists which at one point or another supported the League of Nations. Thus, within the ACIQ and the UDC he worked closely with other internationalists such as Norman Angell, John Hobson, and Leonard Woolf. In addition, he at times collaborated with them in the production of written material. He for example, worked together with Hobson in a series of articles written in 1912 in The Nation on “The trend of Foreign Policy”; and in 1944 he contributed with Woolf and other Fabians to write the book Fabian Colonial Essays. Yet, as this thesis will keep demonstrating, despite the support of the League by internationalists such as Hobson, Woolf and Angell, they also had significant socialist leanings. Moreover, in the early 1900s Brailsford became involved in an incident with Russian Communists that put into manifest his affinities with the socialist cause.

In 1904, Brailsford was involved in helping a group of Russian revolutionaries in exile to obtain fare tickets and false English passports that would enable them to return to Russia unnoticed. Interestingly, among the revolutionaries helped were Trotsky and Lenin, who were personally in touch with Brailsford at that time and for whom the English had considerable admiration. In fact, he had a meeting later (1920) with Trotsky in Moscow. Brailsford regarded him as a good orator with magnetic personality and a ‘brilliant writer’. Beyond this incident, Brailsford met other prominent socialists such as Eduard Bernstein and Jean Jaures.

If Brailsford’s affiliations and relations do not fit smoothly within IR conventional historical accounts, neither do the major issues about which he wrote. Regionally, Brailsford’s expertise was mainly focused on Macedonia, India, and Russia. From the three

236 Sylvest, p. 413; Ashworth, A History of International Thought, p. 126.
237 Taylor, p. 124.
239 Unfortunately for him, after those actions he had to go to court, where was found guilty and had to pay a fine of £100. Blazer, p. 82.
241 ibid., p. 206.
242 Leventhal, Last Dissenter, p. 3.
of them, his most durable interest was on Russia. While Brailsford’s insights on the Balkans were done primarily during the years prior the First World War, and his publications on India were done during the 1930s and 1940s; his interest in Russia’s affairs remained constant since the Revolution of 1905. ‘The whole earth’, he affirmed, ‘has become a more habitable planet since the Russian autocracy has been destroyed.’ While shallowly, his empathy in the Russian revolution reflects some of his leftist leanings.

Thematically, Brailsford’s writings are to a limited extent in accordance with the conventional historiography of IR. Brailsford’s output on the theme of internationalism made a considerable impact, particularly on the creation of the League of Nations. His main contribution to internationalism, A League of Nations (1917), gained considerable attention by those interested in international affairs. In this book, Brailsford proposed the creation of an international organisation responsible for the prevention of war. Among other things, he advised that the organisation should have an executive organ dominated by the great powers, an International Court, and a committed responsibility to reduce armaments. Indeed, Brailsford’s text, together with Woolf’s International Government (1916), was influential in the final constructive idea of the League of Nations put forward by Woodrow Wilson in 1918.

Brailsford’s writings made their major impact on the issue of imperialism. Although he had already written several articles in the Nation (1912) on the subject, The War of Steel and Gold (1914) was his first deep, systematic and length study on the topic. This piece remains to be his main contribution to international theory and is his most well known work. Outside the boundaries of IR, it has sometimes been referred as one of the classical

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244 Leventhal, “Brailsford and Russia”, p. 81.
250 Blaazer, p. 83.
books of imperialism. Although almost completely ignored today, it had a significant impact even some decades after its publication. The book was reprinted ten times until 1918. By the mid 1920s more than 10,000 copies had been already sold and by the 1930s it was used in some Universities as one of the core texts. According to Kingsley Martin, Brailsford’s "magnus opus ‘was one of the seminal books of the century…” Together with Hobson’s Imperialism (1902) and Lenin’s Imperialism (1917), David Blaazer considers Brailsford’s book as ‘…one of the left’s standard works on the subject.’ And for Alan Taylor this piece of work ‘…is a more brilliant book than Hobson’s [Imperialism], written with a more trenchant pen and with a deeper knowledge of international affairs. Though less remembered now, it had probably a stronger influence on its own generation…”

In his own time, Brailsford’s insights on imperialism made a solid impact. According to Stuart Macintyre, at least during the 1920s most of the anti-imperialism of the LP drew their ideas from Brailsford and Hobson. Moreover, The War of Steel and Gold is one of those works mentioned in Lenin’s Notebooks of 1916, which contain his impressions on the material he analysed for the elaboration of his Imperialism (1917). Interestingly, Brailsford’s seminal work is widely quoted in Lenin’s notes with no apparent disagreement with the English intellectual. In contrast, his notes on the material of other intellectuals, such as Hobson and Hilferding, do contain considerable criticism.

251 It is among the most important books of the period on imperialism according to: P Cain and M Harrison (eds.), “Part 1: The Emergence of Imperialism as a Concept”, Imperialism: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies, volume 1, Routledge, London, 2001.
253 The book did not undergo major changes in content. According to Brailsford, only a few words were changed. In addition, one chapter was added in the last edition (“The Postscript of Peace and Change”). H N Brailsford, The War of Steel and Gold: A Study of the Armed Peace, G Bell & Sons, Ltd., London, 1918 [1914], p. 8.
254 Leventhal, Last Dissenter, p. 112. Taylor used it to teach ‘European History’ at Manchester University. Taylor, p. 179.
256 Blaazer, p. 141.
260 ibid., pp. 333, 414, 418.
Therefore, Brailsford’s major intellectual contribution does not fit well within mainstream understandings of early IR. Whereas the traditional story affirms that the so-called idealist writing was a product of the horrors of the First World War and on issues related to internationalism; Brailsford’s seminal work predates the Great War, was the product of an imperialist time, and primarily on the theme of imperialism.

3.3 Brailsford’s (International) Political Thought and Marxism

As already seen, Brailsford’s affiliations, relations and thematic interests, reveal his socialist inclinations. There are two other ways in which his socialist tendencies are confirmed. The first one is that he significantly relied on Marxian theory to elaborate his own insights on imperialism, as it will be illustrated in the next section. Second, Brailsford’s dominant thinking was not liberal idealist/internationalist, as the conventional historiography of IR would lead us to believe. Moreover, his prevailing thought was not even new liberal, as it was Hobson’s. Rather, it was a type of socialism which dominated Brailsford thinking.

Contrary to Bull’s categorisation of Brailsford as an idealist,\textsuperscript{262} he did not regard himself as such. True, Brailsford supported the idea of the League of Nations, but only ephemerally. As already seen, he had put forward the organisation in \textit{The League of Nations} (1917). In the years that followed, he kept supporting the idea of creating a collective security mechanism. In later editions of \textit{The War of Steel and Gold} (1918), Brailsford argued that ‘the best hope for the future lies in making the procedure of a League of Nations for the pacific settlement of disputes…’\textsuperscript{263} Yet, soon after the creation of the international organisation, Brailsford became disappointed with the League because he believed it failed to address successfully capitalist imperialism.\textsuperscript{264} In 1922, he criticised the institution for being idealistic and within the liberal tradition:

Liberals who believe that the League of Nations can begin to work… turn a blind eye to the real force which governs the world. This is Capitalist

\textsuperscript{262} Bull, pp. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{263} Brailsford, \textit{War of Steel and Gold}, p. 197. Brailsford’s comments about the League of Nations were not present in the first edition of \textit{The War of Steel and Gold} (1914). The adding of the last chapter of the book, “A Prescript on Peace and Change”, which was related to the proposition of the League, was the main and almost exclusive modification Brailsford made to subsequent editions of his seminal work.
\textsuperscript{264} H N Brailsford, \textit{After the Peace}, Thomas Seltzer, N.Y., 1922, pp. 148-149.
Imperialism… The idealism of the League of Nations… [testifies] this wilful ruin of Europe, a pathetic attempt to build upon an unsound foundation.265

During the 1930s, he kept detaching himself from the League of Nations arguing: ‘we have tasks more urgent than the mapping of Utopia.’266 Thus, it is clear that at least since the early 1920s onwards, which corresponds to the so called idealist period of the discipline, Brailsford did not consider himself either a liberal or a utopian.

Even though Brailsford recognised he ‘owed too much’ to Hobson’s teaching,267 at least since the 1920s he dismissed his ‘socialism in liberalism’ as a proper trajectory to overcome imperialism. Although new liberals proposed some reforms within the capitalist system that could improve the quality of life, such as job insurance, education, and housing, these changes, Brailsford argued, would not tackle the fundamental problem. For him, there was a need to radically change the capitalist system. Brailsford claimed that new liberalism did not offer a definitive solution to the problem of imperialism since ‘…the capitalist system rests historically on robbery. The relationship between the capitalist-owner and the wage-worker is incompatible with social morality.’269 Therefore, Brailsford did not consider being anywhere within the liberal tradition since the early 1920s. Rather, he pictured himself somewhere within the socialist spectrum.

As it has been seen, Brailsford’s socialist convictions were evidenced at least since his involvement with the Fabian Society before the turn of the twentieth century. According to Leventhal, Brailsford ‘started to read Marx seriously’ in the early 1900s.270 This led Brailsford in the maturity of his career to consider Marx as a paramount theorist that some have failed to acknowledge: Marx was ‘an event in history and I doubt whether Hobson ever faced his full significance, or recognised the importance of Marx and Engels as interpreters of history.’271 This does not mean that he agreed blindly with every single statement made by Marx. For example, he thought that the working class was more

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265 ibid.
270 Leventhal, Last Dissenter, p. 95.
heterogeneous in his time than it used to be in Marx’s epoch.²⁷² But overall, he considered Marx to be ‘a great and seminal teacher.’²⁷³

According to Brailsford himself his central thought was socialism. In 1907, in a letter to Robert Ensor, Brailsford plainly asserted: ‘I have always been a Socialist- I used to be a Fabian.’²⁷⁴ Thus, at least since the early 1900s onwards, Brailsford consistently conceived himself as a socialist in his writings. For example, in one of the essays that he elaborated for the Fabian Society with regards to colonial issues, he stressed: ‘Socialists… we should also be the pioneers in showing how the primitive and colonial peoples can be integrated…’²⁷⁵ Then he sustains, ‘we should do well, I think, to take it as socialists, as one of our primary objectives to raise the level of life of the primary producers…’²⁷⁶ And later on he mentions, ‘I have assumed that we socialists…’²⁷⁷ Moreover, in a letter sent to H G Wells in 1922 trying to convince him to write for The New Leader, Brailsford wrote him: ‘I’m more of a Marxist than you are…’²⁷⁸

Other contemporary IR theorists close to Brailsford considered him to be a socialist. This is the case, for instance, of Woolf and Angell.²⁷⁹ Additionally, co-workers in the LP also characterised Brailsford’s thought within socialism. For example, just a few months after Brailsford died, Michael Foot, a Labour Party member of parliament, called him ‘the greatest Socialist journalist of the century.’²⁸⁰ Therefore, Brailsford’s depiction as a liberal idealist is highly misleading, as it obscures his general overriding thought: socialism. The following two sections will support this claim and aim to provide some elements to comprehend the kind of socialism/Marxism Brailsford embraced.

²⁷³ ibid., p. 257.
²⁷⁷ ibid., p. 33.
²⁷⁹ Woolf, p. 511; N Angell, “Is Capitalism the Cause of War?”, The Spectator, April 20, 1934, p. 626.
3.4 Brailsford’s theory of imperialism and its indebtedness to Marxism

So far, this chapter has shown that to label Brailsford as a liberal idealist obscures an important socialist part in his relations, affiliations, and regional interests. Moreover, it has also been demonstrated that, as argued by Brailsford himself and other contemporary intellectuals, his thinking is predominantly socialist and not liberal idealist. This section reinforces these claims by showing that Brailsford significantly relied on Marxian theory to elaborate core tenets of his theory of imperialism.

Economic Determinism and Concentration of Capital

Brailsford adopted a Marxian deterministic approach by arguing that economics was the main factor to explain international conflict. He thus claimed, ‘the potent pressure of economic expansion is the motive force in an international struggle…’ Yet, even though he stressed that the economic variable was the most important one to explicate international reality, he conceded that there were other aspects of weight, albeit secondary. Thus, for example, in A League of Nations (1917), he explained that:

The economic motives were in Germany, as I believe they are in every modern community, the chief forces which drove it to desire expansion overseas. They were not the only forces. The pressure of a rapidly increasing population must also be taken into account.

Thus, while Brailsford accepted that there were other significant variables that could explain international actions; he stressed that economics was the most fundamental. As explicated in the previous chapter, this approach has its intellectual roots in classical Marxism. For orthodox Marxism, economics is the primary force to explain reality and it determines actions in other fields such as culture, politics, etc. But that does not mean that Marxism ignores other non-economic issues.

Brailsford was aware that he had embraced a Marxian economic deterministic position as a key element of his theory of imperialism. In 1947, in a lecture in memorial to Hobson, Brailsford kindly criticised his friend for not recognising the significance of Marx and

281 Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, p. 42.
282 Brailsford, League of Nations, p. 231.
Engels in the economic deterministic approach that he and Brailsford himself had adopted to explain imperial rivalry.  

Other key elements in which Brailsford’s theory was indebted to Marxism can be encompassed within the Marxian concept of concentration of capital. As highlighted in the previous chapter, in Capital Marx foresaw that capital would be greatly increased and accumulated by a small group of people (the bourgeoisie) and that this in turn would result in a shift from competitive capitalism into a more protectionist era, where monopolies would become paramount.

In Property or Peace? (1936), Brailsford made also a summary of Marx and Engels’ arguments around the concept of concentration of capital. He asserted that these two theorists anticipated that ‘…free market and the competitive system tend to disappear. Monopoly takes their place: capital is concentrated in ever fewer hands: the accumulated surplus spills over, and there ensures a struggle for foreign markets.’ For Brailsford, ‘the facts of history have on the whole fulfilled this remarkable forecast’ made by Engels and Marx.

Brailsford widely employed the above Marxian conceptions for his theory of imperialism in other published works. For instance, in Socialism for Today (1925), he maintains that capitalism ‘…concentrates in few and ever fewer hands the ownership of land, machinery and credit’ and adds that as ‘…associations solidify into trusts and combines, the safeguard of competition vanishes also.’ Another example is found in the The War of Steel and Gold (1914). Whereas the early Victorian England corresponded to a liberal phase of free trade, in the first decades of the 20th century ‘the Manchester School disappears’. Accordingly, ‘the modern phase begins when capital has accumulated in large fortunes… and the discovery is made that investments abroad… offer swifter and bigger returns.’

\[\text{284} \text{ Brailsford, “The Life-Work of Hobson”, pp. 6, 26.} \]


\[\text{286} \text{ Brailsford, Property or Peace?, p. 256.} \]

\[\text{287} \text{ ibid., p. 257.} \]

\[\text{288} \text{ Another place where the same orthodox Marxist idea is found is in the Communist Manifesto. Marx and Engels argued: the bourgeoisie has ‘…centralised the means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands.’ K Marx and F Engels, The Communist Manifesto, 1848, PBworks, Available at: http://harrisorocac.pbworks.com/f/Marx+Communist+Manifesto.pdf [Accessed 24/08/2015], p. 5.} \]

\[\text{289} \text{ H N Brailsford, Socialism for Today, The New Leader, London, 1925, pp. 11, 13.} \]

\[\text{290} \text{ Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, p. 65.} \]

\[\text{291} \text{ ibid., p. 64.} \]
Criticism of Capitalism

One of the important elements that Brailsford embraced from Marxism was its determined criticism of capitalism. Just as Marx, Brailsford saw capitalism in general and capitalists in particular as exploitative of the working class.\footnote{Brailsford, After the Peace, p. 104; Marx and Engels, p. 8.} According to the English intellectual, ‘the capitalist system… always, by the injustice and folly of its distribution of the product of industry… has taken in profits what ought to have gone in wages.’\footnote{Brailsford, Socialism for Today, p. 50.} This is what Marx often called ‘surplus labour’, which is the additional work that the proletariat had to do but that was unpaid, and instead appropriated by the capitalist class.\footnote{K Marx, “Chapter Six: The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power”, Capital, Volume One, Available at: \url{http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch06.htm} [Accessed 24/08/2015].} Moreover, Brailsford criticised capitalism because he believed it ‘…concentrates in few and ever fewer hands the ownership of land, machinery and credit.’\footnote{Brailsford, Socialism for Today, p. 11.} In a similar vein, in the Communist Manifesto (1858), Marx and Engels had sustained almost the same (although they did not mention the centralisation of capital). They asserted the capitalist class has ‘…centralised the means of production and has concentrated property in a few hands.’\footnote{Marx and Engels, p. 5.} The similarity should not strike the reader, not only because, as it has already been seen Brailsford considered himself a socialist; but also because there is evidence that he had read the Communist Manifesto.\footnote{In Property or Peace? Brailsford mentions: ‘One has to realise, moreover, in the reading over the stirring rhetoric of the Communist Manifesto that the working class is not longer as homogenous as it was in 1848.’ Brailsford, Property or Peace?, p. 256.\footnote{Ibid., p. 240.}}

Consequently, Brailsford regarded private property as the primary cause of the most severe economic problems internationally. Thus, in Property or Peace? (1936) Brailsford concludes: ‘we have found the root of our economic disorder in the institution of property… the private ownership… [by] a privileged class.’\footnote{K Marx and F Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848, Offline version 2000, Available at: \url{http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/books/communist.pdf}, [Accessed 24/08/2015], p. 14.} This is evidently in tune with Marxian orthodoxy that considered private property as one of the greatest evils to overcome. In the Communist Manifesto, for instance, it is said that ‘the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.’\footnote{Ibid., p. 240.}
While Brailsford in general was an acute critic of capitalism, he nonetheless conceded that capitalist imperialism was usually accompanied with some progress. For him, those of us who profess an instinctive or reasoned opposition to imperialism, make a grave mistake, if we deny its civilising mission... but always the gifts of education, intellectual stimulus and humane government which it brings with it, are a by-product of the self-regarding activities.\textsuperscript{300}

Brailsford’s position is an orthodox Marxist posture that at the same time that exerts a strong criticism to the exploitative nature of capitalism, it acknowledges that its self-interested imperial actions bring some development. As Marx expressed it, ‘England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating- the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.’\textsuperscript{301}

\textit{Class as the Root of Conflict and Instrumentalism}

Another important element that Brailsford incorporated into his theory was the importance of class in imperial activities. For Marx and Engels, class was so important that they perceived it as the fundamental root of conflict worldwide: ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.’\textsuperscript{302} For them, the most important class struggle in their own time was the antagonism between the proletariat (the vast majority of people, who had to sell their labour to survive) and the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production).\textsuperscript{303} Brailsford embraced this approach. He claimed that class struggle is ‘the most fundamental fact of our lives’.\textsuperscript{304} In addition, he sustained: ‘we are engaged in the most formidable class-struggle which history has ever witnessed. It is a struggle for economic power between the many who do productive work and the few who exercise the authority which ownership confers.’\textsuperscript{305}

\textsuperscript{302} Marx and Engels, 2000 version, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{303} ibid., pp. 3, 12.
\textsuperscript{305} Brailsford, \textit{Socialism for Today}, p. 36.
Moreover, through Marxist lenses on class, he made a connection between war and imperialism. He plainly argued that ‘capitalism means war.’\(^{306}\) He rationalised this conclusion to a great deal by blaming capitalists in particular. Even though he admitted that Angell was right maintaining that imperialism was on the whole unprofitable; he argued that capitalists did benefit from it and as a result were the ones who pushed for imperial adventures.\(^{307}\) This is in tune with the orthodox Marxist argument that ‘the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.’\(^{308}\) In the 1935 rarely known IR debate about whether or not capitalism/imperialism causes war,\(^{309}\) Brailsford elaborated more on the Marxist thesis to answer the question of what economic benefits might the bourgeoisie gain from imperial activities abroad. For him, the typical answer from a capitalist would be: ‘I gain protection for my enterprises abroad…, vast regions of the earth’s surface in which I enjoy a closed or preferential market for my goods, a monopoly of raw materials, and exclusive opportunities for capital investment.’\(^{310}\)

Brailsford’s criticism of Angell’s apparent ignorance of the profits that capitalists obtained from imperialism predates the 1935 direct debate in the *New Statesman*. Since 1914 Brailsford had already charged Angell for not taking into account the fact that small sectional groups were indeed benefiting from imperial activities. In *The War of Steel and Gold*, Brailsford utilised the analyses of imperialism of Karl Kautsky, to whom he considered a ‘brilliant German Socialist writer’,\(^{311}\) to highlight Angell’s (supposed) omission:

> To adopt Kautsky’s illustration, it is surely impossible to deny that the German governing and financial class… would derive considerable profit from the conquest, let us say, of India. The actual investments of British capitalists would, of course, be respected. But the privately-owned railways would tend to pass by purchase into German hands. German banks, assured of official patronage, would compete on favoured terms, with the existing British banks, and would soon control the credit system of India. The profits of all the new loans required for public works, and military works would fall to German


\(^{307}\) Brailsford, *War of Steel and Gold*, p. 163.


\(^{309}\) This debate in which four prominent IR intellectuals of the time were involved in, all of them considered in this thesis (Woolf, Brailsford, Angell and Laski), will be tackled in more detail in the chapter of the thesis concerning Angell.


\(^{311}\) Brailsford, *War of Steel and Gold*, p. 165.
financiers, and the immense gains from contracting would go exclusively to Germans.\textsuperscript{312}

Unfortunately, Brailsford’s journalistic style rarely presents full references in his books, articles and writings in general. As a result, it is not possible to know what exactly was/were the Kautskian text(s) Brailsford used to argue that financiers/capitalists did benefit from imperial actions. Kautsky had been writing about imperial issues since the 1880s,\textsuperscript{313} something that it is usually ignored and goes against the common belief that Hobson’s \textit{Imperialism} (1902) constitutes almost the exclusive base of Marxist theory of imperialism.\textsuperscript{314} In \textit{Socialism and Colonial Policy} (1907), for instance, Kautsky had already claimed that, as a whole, imperial activities were not profitable, even if it was true that they were for some capitalists and to a much more limited extend to some subjugated peoples.\textsuperscript{315}

One crucial way Brailsford explained capitalists were able to carry out their imperialistic actions was through the state. Domestically, Brailsford sustained that ‘a society based on a grossly unequal division of wealth must have its coercive apparatus-the state, which can crush proletarian revolt’,\textsuperscript{316} which is analogous with Kautsky’s arguments written years before: ‘Rebellion against capitalist exploitation always begins as soon as the exploitation reaches a given level, but at home domestic capital has the reassurance of knowing that the state power is behind it protecting it…’\textsuperscript{317} Brailsford, however, added that this institution was also used internationally for imperial purposes. For him, the state is ‘…an apparatus of force that serves at home and abroad the economic interests of an owing and ruling minority.’\textsuperscript{318} In reality, both Brailsford and Kautsky were writing from a Marxist instrumentalist point of view, which sees the state as ‘…a device for administering the common affairs of the whole bourgeois class’\textsuperscript{319}, a privileged group that has ‘the need for a constantly expanding outlet for their products… over the whole world.’\textsuperscript{320}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{312} ibid., pp. 165-166.
\textsuperscript{315} Kautsky, pp. 102-104.
\textsuperscript{316} Brailsford, “War and Capitalism”, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{317} Kautsky, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{318} Brailsford, \textit{Why Capitalism Means War}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{319} Marx and Engels, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{320} ibid., p. 4.
\end{flushleft}
3.5 The Distinctiveness of Brailsford’s Theory Imperialism

The Prospect of an Armed Peaceful Capitalist Era

It has been shown that following Marxism, Brailsford’s theory portrayed capitalist imperialism as militaristic. Capitalists encouraged imperial activities seeking economic benefits. Classical Marxism had emphasised that imperialism was war prone because the selfish desires of the bourgeoisie of capitalist economies spurred them to seek imperial adventures in undeveloped markets. Brailsford embraced this interpretation, although he elaborated on it arguing that now capitalism was entering a new stage in which imperial domination tended to be more informal than colonial, as evidenced through US’s control of Latin America. Moreover, Brailsford visualised the arrival of a new peaceful capitalist era in which there would be no more wars ‘…at least among the six Great Powers.’ This last point is in particular a deviation from orthodox Marxist understandings of imperialism. Lenin specifically had elaborated on this arguing that war between the major powers was unavoidable as long as the epoch of capitalist imperialism remained. Thus, Brailsford’s interpretation of the future relations between advanced capitalist states significantly diverged from Leninist understandings.

However, Brailsford’s insights on this regard are remarkably close to the ones put forward by another socialist/Marxist. Brailsford’s understandings on this issue strongly resemble Kautsky’s famous argument about the likelihood of a new phase of capitalism in which the great powers would realise that war between them was not profitable anymore. This claim was most famously put forward in “Ultra-imperialism” in 1914 (the same year than Brailsford was presenting this argument in his magnus opus). However, the seed of these claims were already advanced by Kautsky three years in advance. In “War and Peace” (1911), Kautsky stressed that disputes to obtain ‘spheres of influence’ between the great powers were still common in his own day:

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322 See for example, Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, pp. 54, 57, 62-63.
323 ibid., p. 15.
324 V Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975 [1917], pp. 10-11, 81.
…the capitalist of the various European nations (and of the United States) regard the various races outside European civilisation as their legitimate prey, and the antagonisms of the various capitalist governments among themselves arise only from the attempts to enlarge or round off these domains—colonies and “spheres of influence”…

Nevertheless, the great costs of war as a result of technological advancement had made the prospect of military conflict between the powers very small:

The devastations with which a European war threatens the whole quarter of the globe have become so unspeakably great, and the advantages which it might bring so trifling that even the bourgeoisie cannot shut its eyes to the impression of this increasing disproportion. The dislike of war is rapidly growing… among the ruling classes. And it has… been found possible to get rid of every occasion of conflict between European powers, however threatening, without any forcible explosion.

As a result, Kautsky urged socialists to stand against and expose ‘the present system of armed peace; the preservation of peace by means of a competition of armaments…’

Analogously, in *The War of Steel and Gold*, which was a ‘study of the armed peace’, Brailsford claimed: ‘…as our armaments increase. It seems to be more costly to settle our quarrels today, than it used to be to nurse them.’ Thus, for Brailsford,

Armaments are not necessarily required for war at all. They serve a purpose first of all in giving prestige to the diplomacy of the Great Power which is seeking from an undeveloped State concessions for its subjects. They are valuable in the second place when rival Powers are competing for some sphere of influence.

Interestingly, the text above is the following paragraph after Brailsford utilised Kautsky’s position to show Angell that capitalists do obtain profit from imperial conquest. Did Brailsford also take the above ideas with regards to the concept of armed peace from Kautsky? Lamentably, Brailsford’s journalistic writing style (rarely citing his references) makes it impossible to asseverate, without a possibility of error, that his visualisations from an armed peace were also obtained from Kautsky; but the close similarities between the arguments seem to indicate so.

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327 ibid.
328 ibid.
329 Brailsford, *War of Steel and Gold*, p. 17.
330 ibid., p. 167.
Brailsford’s Parliamentary and Socialist Remedies

As it has been seen, before the creation of the League of Nations, Brailsford supported the creation of this international institution which among other things should aim to prevent war and reduce armaments. The organisation should include an executive and a judicial organ.\textsuperscript{331} But in addition to this, Brailsford proposed that the League, albeit at the beginning made out of states, would gradually transform into some sort of ‘federal parliament’, which would guarantee broader citizen participation.\textsuperscript{332} Surprisingly for some perhaps, many of these points had already been previously advanced by Kautsky.

In 1911, Kautsky conceded that ‘it may be possible, by international arrangements for the reduction of armaments and the institution of international courts of arbitration, to reduce the danger of war…’\textsuperscript{333} Accordingly, the realisation of a durable peace was indeed a possibility through ‘the union of the States of European civilisation in a confederation with a universal trade policy, a federal Parliament, a federal government and a federal arm – the establishment of the United States of Europe.’\textsuperscript{334} The support for an international organisation, more specially a European confederation, was not uncommon among socialists. Trotsky, for example, also supported this idea, since he believed this international body could eventually be used to attain socialism by revolutionary means.\textsuperscript{335}

Although the chances of an international organisation to achieve peace would be strong, Kautsky warned his readers that the only genuine way to the end war would be through the attainment of socialism.\textsuperscript{336} Brailsford did not arrive to this conclusion in \textit{The War of Steel and Gold} (1914); but he did it later. After witnessing that the real-life experiment of the League of Nations did not work on security matters, Brailsford began to be very critical of this international organisation. He criticised it for being founded on liberal values and failing to address the underlying problem: capitalist imperialism.\textsuperscript{337} By 1933, his

\textsuperscript{332} ibid., p. 206.
\textsuperscript{333} Kautsky, “War and Peace”.
\textsuperscript{334} ibid.
\textsuperscript{335} Brailsford later on arrived to an analogous conclusion. But while Trotsky favoured revolutionary means for the accomplishment of socialism, the English supported a democratic transition as it will be shown in the next pages of this chapter. Thus, in the 1930s Brailsford supported a League conformed of democratic socialist states. Compare, Brailsford, \textit{Property or Peace?}, pp. 284-285 with L Trotsky, \textit{The War and the International}, 1914, Marxists Internet Archive, Available at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1914/war/ [Accessed 24/08/2015].
\textsuperscript{336} Kautsky, “War and Peace”
\textsuperscript{337} Brailsford, \textit{Socialism for Today}, p. 122.
radicalism became more evident. Brailsford strongly asserted: ‘We ought to quit the League and smash it by our departure – smash it as a dangerous delusion, and as an organ… of imperialism.’ Consequently, Brailsford reasoned that the only real solution to overcome capitalist imperialism and to achieve peace was socialism. Hence, for him ‘socialism offers in the modern world the one sure way to escape from war.’ Thus, just as orthodox Marxism, Brailsford argued that the only ultimate remedy to imperialism would be a society without classes. According to Marx and Engels, communism would begin to be strengthened ‘when, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation…’ Likewise, Brailsford sustained that the class struggle between the rich and poor in the imperialist age cannot be finalised until the ‘…usurping class has been disposed by the transference of its capital to the community. The struggle cannot be avoided, but victory will mean… the abolition of class itself.’

Therefore, Brailsford’s theory has a strong socialist basis. Yet, he differed in essential ways from Bolshevism. Even though Brailsford preached socialism and he even came to consider that ‘in the main, for the mass, the Soviet Government rather leads than coerces, and it contrives to make the progress…’; he was also critical of the violent methods frequently used by Bolsheviks. Writing about Russia, he considered ‘one must strive to understand the conditions which made the Terror, but nothing can excuse its cruelty.’ After Stalin purges and his invasion of Finland, Brailsford strongly condemned the Russian ruler: ‘His Russia is a totalitarian state like another, as brutal towards the rights of others… If this man ever understood the international creed of Socialism, he long ago forgot it.’ Additionally, Brailsford had already been criticising the Soviet Union for not endowing Russians with liberties in education, as they were not able to study texts against communist doctrines.

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339 Brailsford, Why Capitalism means War, p. 86. Also, Brailsford, Socialism for Today, p. 118.
340 Brailsford, Property or Peace?, p. 261.
342 Brailsford, Socialism for Today, p. 36.
343 Brailsford, Property or Peace?, p. 24.
As a result of the above, Brailsford rejected the Russian path to socialism. In an introduction that he wrote for Trotsky’s *Where is Britain going?* (1926), the English socialist praised the Russian communist for his intellectual effort in this particular book. Nevertheless, Brailsford differed from Trotsky’s conclusion that violent means are the only way to achieve socialism. For Brailsford, the right path ‘to advance to socialism [was] by constitutional means… [by] the use of democracy as our instrument.’ Therefore, Brailsford’s theory differed significantly from orthodox Marxian understandings in their appeal to revolution. Whereas Lenin, Marx, Engels, Trotsky and other recognised orthodox Marxists perceived revolution as essential for the attainment of socialism, Brailsford supported a more peaceful parliamentary trajectory.

Nonetheless distant from orthodox Marxism, Brailsford’s position was not rare among some socialists/Marxists. Even though Marx usually favoured revolutionary means, a sentence in the *Communist Manifesto* appears to indicate the indispensability of democracy for the achievement of the utopian society. According to Engels and Marx, ‘…the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy.’ This provided the basis for some socialist movements to stress the indispensability of democracy for the attainment of socialism. Among these lines, Eduard Bernstein’s *The Preconditions of Socialism* (1899) caused considerable debate among Marxists in the early 1900s. Among other things, Bernstein opposed the inevitability of revolution to accomplish socialism, favouring instead a peaceful transition to it through the adoption of democracy. Bernstein was a widely known socialist in the beginnings of the twentieth century who Brailsford knew personally and was aware of some of his work.

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349 Brailsford, *Property or Peace?*, p. 261.
350 Marx and Engels, PBworks, pp. 11-12, 32; Lenin, *Imperialism*, pp. 11-14.
352 Marx and Engels, 2000 version, p. 11.
353 This was the case for example of the Mensheviks which, in contrast to Bolsheviks, considered democracy as a necessary prerequisite for the achievement of socialism. According to them, another precondition was the development of capitalism in a determined economy. On these bases, Mensheviks argued that Russia was not ready for an authentic socialism. See, J Townshend, “Right-Wing Marxism”, in D Glaser and D Walker (eds.), *Twentieth Century Marxism: A Global Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2007, pp. 52-53.
The other famous Marxist that took a similar position, who (as already seen) Brailsford had a favourable opinion of and knew some of his work, was Kautsky. Although Kautsky had previously favoured revolutionary means, his point of view began to fluctuate in the 1910s. Thus, in 1918 he argued that it was “…under democracy, by virtue of which the majority of the people rule, [that] Socialism can only be brought about when a majority in its favour, is gained.”

Hence, although it is not possible to know who exactly was the inspiration behind Brailsford’s support of socialism through parliamentary means; it is certain that he was adopting a common position among some recognised Marxists/socialists. This makes Brailsford’s standpoint little original. Yet, in spite of this, his approach was important because in IR provides an alternative to the Leninist approach. The thesis will continue to reveal that, albeit unknown, this stand was common among some top intellectuals of early IR. While Brailsford’s theory deviates in important ways from orthodox Marxism, it is clear that it is fundamentally socialist. Its portrayal as part of liberal internationalism/idealism is therefore misleading.

3.6 Conclusion

The life and work of Brailsford poses an important challenge to the mainstream narratives of IR. Firstly, because his relations and affiliations do not fit well within the conventional depiction of early IR as liberal idealist/internationalist. While it is certain that Brailsford’s education was considerably liberal, and that he was a member of the Liberal Party; since his studies, his relations and affiliations evidence important socialist leanings in Brailsford. This is evidenced for example by his involvement with Fabianism since the late 1890s, his affiliation with the ILP in 1907, and his association with socialist groups such as the 1917 Club and the Friends of Russian Freedom. In addition, his esteem for some important Russian revolutionaries made more evident Brailsford’s affinities towards the socialist cause, as evidenced by his help to Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolsheviks to return to Russia.

Secondly, Brailsford’s writings also confront IR orthodoxy which oversimplifies everything written in the decades prior the Second World War as merely on issues related

356 See for example the last paragraph of: Kautsky, “War and Peace”.
to internationalism and as a result of the carnage of the Great War. While Brailsford indeed significantly contributed with his insights on the issue of the League of Nations; his primary contribution to international theory was on the theme of imperialism, and a product of an imperialist age which predates the conventional birth of the discipline in 1919. This is confirmed by the impact of his seminal *The War of Steel and Gold* (1914).

Thirdly, Brailsford’s case is at odds with traditional narratives of formative IR in that his dominant thinking was not liberal idealist/internationalist. While Brailsford indeed supported the idea of the League of Nations, after its materialisation he dismissed the utopianism and liberalism of the organisation. He thus criticised ‘the idealism of the League’ and condemned ‘liberals who believe that the League of Nations can begin to work… [and yet ignore] capitalist imperialism.’ Moreover, this chapter has shown that Brailsford also rejected the ‘socialism in liberalism’ endorsed by Hobson. Instead, after the turn of the twentieth century, he constantly situated himself somewhere within the spectrum of the socialist tradition. Furthermore, some of his contemporaries, such as Angell and Woolf, regarded him as a socialist.

Finally, this chapter has striven to demonstrate Brailsford’s reliance on Marxism for the advancement of core tenets of his theory of imperialism. In particular, it has been shown that he consciously adopted a Marxian economic deterministic approach and acknowledged to have embraced directly from Marx and Engels several tenets around the concept of concentration of capital. Moreover, Brailsford endorsed a typical Marxist criticism of capitalism. While just as orthodox Marxism, Brailsford conceded that capitalist imperialism could bring some progress to dominated territories; overall, he visualised capitalists as an exploitative class. In accordance with Marxism, Brailsford perceived the bourgeoisie as partly guilty of pushing for imperial adventures for their own benefit utilising the power of the state. Consequently, through his Marxian lenses, Brailsford conceived class as a fundamental root of conflict and thus perceived a classless society as the only lasting solution to the conflictive nature of capitalism.

Besides Engels and Marx, another important Marxist figure that Brailsford used for his analyses on imperialism was Karl Kautsky, whom he referred to as a ‘brilliant German Socialist writer’. Specifically, Brailsford employed Kautsky’s accounts to show that

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358 Brailsford, “A Socialist Foreign Policy”, p. 286.
359 Brailsford, “The Life-Work of Hobson”, pp. 6, 26; Brailsford, *Property or Peace?*, pp. 256-257.
360 Brailsford, *War of Steel and Gold*, p. 165.
financiers obtained important profits from imperial activities. In addition, it is possible that Kautsky’s writings might have been influential on Brailsford’s understandings of the possibility of a coming armed peaceful capitalist era in which wars between the great powers would be very unlikely.

While Brailsford’s theory was significantly indebted to Marxian accounts, it however substantially deviated from radical Marxist methods for the achievement of socialism. In particular, Brailsford criticised the violent and dictatorial methods utilised by Bolshevism in which liberty was secondary. Additionally, he rejected the revolutionary path preached not only by Leninists; but also by Marx, Engels and other Marxists. Instead, Brailsford supported the non-violent attainment of socialism through democratic means. While this was not an original posture, since this was the position of other socialists, such as Kautsky and Bernstein; Brailsford’s standpoint is important in IR because it provides an alternative to the Leninist theory of imperialism in the discipline.

Brailsford’s parliamentary socialist theory of imperialism represents a significant challenge to the traditional history of early IR and demonstrates (even more clearly than Hobson) the importance of Marxism as a commonly used underlying tool by prominent IR experts in the early stages of the discipline. The following chapter will confirm this through the case of Leonard Woolf.
Chapter 4: Leonard Woolf’s Undogmatic Socialistic Theory of Imperialism

4.1 Introduction

Leonard Woolf is frequently considered to be one of the most important intellectuals writing during the so-called idealist theoretical stage of the discipline of International Relations (IR). His *International Government* (1916) was one of the key influential texts behind Woodrow Wilson’s crystallisation of the League of Nations. Consequently, Woolf has also often been pejoratively labelled as a utopian. Together with Brailsford, he is one of those IR figures that Hedley Bull catalogued as ‘idealist’. Referring to Woolf’s *International Government*, Brailsford’s *The War of Steel and Gold* (1914) and other IR contributions of the period; Bull asserted that “…none of these works is at all profound, and none is worth reading except of the light it throws on the preoccupations and presuppositions of its place and time.”

There have been recent notable attempts to stress the value of Woolf’s writings, especially highlighting the inaccuracies of the conventional narratives of the discipline. The most important efforts have come from Lucian Ashworth and Peter Wilson. Both scholars have argued that denigrating Woolf as an idealist is imprecise and does not reveal much of his output in IR. They have shown that three of the main charges that E H Carr attributes to ‘utopians’, that is that they 1) ignore facts, 2) underestimate power and 3) fail ‘to appreciate the self-interested character of… [their] thought’; are not easily ascribed to Woolf. While Ashworth and Wilson have already demonstrated that Woolf’s theoretical insights are not rightly portrayed within the so-called idealist tradition, the stress of this chapter will be on the Marxian leanings that are reflected in Woolf’s writings and thought which are obscured as a result of his portrayal as an idealist.

Knowing the Marxian influence on Woolf’s international theory is important for several reasons. First, the Marxist theoretical persuasion on Woolf’s accounts has been completely

obscured by the conventional IR historiography, and rarely considered even in revisionist narratives. Second, being aware of the Marxian component of Woolf’s insights on imperialism challenges the traditional historiography of IR that depicts Woolf’s writings as solely related to internationalism and from an idealist perspective. Finally, recovering the Marxian influence on Woolf adds one more piece to our understandings of Marxism as an important underlying theoretical tool used by some of the most influential intellectuals during the disciplinary origins of IR.

The chapter asks the question, is it the case that Woolf’s writings and thought were indebted to Marxism? If so, to what extend and in what ways were they influenced by Marxism? The chapter contends that even though Woolf was a constant and firm supporter of the League of Nations, his international theory is considerably indebted to Marxian accounts and as a result the field’s labelling of him as “idealist” is misleading. Specifically, the chapter shows how he utilises Marxism as a key tool for his theory with regards to the concepts of economic determinism, instrumentalism, anti-capitalism, and by proposing socialism as a lasting solution to overcome imperialist capitalism. However, it is also stressed that he was seldom comfortable with rigid theoretical positions, and even less with ideological adherences. Consequently, the chapter suggests, with the evidence presented, that Woolf’s undogmatic socialism is at odds with his common identification as a liberal idealist/internationalist.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. First, Woolf’s significance and impact on IR are explored by reviewing his main associations, relations, and broad themes in which he was embedded. Second, his theoretical position in the discipline is investigated by reviewing his relation with realism, liberal internationalism/idealism, and socialism. The third part recovers some of Woolf’s Marxian-influenced writings. In particular, Woolf’s understandings of economic determinism, instrumentalism, anti-capitalism, and socialism as a remedy to imperialism, are explored to investigate the extent to which his theoretical insights rely on Marxist tenets. Finally, the last section highlights the uniqueness of Woolf’s international theory as opposed to Marxian orthodox understandings of economic determinism and socialism. The chapter concludes that although undogmatically, Woolf commonly used Marxism as an important theoretical tool for explaining international imperial affairs. As in previous chapters, the focus on the writings of the thinker in consideration would be primarily through the prism of imperialism. As discussed below,
besides being Woolf’s most regular avenue of research, his contributions on imperialism also made a considerable impact.

4.2 Woolf’s Engagement with and Impact on IR

Leonard Sydney Woolf’s engagement with IR-related institutions, scholars and issues pose both a confirmation and a challenge to mainstream narratives of the period. They confirm the IR conventional historiography through Woolf’s almost unconditional support for the League of Nations, his interest and influence on the theme of internationalism, and because he has been criticised for being naïve by some important IR scholars. On the other hand, Woolf poses a challenge to IR conventional narratives in that most of his associations were clearly leaned towards the left, in that he enjoyed a close relationship with socialist orientated IR scholars, and through his substantial writings on the issue of imperialism which have made a considerable impact on the discipline.

Woolf (1880-1869) was born in London in a Jewish family. He studied at Trinity College Cambridge, where he was part of the selective intellectual society known as the “Apostles”. The group included distinguished figures such as J M Keynes, G E Moore, and Thoby Stephen (a brother of Virginia, who would became Leonard’s wife and one of the most famous English modernist writers of the twentieth century). This is where Leonard Woolf might have started to be more significantly in touch with Marxist ideas, since the group has frequently had a considerable influence from Marx.

Several institutions to which Woolf belonged reflected some of his inclinations towards the left. During the early 1900s, for example, he had contact with the Fabians and became himself a Fabian socialist. Up to that point, the Fabian Society had paid little attention to international affairs, but it was Woolf who injected this interest into the group, standing out clearly as the expert of the society on the theme. Since 1918, the Labour Party (LP) became Woolf’s main political group. Within the LP, Woolf’s increasing reputation as an expert on international and imperial affairs provided him with the opportunity of being secretary of the Advisory Committee on International Questions (1918-1945) and the

365 Wilson, p. 1.
367 Ashworth, International Relations and the Labour Party, p. 204.
Committee on Imperial Questions (1924-1945). Additionally, he was a founder of the 1917 Club, a group which Brailsford and Hobson belonged to, as well as other important personalities such as Virginia Woolf and Ramsay McDonald. The club began its life as a left-wing group, as a result of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

However, even though Woolf’s political associations reflect a moderate leftist leaning, his firm support of the League of Nations manifested his close proximity to internationalism. Indeed, Woolf’s defence of this international organisation waned little even after its evident failure to stop the Second World War. Prior to the creation of the League of Nations, Woolf was one of the founding members of the British League of Nations Society, a group which promoted collective security. Thus, Woolf’s associations partly fit within the traditional narratives of IR, which is also the case of his writings and impact on the field.

One of the major impacts Woolf made on IR was through his writings on the theme of international organisation. In the Fabian Society, he was commissioned to write a study on how the prevention of war could be achieved. The result was the influential *International Government* (1916). The book, which is perhaps his most famous in IR, contained what he claimed to be the immediate solution to the problem of war: the creation of a League of Nations. Woolf’s proposal was straightforward and can be situated within the liberal internationalist perspective. Due to the lack of authority in the international system above states, an international organisation/government to regulate their relations and put in harmony their interests was indispensable and achievable. Among other things, it recommended that the international body should have an International Council dominated by the great powers, an administrative Secretariat, and an International Court of Justice to operate legal issues. Woolf’s suggestion for the creation of a supranational authority to regulate international affairs, albeit not new, became significantly influential and considerably well received by intellectuals. One reviewer, for instance, portrayed it as

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‘perhaps the most permanently valuable of his political writings.’375 Henry Brailsford described it as ‘a brilliant book’.376 Most importantly, the work was among those texts that provided the basis for Woodrow Wilson’s crystallised proposal for the creation of the League of Nations a couple of years later.377 The impact of Woolf’s International Government was such that it is why some IR scholars later labelled him as an idealist.378 While Woolf continued to believe in the importance of an international organisation for the achievement of peace, his writings on the issue substantially decreased after the League of Nations was created.379 His most frequent and constant theme of writing in international affairs was imperialism/empire.

The issue of imperialism was constantly present in Woolf’s thought since the beginning of his career. In 1904 after graduating from Cambridge, he decided to pursue a career in the British Imperial Civil Service and was sent to Ceylon, modern day Sri Lanka.380 When arriving there, he ‘…was a very innocent, unconscious imperialist… but gradually became fully aware of… [the] nature and problems… [of] imperialism’381 As the years went on, he became more anti-imperialist, and that together with the fact that he wanted to marry Virginia Stephen, seem to be the main reasons why he resigned his commission and went back to London in 1911.382 After returning and getting married, he published his first book. The work was a novel called The Village in the Jungle (1913), in which he presented a subtle criticism of the British imperial practices in Ceylon.383

In 1920, under the auspices of the Labour Party, Woolf published a book on the topic that made his reputation as one of the primary anti-imperialist intellectuals of his time. The text was particularly important because it drew the African case to the study of imperialism, something that had been almost completely ignored before.384

377 Parkinson, p. 156.
378 See, Bull, pp. 34-35.
382 ibid., pp. 158, 251.
Africa was widely reviewed\textsuperscript{385} and overall was well received after its publication. Harry Barnes, for example, asserted that 'all in all, it is a book with which all students should familiarise themselves and with which statesmen must reckon.' Additionally, he considered that the work would ‘…probably have a political as well as an academic influence.’\textsuperscript{386} Years later in 1961, Richard Hammond, still stressed that Woolf’s ‘book remains indispensable to the student of imperialism.’\textsuperscript{387} And Peter Wilson still considers that IR students would benefit by reading Woolf’s material on imperial issues.\textsuperscript{388}

Woolf’s contributions on the theme of imperialism and empire, concepts which he frequently treated as synonyms,\textsuperscript{389} continued after his Empire and Commerce. Other books on the subject that were considerably influential in their time were Economic Imperialism (1920), and Empire and Civilization (1928). These works together with others that frequently touched the topic indirectly, such as The War for Peace (1940), and his constant journalistic production of articles on the subject, solidified Woolf’s reputation as one of the most important anti-imperialists of his time. According to Stuart Macintyre, the chief anti-imperialists of the first half of the twentieth century were Woolf, Hobson and Brailsford.\textsuperscript{390}

The impact of Woolf’s writings on the topic has been such that several scholars have maintained that he is one of the foremost intellectuals that contributed to the erosion of the British Empire.\textsuperscript{391}

Woolf often closely collaborated with prominent internationalists who had considerable socialist tendencies. For example, within the Advisory Committee on International Questions, he had close links with Norman Angell and Henry Brailsford, who had different degrees of socialist tendencies, as this thesis demonstrates.\textsuperscript{392} Together with Brailsford and

\textsuperscript{385} A search of reviews of Empire and Commerce using the digital library JSTOR throws six reviews only between 1920 and 1921. In contrast, a search for reviews on International Government from 1916 to 1921 only displays two articles.


\textsuperscript{391} Wilson, “Leonard Woolf: Still not out of the Jungle?”, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{392} Ashworth, International Relations and the Labour Party, p. ix.
Hobson, Woolf was a prominent member of the Union of Democratic Control. Additionally, he contributed with IR theorists for the production of literature on international affairs. For example, he edited the book *The Intelligent Man’s Way to Prevent War* (1933), which included the contributions of Angell and Harold Laski. Journalistically, he was one of the most well recognised and read British writers on international affairs of his time, and was the director of the *New Statesman* (1942-1965), as well as editor of the *International Review* (1919), the international section of *Contemporary Review* (1920-22), the *Political Quarterly* (1931-59), and *The Nation* (1922-30). In all these journal-magazines, Woolf was often in contact with the IR writers covered in this thesis who have been frequently portrayed as liberal internationalists/idealists; but whose thought also had significant socialist elements (i.e. Hobson, Angell, Laski and Brailsford). Thus, Woolf enjoyed a close relation with distinguished IR theorists with leftist tendencies. Yet, in common with these intellectuals, Woolf’s thought has been frequently generalised as liberal idealist/internationalist by some IR theorists after his death. The issue of how Woolf’s thought could be characterised, is addressed in the following section.

### 4.3 Woolf’s (International) Political Thought and Marxism

Woolf’s political thought was primarily not liberal idealist/internationalist. Yet, some of his theoretical postures might lead one to prematurely label his thinking as such. Woolf’s criticisms to Carr’s realism, his support for the League of Nations and his rejection of economic protectionism are insufficient grounds to generalise his theoretical perspective as liberal internationalist/idealist. Instead, his political thought was primarily based on socialist grounds.

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397 Recently for example, Craig Murphy, current IR Professor, has catalogued him as a liberal internationalist. C N Murphy, *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 17.
It is clear that Woolf did not consider himself to be within Carr’s realist tradition. Even though some IR revisionist studies have argued that there was never a meaningful intellectual debate between the so-called idealists and realists during the genesis of the discipline, Woolf provides a challenge to this argument, since he elaborated a response to the realist critique of utopianism. For him, realism was a very popular theory among academics and politicians in 1940 which stressed the importance of power and war in international affairs and categorised the experiment of the League of Nations as utopian. Nevertheless, Woolf considered it to be a flawed approach because even though realism relied in the diametrical division between itself and idealism, it failed to provide a clear distinction between both. According to him, Carr thought the term utopian set hopes and ideals over and above real life events. However, Woolf argued that if we adopt this distinction then Hitler’s aims, as they were ultimately unsuccessful, should be categorised as utopian and not as realist. Moreover, Woolf claimed that it was difficult to explain the abolition of slavery in the world through realist lenses; because even though this was against the interest of statesmen, it became to be intolerable to practice slavery since the nineteenth century. Further, Woolf criticised realists for cataloguing the League of Nations as utopian:

…the realist’s use of the word utopian is wrong and it is wrongly used… I do not admit that the League’s collective security system was, or that would be, utopian in the sense that there is anything inherent in the nature of states or of their relations, interests, and power which makes such a system impossible. On the contrary, all the evidence goes to prove that such a system is not only possible, but inevitable…

Woolf went on to argue that the collapse of the League of Nations did not prove that it was a utopian experiment. Just as Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement failed and yet it was not regarded as idealist, the failure of the League did not make it utopian either. Therefore, Woolf neither sided with realists, nor did he regard himself to be an idealist due to his support of the League of Nations. In fact, he stressed that a model supranational institution should avoid any utopianism. As stressed in the previous chapter about Brailsford, the support for an international federation of states was common among

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402 ibid., p. 226.
403 ibid., p. 116.
renowned socialists, such as Trotsky\textsuperscript{405} and Kautsky;\textsuperscript{406} and that did not make them
effectual or liberal internationalists. In fact, Woolf did not situate himself within the liberal
tradition. Writing about the means that liberals considered to be the appropriate to attain a
civilised world, Woolf maintained: ‘I personally have no doubt that they have been and are
completely wrong.’\textsuperscript{407} Thus, Woolf himself did not view his support of the League of
Nations as within the liberal internationalist tradition.

There is one more element in Woolf’s theory that could be categorised within the liberal
internationalist tradition. According to Peter Wilson, notwithstanding Woolf never
advocated free trade as a means to overcoming imperialism and/or achieving a more
peaceful world, ‘in his rejection of protectionism… the imprint of liberal internationalism
is clear.’\textsuperscript{408} This is indeed an appealing conclusion to reach, but it has nevertheless little
support since, as Wilson acknowledges, Woolf never advocated free trade practices.\textsuperscript{409}
Moreover, just because a theorist highlights the negative effects of protectionist policies
that does not \textit{per se} make him/her a liberal. Indeed, stressing the negative impact of
protectionist measures in the first half of the 20th century was a common practice among
several distinguished Marxist theorists of imperialism.\textsuperscript{410}

Woolf did not conceive his work as belonging within either the realist or idealist tradition.
Rather, he situated it somewhere in the socialist spectrum. In \textit{Socialism and Cooperation}
(1921), for example, he often uses phrases like: ‘I call myself and think myself a socialist’,
‘the author of this book is a socialist’, or ‘socialists, and I among them’.\textsuperscript{411} Indeed, it is not
rare to find in Woolf’s writings expressions such as: ‘As a Socialist, one laments…’\textsuperscript{412}; or
even more plainly and radically: ‘I hold myself to be a Marxian socialist’.\textsuperscript{413}

\textsuperscript{405} L Trotsky, \textit{The War and the International}, Marxists Internet Archive, 1914, Available at:
\url{http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1914/war/} [Accessed 13/08/2015].

\textsuperscript{406} K Kautsky, “War and Peace”, Marxists Internet Archive, April 1911, Available at:
\url{https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1911/04/war1911.htm} [Accessed 13/08/2015].


\textsuperscript{408} Wilson, \textit{The International Theory of Leonard Woolf}, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{409} Perhaps Woolf’s clearest contribution highlighting what he considered to be the main negative effects of
protectionism is found in his \textit{International Economic Policy}. There he stresses that the main effects of tariffs
are ‘(1) to increase the profits of the protected industry; (2) to raise the price of the commodity in the home
market; (3) to favour the creation of capitalist rings, combinations and trusts.’ L Woolf, \textit{International Economic Policy}, The Labour Party, London, 1919, p. 2. For another example of Woolf’s critique to
negative impacts of tariffs mentioned by Woolf were also highlighted years before by the Austro-Marxist

\textsuperscript{410} See for example, Hilferding, pp. 7-8, 308-310.


\textsuperscript{412} L Woolf, “English Socialism”, \textit{The New Statesman and Nation}, March 22, 1941, p. 304.

\textsuperscript{413} Woolf, \textit{The War for Peace}, p. 152.
Leonard Woolf had a profound interest in Marxism/Socialism and was familiar with its main thinkers and tenets. He often reviewed books on Socialism and Marxism, a reflection of his interest on the theme. He even wrote an entire book about the potential that he considered the Cooperation movement had to attain socialism gradually (i.e. *Socialism and Cooperation* (1921)). In addition, some of his writings show considerable familiarity with and positive comments about important Marxist figures. In *Socialism and Cooperation*, for example, he acknowledges the work of Marx, Trotsky and Lenin. In *Barbarian at the Gate* (1939) he asserts that Marx’s house in Vienna should be considered a social patrimony to be used with the purpose of enhancing the beauty of civilisation. Additionally, referring to Marx and Engels, he states that the ‘...ultimate aim of the founders of modern socialism was not a society of masters and salves, but of free men.’ He also described Lenin as ‘...a great man of action, of immense tenacity of purpose, and with a subtle and powerful brain... never a personal dictator in the way that Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini are today.’

Woolf was well aware of some of the paramount intellectual contests involving Marxism in his time. In a review in *The New Statesman*, Woolf criticised socialists for being sidetracked on Marxist debates and not paying enough attention/effort to the accomplishment of socialism particularly in Britain. For Woolf, ‘the collapse of civilization - and with civilization of Socialism - will continue if Socialists continue to quarrel about the Second and Third International, about Communism and social democracy, about dictatorship and democracy, about revolution and revisionism.’ Woolf was thus highly attentive to the main debates Marxists were undergoing during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Most importantly, Woolf had a considerably solid knowledge of their approaches and of the Marxian theory in general. As previously discussed, Woolf elaborated reviews on texts

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416 Woolf, *Barbarians at the Gate*, pp. 48, 192.
417 ibid., p. 172.
419 For a good account of the main Marxist debates at the turn of the 20th century, which include the issues mentioned by Woolf (i.e. revisionism, revolution, democracy, dictatorship, and the creation and functioning of the Communist Internationals) see chapters two and three of: D Glaser and D M Walker (eds.), *Twentieth Century Marxism: A Global Introduction*, Routledge, N.Y., 2007.
about Marxism. It should be noted, that in some cases those books were about particular Marxist figures. For example, *Paths in Utopia* (1949) by Prof. Martin Burger contained an analysis of Marx, Engels and Lenin’s approaches, and of other socialists, such as Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier.\(^{420}\) Another example is the book *To the Finland Station* (1940) by Edmund Wilson which was also reviewed by Woolf and considers the history of socialism, as well as the lives and ideas of several Marxists, such as Lenin, Marx, Engels and Trotsky.\(^{421}\) What these reviews indicate is that he had an interest in Marxist ideas and that he had a considerably good knowledge of Marxism, at least from secondary sources. But in addition to this, even though his journalistic style complicates the work of tracing the theoretical origin of his ideas, since he does not always provide bibliographic references in his writings; there is evidence that he read important Marxist primary sources. Particularly, Woolf’s *Barbarians at the Gate* mentions Marx’s *Capital* at least twice and the *Communist Manifesto* seven times. In addition, the *Communist Manifesto* is cited at least twice and there are two quotes of individual writings of Engels.\(^{422}\)

There is no wonder then why several scholars, especially outside IR, have considered Woolf to be a socialist. Although Ashworth and Wilson have acknowledged a socialist component in Woolf’s theoretical insights,\(^{423}\) it has been outside IR where Woolf has been more commonly called socialist. For instance, historian Elleke Boehmer has called Woolf an ‘anti-imperial socialist economist and internationalist’.\(^{424}\) Similarly, Noel Annan described Woolf as ‘a socialist, an anti-imperialist, and a supporter of the League of Nations’.\(^{425}\) Additionally, Victoria Glendinning, Woolf’s biographer, called him ‘a Marxist of a sort and a socialist’.\(^{426}\) According to her, Woolf was frequently asked about his

\(^{420}\) Woolf, “The Utopians”, p. 624.

\(^{421}\) L. Woolf, “Lenin turns the Key”, *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 6, 1941, p. 234.


\(^{423}\) Both Peter Wilson and Lucian Ashworth agree that situating Woolf within the so called idealist tradition is imprecise. Wilson has suggested that Woolf is better characterised by ‘radical dissent and Fabian paternalism’; and Ashworth has labelled him a ‘liberal socialist’. See, Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf*, p. 135; L M Ashworth, *History of International Thought: From the Origins of the Modern State to Academic International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2014, p. 161. Both suggestions capture much more thoroughly Woolf’s thought than simply labelling him as an idealist. However, Wilson proposal does not explicitly mention the clearly socialist part of Leonard Woolf; and while Ashworth’s term does it, he adds the word ‘liberal’; a term which Woolf never personally felt comfortable with regards to his theoretical contributions.


theoretical position; and for her, ‘…his life as a socialist, and his answers were consistent… he described himself as a “Marxian Socialist…up to a point.”’

Here Glendding was quoting Woolf’s *Barbarians at the Gate*. Why did he describe himself as a ‘Marxian Socialist—but only up to a point’? Woolf explained that he was against ‘doctrinal lunatics’ who thought of Marx as being a prophet and the *Capital* as a quasi inspired divine text. While Woolf acknowledged that there was ‘so much truth in Marx’ and in his *Capital*, he did not consider it appropriate to regard them as divinely inspired. Woolf believed that,

> It is right and proper that we should praise Marx as a great man and accept from him the truth that was in him, but it is fantastic to ask us to swallow…his rules… as if they were the absolute truths of revealed religion. Nothing has done more harm to Marx and the cause of Socialism than the ridiculous demand that we should treat Das Kapital as if it were the Sermon on the Mount...”

While Woolf was convinced to be a socialist, he was always critical about any dogmatism, including those commonly held within Marxism. Thus he asserted, ‘… where there is a dogmatic coordination between one’s beliefs and moral judgments, it should, I think, be regarded with the gravest suspicion.’ His first experience with the unofficial Bolshevik ambassador in UK in 1919 reflects Woolf’s abhorrence of any kind of dogmas:

> Rothstein, as I said, was the first of these modern civilized savages, these communist fanatics that I came across. Outside the circle of his Marxist religion he seemed to me a nice man and highly intelligent… He would expound the gospel of Marxism-Leninism to me at great length in that dreadful jargon of meaningless abstractions which has become the language of communism and the excuse for the torture or killing of hundreds of thousands of human beings.

Consequently, Woolf often harshly criticised the abuses of the Soviet Union/Russia. While he welcomed the Russian revolution of 1917, he was frequently critical of the violent methods used afterwards in the name of Communism. It was often puzzling for him to

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427 ibid., p. 347.
429 ibid., p. 124.
432 Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, p. 19.
understand how ‘communists, being communists, were continually torturing and murdering their fellow-communists on such grounds as that they were either right deviationists or left deviationists.’\(^{434}\) However, despite his firm criticisms of the violent methods used by Russian communists after 1917, he wrote in a letter to Margaret Llewelyn in April 1920: ‘I hope you don’t think I’m anti-Bolshevik. I’m not, I think they’re the only people who’ve made an honest and serious attempt to practise what I believe in. But I can’t help seeing their faults and mistakes...\(^{435}\)

All of the above provide a better understanding of why Woolf called himself a ‘heretical socialist’.\(^{436}\) Woolf’s dominant theoretical posture as an undogmatic socialist is clearly at odds with his depiction as an idealist in conventional IR. His theoretical writings on the issues around imperialism confirm this point, as it will be demonstrated below.

### 4.4 Woolf’s Undogmatic Indebtedness to Marxism on the Theme of Imperialism

*Economic Determinism and Instrumentalism*

One of the important elements that Woolf adopted considerably from Marxism was its economic determinism. As part of his theory of imperialism he frequently argued that ‘at every step in the imperialist expansion of Europe, the impulse of economic causes is evident.’\(^{437}\) Accordingly,

> The motive power, therefore, behind modern imperialism, is economic; it springs from economic beliefs and desires. There are other ingredients... but if they had all been absent and the economic causes and motives had remained, the same effects would have resulted.\(^{438}\)

According to Woolf, the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries had shown that the motives behind imperial expansion ‘were purely economic’. He argued that in the particular case of Britain’s imperial activities in India and Egypt, it was evident that the main impulse was ‘...the provision of markets and customers for the European citizens of the British


\(^{436}\) Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, p. 85.


\(^{438}\) *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
This is in tune with the *Communist Manifesto*, which Woolf had read, and which asserts that ‘the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe.’

Woolf often utilised the Marxist economic interpretation of history to understand world events. For example, he interpreted Britain’s policy of appeasement in the early years of the Second World War as an agreement between the imperial capitalist Great Powers for the partition of the world. Thus, he regarded that ‘up to 1939 Mr. Chamberlain’s policy can only be correctly interpreted upon classical Marxist lines.’ He also believed that the rise of Hitler ‘was in accordance with the principles of orthodox Marxism’ as it was in the interest of capitalists because they were afraid of the power that the socialist movement was gaining in Russia and Germany. Nevertheless, he also recognised that Hitler’s aims were not primarily economic. Instead, for him the dictator thought mainly in terms of power. Woolf thus had a distinctive Marxian understanding of economic determinism, which is further discussed below.

Another key part of Woolf’s theory of imperialism was the Marxian interpretation of the state. According to him, in order to accomplish their imperialistic goals, capitalists frequently enlisted the help of the state. As already seen in the two previous chapters, this theoretical posture is commonly known as Marxist instrumentalism, where the state is perceived as ‘…a device for administering the common affairs of the whole bourgeois class’. Woolf embraced an instrumentalist view of the state in his work on imperialism. For example, in *Economic Imperialism*, he asserts that at the dawn of the 19th century in China an ‘economic exploitation was ruthlessly carried out…’ by the French, German, British and Russian empires ‘…in the interests of groups of foreign financiers supported by their Governments.’ And perhaps even more clearly in *Imperialism and Civilization*, Woolf maintained that as part of the consolidation of the imperialism that emerged during the 19th century primarily in Europe, the ‘modern State… was invoked by the capitalist to aid him in developing or exploiting the other continents.’

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440 Marx and Engels, p. 6.
441 Woolf, *Barbarians at the Gate*, p. 208.
442 ibid., pp. 133, 137.
Criticism of Capitalist Imperialism

Woolf’s theory of imperialism also drew from Marxian accounts in its strong criticism of capitalism in general, and capitalist imperialism in particular. However, it should be noted that in accordance with orthodox Marxism, he sometimes conceded that capitalism has a progressive element in it. In one of the volumes of his autobiography he recognised that despite the exploitative nature of British imperialism, in his own experience he found that ‘there were also some very good things in it’. Elsewhere, he also wrote that even though imperialism had brought much more evil and exploitation than goodness, the construction of railways was accompanied with some limited development to certain undeveloped regions. It is also possible to find Woolf’s same position with regards to the partly civilising/developing component of imperialism in some of his memorandums. The same posture is also found in orthodox Marxism. Karl Marx acknowledged that capitalism, and specifically capitalist imperialism, had an element of progressiveness in it. In Marx’s words, ‘England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating- the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.’

Having shown that caveat, Woolf’s anti-capitalism is a recurrent element in his writings and encompassed a critique of a variety of aspects of capitalism. First, Woolf regarded capitalist imperialism as a system which was ‘essentially one of exploitation’. Particularly, he frequently denounced the economic exploitative activities of the capitalistic imperialism practiced by economically developed (imperial) states over the less developed countries. Likewise, Marx and Engels considered that the capitalist system is one in which the ‘exploitation of the world market’ and ‘the exploitation of one nation by another’ is a common practice.

Additionally, Woolf often embraced the Marxian dialectical approach that simplifies capitalism as a system divided in two main antagonistic classes, in order to highlight the

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446 Woolf, Journey, pp. 195-196.
448 Reader, p. 111.
450 Woolf, Economic Imperialism, p. 71.
452 Marx and Engels, pp. 6, 18.
453 In Socialism and Cooperation he considered a third class which he called the ‘consumers’. Woolf, p. 81.
excesses done by the capitalist class over the proletariat. Hence, for Woolf, it was a common practice that the bourgeoisie in its eagerness to gain more profits will exploit the worker for its own benefit.\textsuperscript{454}

The manual worker finds himself in the centre of a system which assumes that you will only produce if you make a profit out of production; he then discovers that if he increases his effort to produce all of the greater part of the profit goes into the pocket of some else... The great masses of manual workers are forced to produce, because if they did not they would starve....\textsuperscript{455}

As already shown in the previous chapter, Woolf here is utilising a Marxist interpretation of the exploitation of the worker which can be encompassed under the term ‘surplus labour’. Marx used this concept in \textit{Capital} to refer to the additional work the worker had to do to increase production/profits, and yet that was not reflected in any increase of his/her salary, but was instead appropriated by the capitalist.\textsuperscript{456} Thus, for Woolf capitalists represented the very few who benefited from imperial activities.

Woolf also expressed his antipathy for capitalism by arguing that the system was economically unequal. He argued that there was a marked inequality with regards to the distribution of wealth under capitalism. In Britain for example, he showed that in his time approximately ‘...two-thirds [of the national income] is distributed among one-third of the population.'\textsuperscript{457} Additionally, he maintained that inequalities in capitalism were outstanding with regards to the possession of the means of production. Thus, he stressed that ‘under the existing system the instruments and machinery are mainly in private hands and under private control.’ And he added that ‘factories and machines, the banks, the ships, [and also] the railways, are in the hands and under the control of a minute minority...’\textsuperscript{458} These inequalities in the system deemed capitalist imperialism to be unstable. As a result, Woolf considered that capitalism ‘...contains within it an economic contradiction and the seeds of its own destruction.’\textsuperscript{459} While Woolf acknowledged to have borrowed the idea of the instability of the capitalist system due to its inherent inequalities from the Marxist tradition; he did not believe, as it was common among some Marxists, that the system

\textsuperscript{454} ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{455} ibid., p. 48.
\textsuperscript{459} Woolf, \textit{Barbarian at the Gate}, p. 124.
would be inevitably destroyed.\textsuperscript{460} Although capitalism was intrinsically unequal and it contained ‘the seeds of its own destruction’; it could easily prolong its life if there was a lack of human will to change it.\textsuperscript{461}

Woolf also criticised the bellicosity that stems from international capitalism, and considered that one of the major obstacles to reach international peace was imperialism.\textsuperscript{462} And for him the roots of imperialism were to be found in capitalism.\textsuperscript{463} Therefore, he thought that the existence of capitalist imperialism represented future wars.\textsuperscript{464} This was of course a common position among the previously elaborated classical Marxist theories of imperialism.\textsuperscript{465} In fact, Woolf situated the idea of the bellicosity of capitalism within the socialist tradition. In the 1935 \textit{New Statesman} exchange of letters previously mentioned, even though Woolf claimed that Marxists wrongly dismissed non-economic factors of war, he asserted: ‘The Socialist analysis is indeed irrefutable if it is put in its right form, i.e. that the existing protectionist, imperialist structure of capitalist society must almost inevitably sooner or later produce war.’\textsuperscript{466} Elsewhere, Woolf acknowledged that Marx was aware of the bellicose nature of the capitalist system: ‘When Marx formulated his theories, capitalism was pre-eminently a competitive economic system, and competition is the economic form of conflict.’\textsuperscript{467}

Here it is important to notice that Woolf attributed much of the evils of imperial activities to the international capitalist system, and not so much to the bourgeoisie. The greatest problem for him to be dealt with was not the capitalist class, but the capitalist international system.\textsuperscript{468} According to him, the system was the reason why there were Hitlers, Mussolinis, Stalins and other dictators in the world.\textsuperscript{469} For Woolf,

The capitalist imperialist is only a human being who has yielded to the tyranny of his own desires and of the social and economic system in which he blindly

\textsuperscript{460} Lenin, for example, believed that ‘the period of imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution’. V Lenin, \textit{Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism}, Progress publishers, Moscow, 1917, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{461} Woolf, \textit{Barbarians at the Gate}, pp. 124-125.
\textsuperscript{462} L Woolf, \textit{The International Post-War Settlement}, Fabian Publications Ltd, Research series no. 85, 1944, p. 19; Woolf, \textit{Economic Imperialism}, p. 64;
\textsuperscript{464} Woolf, \textit{The International Post-War Settlement}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{465} Referring to what he considered to be the latest stage of capitalism, Lenin for instance thought that ‘imperialist wars are absolutely inevitable under such an economic system’. Lenin, p. 10. For another well known Marxist analysis that regarded capitalist imperialism as bellicose see, N Bukharin, \textit{Imperialism and World Economy}, Bookmarks, London, 2003, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{467} Woolf, \textit{The War for Peace}, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{468} Woolf, \textit{The International Post-War Settlement}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{469} Woolf, \textit{The War for Peace}, p. 237.
believes. The social and economic system allows him to regard personal profit-making as in itself a legitimate motive for either personal or political action… and still regard himself as philanthropic, patriotic, and most honorable gentleman. It is a mistake to exaggerate the personal responsibility or iniquity of these men. 

In a similar vein, in the first volume of *Capital*, which Woolf likely read, Marx had already argued the capitalist individual was greatly a result of the capitalist structure and his/her actions were thus determined by that:

I paint the capitalist and the landlord in no sense *couleur de rose* [i.e., seen through rose-tinted glasses]. But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests. My standpoint… is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.

Despite both Marx’s and Woolf’s assertion that we should blame the system more than the actions of capitalists, they both stressed that capitalist imperial activities were carried out as a result of the economic desires of capitalists. In *Economic Imperialism*, Woolf asserted that the imperial activities of Germany, Belgium and Britain in Africa have ‘…always [been] directly or indirectly associated with or controlled by commercial companies or by groups of European financiers and capitalists.’ He reaffirmed this point in *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, arguing that imperial practices by the great powers in Africa were motivated by a ‘small group of persons, the financiers, traders and capitalists, who are seeking particular economic ends…’ Woolf’s theoretical position is in tune with the *Communist Manifesto* in which it is argued that foreign imperial adventures are a result of the capitalists’ desire to increase their profits. In words of Marx and Engels, ‘the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe.’

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A Lasting Solution to Imperialism

If Woolf regarded the capitalist imperial structure as the main international problem, what was his proposed solution? His most well known systemic solution to imperialism in IR, and perhaps also elsewhere, was the potential of the League of Nations. This remedy is Woolf’s most famous solution, partly because it is the one he proposed in his two best known written books, International Government (1916) and Empire and Commerce in Africa (1920). This contribution to international thought, which as already seen could be (or not) labelled within the liberal internationalist tradition, was important. However, there is another remedy to imperialism that Woolf frequently put forward; one which has received scant attention in IR.

In plain language, Woolf argued: ‘Capitalists believe certain things about society which are false and desire certain things in society which are bad; [whereas] socialists believe certain things about society which are true and desire certain things in society which are good.’ In contrast to destructive capitalist tendencies, Woolf believed that socialist principles provided the basis for civilisation.

Woolf’s proposal of a socialist international society encompassed several recommendations. First, he thought that socialism should start by placing the interests of the community as a whole first, as opposed to the individualistic benefits of capitalists. This meant that ‘uncontrolled competition of private profit making interests’ should be ended. Second and related, Woolf proposed that ‘…the economic resources of the community should be owned and controlled not by individuals or by classes, but by the whole community.’ Put it in more radical words, Woolf advocated for ‘the abolition of private ownership and capitalist control’. Third, because the capitalist system meant class antagonisms, Woolf suggested that the ‘abolition of this class structure’ would represent a noteworthy development for civilisation. In short, Woolf considered that the implementation of socialism internationally ‘would abolish the conditions creating conflict of interests and would then create a planned economic system based upon

476 Woolf, Socialism and Cooperation, p. 5.
477 Woolf, The International Post-War Settlement, p. 3.
478 Woolf, Socialism and Cooperation, p. 21.
479 ibid., p. 123.
480 Woolf, Barbarians at the Gate, p. 126; The War for Peace, p. 180.
481 Woolf, Socialism and Cooperation, p. 97.
cooperation… Privileging communitarian interests, and advocating for the abolition of class and property is evidently in tune with orthodox Marxism. Plainly, Woolf considered that ‘socialism is the only permanent solution of the world’s economic distresses’.

4.5 The Distinctiveness of Woolf’s Socialist Theory of Imperialism

Woolf’s Interpretation of Economic Determinism

As already shown, Woolf considerably embraced a Marxian economic standpoint to interpret international affairs. Yet, he was not rigidly doctrinaire in his theorisations. His undogmatic Marxist posture about economic determinism is reflected in some of his writings. In *Imperialism and Civilization* (1928), he conceded that not only economics, but also politics and ideas frequently played a major part in shaping world affairs. After reviewing some practical examples of the early twentieth century imperialism, Woolf explains that in all his examples the motives were ‘economic and political’, springing from the imposition of ‘Western civilization… upon the rest of the world’. Moreover, in the often ignored IR debate of whether or not imperial capitalism causes war, Woolf again rejected economics as being the only force playing a considerable part in imperial conflictive practices. He agreed with Brailsford ‘on the enormous effect of the economic structure of present-day society upon the policy of imperialist and protectionist states.

Nevertheless, he thought illogical to disregard other non-economic forces:

> I claim to be a Socialist, but I have never understood how the extreme Marxist or even the non-extreme Marxist who claims to be orthodox can believe that the world is as simple as he tells us it is. The millions who fought in the last war… were fighting for everything which was contrary to their own economic interests… For a Socialist to refuse to admit and combat these non economic causes seems to me blind…

In spite of his dismissal of considering economics as the exclusive force to understand imperial practices, Woolf believed that his position was not in opposition to Marxian

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482 Woolf, *The War for Peace*, p. 139.
483 See, Marx and Engels, PBworks, pp. 12, 14, 16, 21.
classical theory. Even though he thought that dismissing non-economic forces to understand international affairs was mistaken; he conceded that that idea was based on ‘a profound truth’ of Marxism, which had highlighted the significance of economics.\footnote{Woolf, \textit{The War for Peace}, p. 129.} The following quote shows that while Woolf condemned the economic determinism commonly preached among Communists, he adopted what he thought was Marx and Engels’ original doctrine on the issue. He criticised…

…the absurdity of the crude dogma of economic determinism preached today by so many Communists who have the mistaken idea that Marx and Engels believed that history is determined solely by economic facts. They should study the letter which Engels wrote to Mehring… because… [it] show[s] that the theory of the interaction of economics and ideas as a cause of civilization or barbarism… is consistent with Engel’s interpretation of the determination of history.\footnote{Woolf, \textit{Barbarians at the Gate}, p. 194.} 

Engels’ letter to which Woolf was referring, was extracted and published as an appendix of \textit{Barbarians at the Gate} (1939). In the letter, Engels stressed that even though his and Marx’s interpretation of history as determined by economic forces was indeed what they preached, they never denied that there were other secondary non-economic elements of importance that also shaped the environment.\footnote{Woolf, \textit{Barbarians at the Gate}, p. 194.} This economic deterministic approach adopted by Woolf, was reinforced by Engels perhaps in a clearer manner in another letter a couple of years later. Engels again maintained that ‘the economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure… political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views… also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles.’\footnote{Engels, “Extracts from a Letter from Friedrich Engels to Mehring”, 14 July, 1893, in L Woolf, \textit{Barbarians at the Gate}, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1939, p. 220-221.} Therefore, while Woolf disqualified the economic deterministic approach that he considered was dogmatically preached by the Communists of his time; he embraced Engels and Marx’s original posture of history determined primarily by economic forces, but also shaped secondarily by other elements such as politics and ideas.

Yet, Woolf believed that there was one particular outdated element in Marx’s economic interpretation of history. He thought that Marx was not able to predict a shift from the capitalist competitive stage in which he was living at, to the more protectionist imperialism (characterised by ‘monopoly’) which Woolf experienced in his time.\footnote{Woolf, \textit{The War for Peace}, pp. 143-144.} That said, Woolf
considered that ‘that does not alter or destroy the truth in Marx’s analysis or in Marxian Socialism; it merely means that he did not and could not foresee the future.’

Solution(s) to Imperialism

Nevertheless, his undogmatic stances placed him at odds with certain aspects of Marxism orthodoxy. As discussed above, Woolf frequently criticised the violent means used by the leaders of the Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution and even more fiercely since Stalin came into power. Woolf thought that there was no reason to believe it was not possible to establish socialism ‘without violence’ or a ‘bloody revolution’. This posture clearly differs from orthodox Marxism, which argued that the use of revolutionary means was necessary for the achievement of the socialist utopia. Instead of sudden change, Woolf supported gradualness.

According to him, a smooth transition to socialism could be done through the Cooperative Movement. Woolf maintained that this movement could be used as a key potential instrument through which the ownership of the means of production might be given to the community. Under those circumstances, he argued that potentially the industrial production would be ‘carried on not for the profit of individuals or classes, but for the use or consumption and benefit of the whole community.’ Hence, Woolf exhorted socialists not attempting ‘by a cataclysmic revolution to break up the whole framework of our existing society…rather we shall seek the right means to develop the existing Cooperative Movement…’

Besides avoiding violence, a gradual transition to socialism would also have the benefit of eliminating the pervasive capitalist psychology present in society. Woolf maintained that the most difficult task that socialists faced for the realisation of socialism was the eradication of the psychological capitalist aspects that were present in the minds of

493 Woolf, Barbarians at the Gate, pp. 136-137. Woolf’s criticism is, however, based on an incomplete/poor reading of Marx’s Capital. Although he gives the impression that he knew well Das Kapital by commenting its content; he never mentions if he read all the volumes or only one or two. It is likely that he did not read the third volume because it is there where Marx had predicted a transition from competitive capitalism into monopoly. Woolf’s position on this regard, albeit erroneous, reflects his undogmatic respect for Marxism. See: ibid., pp. 123-124; C Polychroniou, Marxist Perspectives on Imperialism: A Theoretical Analysis, Praeger, London, 1991,p. 47; Lenin, p. 20.
495 Marx and Engels, PBworks, pp. 12, 32.
497 ibid., p. 108.
498 Woolf, Socialism and Cooperation, p. 111.
individuals. For example, Woolf argued that the society in which he lived at put an enormous importance to production at work: people must work and produce, or otherwise they would starve.\textsuperscript{499} But according to him this is a capitalist value. Moreover, he stressed that that is an aspect that was even present in the economic system of the Soviet Union and in the minds of some socialists.\textsuperscript{500} He maintained that a socialist society should not assign such an exaggerated importance to work and instead limit industrial production only to levels that would guarantee a comfortable life existence. This would in turn provide individuals with extra time to devote themselves in other domestic, cultural, or leisure activities.\textsuperscript{501} Therefore, for Woolf, a gradual transition to socialism was necessary because ‘no sudden revolution or change in the framework of social organization will extirpate those beliefs and desires…’ inherent in capitalism.\textsuperscript{502} The socialist gradualism promoted by Woolf can be traced to the Fabian socialist tradition to which he was highly familiar with.\textsuperscript{503}

Although Woolf normally supported a gradual non-violent transition to socialism, in \textit{Barbarians at the Gate} (1939) he claimed that there might be some occasions where revolutionary means might be temporarily justified. Accordingly, he asserted that,

Marx, Lenin, and all orthodox Communists rightly maintain that the first step towards the transfer of economic power from the \textit{bourgeoisie} to the proletariat must be a political revolution, i.e. the transfer of the political control of communal power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat.

He went on to argue that if there was ever a revolution justified, that was the Russian of 1917. For him, ‘only the most extreme pacifist and non-resister can believe that a revolution is never justifiable or desirable.’\textsuperscript{504} However, he stressed that although a revolution might be needed to set up a new society; after order is reached, it would be necessary to stop using violent means and substitute them with civil rights. In particular, democracy and civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, would have to be established after order had been restored.\textsuperscript{505}

\textsuperscript{499} ibid., pp. 42, 55.
\textsuperscript{500} Woolf, \textit{Barbarians at the Gate,} p. 49; \textit{Socialism and Cooperation}, pp. 39, 54, 76.
\textsuperscript{501} Woolf, \textit{Socialism and Cooperation}, pp. 66, 86.
\textsuperscript{502} ibid., p. 124.
\textsuperscript{504} Woolf, \textit{Barbarians at the Gate,} pp. 174, 177.
\textsuperscript{505} ibid., p. 181.
Woolf was a constant promoter of a society in which freedom would be enhanced. While contradictory for some, he called himself a socialist and at the same time he firmly supported freedom of thought. For him there was no contradiction in that with the principles of socialism. Moreover, he claimed that ‘there is nothing in socialism which makes it inevitably uncombinable with democracy’. This is why Woolf did not justify the maintenance of the lack of liberty and democracy in the Soviet Union, and this is why he argued,

There is nothing in Marxism which requires that the central government should be a dictatorship… or that personal liberty, freedom of speech, humanity, and tolerance should not exist… liberty and fundamental rights…should be protected and respected. This is not the doctrine of Liberal democratic capitalism; it is the doctrine of Marx and Engels themselves and of the Communist Manifesto…

Thus, Woolf claimed that the only lasting solution to overcome imperial capitalism is ‘the application of democracy and socialism’ internationally. Why did Woolf consider in some of his writings that socialism was the ‘only hope’, whereas elsewhere he advocated for the League of Nations? The reason is that he did not see any contradiction in supporting both things at the same time. As already shown, the idea of the possibility of an international (or European) organisation was not rare among socialists. Although Woolf’s undogmatism allowed him to argue, against some of the Marxist orthodoxy, that a world composed of socialist states would not necessarily mean the eradication of war; he did maintain that the fact that the League was integrated by capitalist states meant that those states would keep thinking in carrying out more imperialist activities. Hence for him, the ‘economic exploitation in Africa and Asia… is not surprising. The states which are members of the League are capitalist States, organised on a basis of capitalistic imperialism; the statesmen who signed the Covenant are capitalist imperialists…’

Therefore, while he might have preferred a world of socialist states, even though that did not completely guarantee the eradication of imperial activities; the reality was a world composed mainly by capitalist countries. It is in that reality that human beings would have to work for the achievement of peace.

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506 Woolf, Socialism and Cooperation, p. 3.
507 Woolf, The War for Peace, p. 89.
508 Woolf, Barbarians at the Gate, p. 189.
509 ibid., pp. 190-191.
510 Woolf, The International Post-War Settlement, pp. 3, 21; Barbarians at the Gate, p. 216.
512 Woolf, Economic Imperialism, p. 105.
Although the League was composed by capitalistic imperial states guided by the leaders under these principles, Woolf believed that individuals could change their beliefs and desires. Inherited from Fabianism, Woolf thought that reason could play a major part in changing international history in general, and in undermining capitalistic imperialist thoughts in particular. It should be noted that reason is an element that has been classified as being part of the so-named idealist school, and it is one which Woolf did certainly embrace. Woolf, however, as it has been demonstrated, did not consider himself to be within an idealist school of thought, but within a socialist tradition. He thus advocated for a supranational entity based on socialist and democratic principles, as opposed to capitalist and imperial standards. In his own words: ‘If the international government which our society demands is not established on a democratic and socialist basis by free national communities, it may be established in the form of slave empires by dictators.’

The above explains why Woolf considered that his support of League of Nations was not contradictory to socialism. Instead, he believed they could be two sides of the same coin. This is also confirmed in his pamphlet *The International Post-War Settlement* (1940) in which he urged members of the Labour Party to implement ‘a socialist international policy’. Woolf stressed that after the imperial actions of Fascist, Nazi, and Tory capitalists it was evident that ‘the only way in which we can prevent history repeating itself is to rebuild the economic system and international society on Socialist principles’, and that socialist solution for him included the establishment of ‘an economic and political international authority...’

### 4.6 Conclusions

On the surface, it might be possible to qualify Woolf’s theoretical position as part of a liberal idealist/internationalist tradition. His case seems to confirm IR conventional historiography through his interest in internationalism, his support of the League of Nations, his rejection of economic protectionism and his anti-“realism”. Yet, this is a woefully inaccurate reading of his political thinking.

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513 Lewis, p. 446.
516 Woolf, *The International Post-War Settlement*, pp. 2, 6. See also the “Foreword” of this pamphlet.
Although internationalism was an important theme to which Woolf widely contributed, imperialism was another major research avenue in Woolf’s career. His theoretical writings on imperialism, for which he was widely recognised as one of the most important anti-imperialists of his time, reflect the significance of Marxian influence on his writings. Most importantly, this chapter has shown that he frequently embraced an economic deterministic posture, a constant and firm anti-capitalism, an instrumentalist view of the state, and that he put forward socialism as the only lasting solution to capitalistic imperialism.

While it is certain that Woolf was one of the foremost advocates for establishing a supranational organisation; he never conceived his support of the League of Nations as utopian. Moreover, he did not see any contradiction in defending this organisation while at the same time hoping for the socialist cause. Woolf’s socialist/internationalist position was not unique. Other socialists/Marxists, such as Trotsky and Kautsky, declared their support for an international federation of states. Similarly, Woolf’s anti-protectionist posture was not liberal. First, because he never supported free trade. And second because other socialists, such as Hilferding, were also against economic protectionist measures.

Even though Woolf clearly criticised Carr’s anti-utopian realism, he did not regard himself as an idealist. Woolf had a profound interest in Marxism/Socialism, he was familiar with its leading intellectuals, had a good knowledge of the theory and the debates that surrounded them, and he frequently utilised it for his theoretical analyses. Rather than an idealist, he persistently portrayed himself as a ‘Marxist socialist’ of a sort. This categorisation has been supported as well by other scholars, especially outside IR.

Although Woolf’s writings on imperialism reveal that a major part of his work significantly relied on Marxism, he was seldom comfortable with dogmatic theorisations. While he believed he adopted the original posture that Marx and Engels took with regards to the primacy of economics for explaining international affairs, he almost ridiculed the economic reductionist approach preached by many Communists of his time in which other non-economic variables were dismissed. Moreover, even though he theorised from a Marxist/socialist perspective that in order to achieve a more civilised world it was necessary to privilege communitarian interests and to abolish class and property; he supported a gradual and non-violent transition to socialism, as opposed to revolution. However, in spite of Woolf’s scepticism about rigid truths, he considered: Marx’s ‘analysis
of the capitalist system, of the enormous importance economics and the class structure of society in determining history, and the necessity of substituting socialisation for capitalism, is true. Nonetheless undogmatic, Woolf’s predominant socialist posture contradicts his conventional portrayal as an idealist.

This chapter has demonstrated that Woolf’s socialist theory of imperialism considerably utilised Marxism for the elaboration of several of its key tenets. This has two main implications for IR. First, by showing that one of the main IR theorists of the period put so much attention to the issue of imperialism (instead of only internationalism), and theorised significantly from a non-idealist point of view; it challenges the traditional narrative of the discipline that oversimplifies the period as simply idealist. Second, Woolf’s case is important because it adds one more piece enhancing our understandings of the significance that Marxism had for important IR intellectuals during the so-called idealist period of the discipline. In the following chapter the figure of Harold Laski will confirm the significance of Marxism for early IR thinkers.

517 Woolf, Barbarians at the Gate, p. 124.
Chapter 5: Laski’s Flexible Socialist Theory of Imperialism

5.1 Introduction

Harold Joseph Laski has been described as the most important British political philosopher of his time, and the foremost spokesman of democratic socialism during the 1930s and 1940s. Norman Angell, for example, referred to him as ‘perhaps in his generation the most distinguished philosopher of the Left, as he was certainly the most erudite’.

Likewise, one of Laski’s main biographers, Michael Newman, has maintained that he ‘was arguably the most famous socialist intellectual of his era.’ Yet, Laski’s status of prominence fell rapidly after his death and his theoretical contributions were soon sent to the dustbin of history. Additionally, while he played an important role in the early development of the discipline of International Relations (IR), his ideas have also been frequently ignored within this field, as he is one of those writers who have been pejoratively described as part of the idealist tradition.

However, since the 1980s, there has been a robust effort to recuperate Laski’s thought. Several journal articles, book chapters, and impressive biographies have strived to recover his life and legacies. In particular, a strong effort has been made on trying to rescue Laski’s contributions on the theory of pluralism. The Marxist theoretical components, which were the major part of his writings, have nevertheless received substantially less

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attention. This is partly because it has been commonly argued that Laski’s pluralism is his most important and enduring contribution to social theory, whereas his Marxism is repetitive and unoriginal. Yet, regardless of the originality of Laski’s Marxism, it is important to retrieve and demonstrate his Marxist insights to put forward his full views on the international sphere. In IR, scholars have also done important (albeit more recent) efforts to highlight Laski’s theoretical significance; but again, the focus has been mainly put on exploring his pluralist thinking (1914-1924). In addition, Laski’s analyses of imperialism have been also neglected in the field. Thus, an in-depth exploration of Laski’s writings of imperialism will demonstrate that contrary to the conventional understanding that Laski’s thinking was predominantly pluralist/idealist, most of his insights on international affairs were more closely associated with Marxist ideas.

This chapter seeks to excavate Laski’s theoretical perspective on international issues with a particular focus on his views of imperialism and on his Marxist writings. The main aim is to challenge the orthodox IR historiography by showing that Laski confirms the previously illustrated significance and frequency of Marxist ideas during the so-called (liberal) idealist period. Showing that Marxism was reflected in Laski’s theoretical analyses even before the 1930s is important not only to critique IR traditional accounts; it also helps to correct the common non-IR interpretation of Laski’s thought before 1925 as merely pluralist.

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529 At least two scholars have nevertheless explored Laski’s writings of imperialism. Although Lamb’s work is not focused on Laski’s contributions on imperialism, he nonetheless covered important terrain on this. There is however a greater emphasis on this chapter to challenge the traditional historiography of IR showing how it has neglected Marxism in its early stage. Additionally, Morefield has elaborated on Laski’s views on imperialism in an article. Unfortunately, she severely narrowed her research to only two of Laski’s primary works, and as a result substantial elements covered in this chapter are missing. J Morefield, “Harold Laski on the Habits of Imperialism”, British Academy, vol. 155, 2009, pp. 213-237.

530 Outside the realm of IR it has been common to describe Laski’s early thought (1914-1924) as merely pluralist. See: Mathur, p. 455; Deane, p. 8. For two efforts that show some gradual continuity of Laski’s socialism that predate 1925, see, Newman, pp. 63, 75, 100; P Lamb, Harold Laski: Problems of Democracy, the Sovereign State and International Society, Palgrave Macmillan, N.Y., 2004, p. 8.
Considering the Marxian tenets of historical materialism, instrumentalism, class struggle, and socialism, this chapter claims that even though Laski did not openly portray himself as a Marxist before the 1930s, prior to that he had already considerably embraced key Marxian components into his core theoretical views. Moreover, it is argued that during the last two decades of his life, he saw Marxism as the most useful theoretical tool for understanding international relations. The chapter also stresses that he often held a flexible interpretation of Marxism in comparison with Leninist orthodoxy, which allows him to have a distinctive socialist perspective.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first part presents Laski’s noteworthy engagement with IR institutions, issues, and thinkers. It also shows the impact of his writings in the discipline which so far have stemmed from his functional pluralist approach. The second section considers Laski’s intellectual journey to Marxism showing that the depiction of Laski as purely an idealist is deceptive. Delimited mostly through the prism of imperialism, the third part explores Laski’s theoretical indebtedness to Marxism by reviewing his engagement with the Marxian tenets of historical materialism, class struggle, instrumentalism, and socialism. The final section considers some of the elements in Laski’s theory of imperialism that makes it distinctive from orthodox Leninist accounts. In addition to his published work, this chapter utilises the personal correspondence of Laski with his friend Oliver Wendell Holmes, an Associate Justice of the United States (1902-1932). The letters are considerably illustrative of Laski’s gradual conversion to Marxism since they were written between 1916 and 1932.

5.2 Laski’s Engagement with and Impact on IR

Although Laski’s theoretical work is not limited to international affairs, his engagement with IR issues, institutions and scholars was substantial. This allowed him to be recognised as being among the most important international experts in his time. Two key themes through which Laski’s theorisations engaged with IR were sovereignty and imperialism. This is at odds with the traditional historical understandings of the field that characterise the writings of the time as merely related to internationalism. While Laski’s output was soon dismissed after his death partly as a result of traditional IR narratives that pejoratively portray the writings of the period as idealist, some recent efforts have stressed Laski’s theoretical importance in the early stages of IR. These contributions however have mostly
aimed to recuperate Laski’s pluralist writings on sovereignty and have neglected his Marxist analyses of imperialism.

Laski wrote extensively and on many issues. According to Mathur, ‘he wrote thirty books, sixty pamphlets and chapters in books, hundreds of articles in the learned and popular journals and in the newspapers besides, introductions, forewords to other people’s works…’531 In contrast to the four other writers considered in this thesis, Laski was not exclusively specialised on international issues; his range included political theory, history, law and philosophy, among others.532 Yet, a very significant part of his work was elaborated on world affairs, and in his time he was recognised to be among the most prominent British writers on international issues.533

While Laski did write about internationalism as most contemporary IR intellectuals, the majority of his writings on international affairs were concerned with the themes of sovereignty and imperialism. As Peter Lamb has shown, Laski’s interest on the issue of sovereignty endured throughout his entire theoretical career.534 During the late 1910s and most of the 1920s, Laski mainly worked on the topic from a pluralist perspective; while throughout the 1930s and 1940s, he embraced a Marxian point of view.535 The other major theme that drew Laski’s thought closer to IR was imperialism. While certainly Laski’s writings on the subject predate the 1930s, as it will be later shown, he placed a greater attention to the topic from that decade onwards, partly as a result of the imperial actions of the time.536 Both imperialism and sovereignty were key components in Laski’s writings, and the former has been significantly under-explored in the discipline. At any case, what is clear is that internationalism was not the main concern of Laski’s international thought.537

531 Mathur, p. 460.
533 Morefield, Covenant without Swords, pp. 143, 190; Lamb, “Laski (1893-1950)”, p. 329; Hoover, p. 171. Laski’s articles appeared in prestigious journals dedicated to world affairs, such as Foreign Affairs. Among the most common subjects addressed by Laski’s articles in this journal are Communism/Socialism, sovereignty, and the LP’s foreign policy. Some of these articles gained considerable attention in his time and they have even been recently cited in journals of Political Science, Law, and to a less extent in IR. See for example, H J Laski, “The Crisis of our Civilisation”, Foreign Affairs, vol. 26, no. 1, 1947, pp. 36-51; H Laski, “Lenin and Mussolini”, vol. 2, no. 1, 1923, pp. 43-54.
534 Lamb, Harold Laski, pp. 93-113.
537 As it will be shown later, when Laski approached the topic of internationalism, he was always cautious about the prospects of peace through an international organisation. See: H J Laski, The State in Theory and Practice, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1935, pp. 221, 225, 236, 242-243, 252-254. Although there are similarities between liberal internationalism and pluralism, we should be careful when trying to link them. Both theoretical approaches were at some point part of a broad progressive British agenda. However,
This forces a revision of the traditional narrative of IR that oversimplifies the writings of the period as merely about issues related to international organisation.

Throughout his career, Laski played a noteworthy role in important IR-related institutions of the time, working together with recognised theorists of the field. Interestingly, these affiliations were often inclined towards socialism. For fifteen years from 1921 he became an executive member of the Fabian Society, where he worked with other distinguished IR theorists such as David Mitran, Henry Brailsford, and Philip Noel Baker.\textsuperscript{538} In 1936, he left the Fabian group to create the Left Book Club together with the then members of the Communist Party in Britain (CPGB), John Strachey and Victor Gollancz.\textsuperscript{539} The club, which achieved a membership of 57,000 in 1939, was established with the purpose of educating the left movement in Britain, while at the same time promoting world peace and confronting fascism.\textsuperscript{540} Thus, two of the most distinctive characteristics of this organisation were 1) its leftist tendencies, and 2) its interest in international matters,\textsuperscript{541} which were both central issues in Laski’s life and work.

Together with Angell, Woolf and other IR theorists, Laski was also part of the Union of Democratic Control aiming denounce the secret diplomacy carried out by the great powers at the time.\textsuperscript{542} Moreover, he was among a selective group of intellectuals appointed by UNESCO to revise the draft of the Declaration of Human Rights and give recommendations for possible amendments. E H Carr, who was the Committee’s chairman, and Quincy Wright stand out as other renowned IR intellectuals participating in that event held in 1947.\textsuperscript{543}

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while the aim of the former was the eradication of sovereignty; most internationalists accepted that the world could be organised through an international organisation respecting sovereignty. For a thorough differentiation see, Sylvest, pp. 67-80.
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\textsuperscript{539} Olechnowicz, pp. 205-207.
\textsuperscript{540} Newman, p. 187.
\textsuperscript{543} Although Laski believed that the Declaration of HR could be a document with lasting influence, he criticised its emphasis on individual rights and its ignorance of economic/social rights, such as employment and medical care. For him the effective accomplishment of human rights required a fundamental change in the contemporary ‘relations of production’, which bestowed significant privileges to one class over other individuals. H J Laski, “Towards a Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, in UNESCO (ed.), \textit{Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations}, Columbia University Press, N.Y., 1949, pp. 78, 88-89, 90-91.
Within the Labour Party (LP), just like Hobson, Woolf and Brailsford, he was part of the Labour Advisory Committee on International Questions. Additionally, in 1936 Laski joined the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the LP, chairing it between 1945 and 1946. Together with Noel Baker and Hugh Dalton, Laski was one of the three main leaders of the International Sub-Committee of the NEC. Thus, Laski’s affiliations frequently put him in close contact with some of the most recognised international experts of the time.

Laski entertained personal relations with some renowned IR intellectuals such Carr, Brailsford, Woolf, Zimmern and Mitrany. But besides that, his work frequently drew the attention of most important contemporary scholars in the discipline. Carr’s *Twenty Years’ Crisis* (1939), for instance, cites Laski in six different occasions. Surprisingly for some perhaps, those references are not used by Carr to criticise Laski’s utopianism. Instead, Carr often utilises Laski’s work to support his ‘realist’ theory, which interestingly he described as ‘not exactly a Marxist work, but strongly impregnated with Marxist ways of thinking, applied to international affairs.’ In particular, Carr employed Laski’s writings to illustrate the ‘dual character of political society’, in which political actions are based on both power and morality. Thus, Carr argued we should not ignore both realms when analysing international politics. Additionally, as discussed below, Carr also used Laski’s writings to show how law was usually utilised to accomplish the ends of a small privileged group of people within a state.

Another major realist scholar who engaged with Laski’s work was Hans Morgenthau. In the *Restoration of American Politics* (1962), Morgenthau dedicated a complete section of the book to Laski. Although he began the section by qualifying Laski as ‘the most brilliant, erudite, and prolific exponent of the last stage of liberalism…’, Morgenthau’s aim was

544 Ashworth, p. ix.
547 Indeed, Carr’s work is potentially a very interesting case to support the importance of Marxist ideas in IR disciplinary development. Carr’s writings, however, go beyond the limits set on this thesis, which is about the so-called idealist stage of the discipline. This is nonetheless an area for potential fruitful research in the field. The quote was taken from Davies, p. 485.
to criticise the English intellectual. According to him, the rise of fascism had evidenced the inadequacy of liberalism as an ideology and as a theory, since the latter could not prevent the ascent of the former. As a result, Laski had to corrupt his liberalism with a ‘cliché Marxism’, in order to explain the rise of fascism as a way to preserve a capitalism that was in decay. But this Marxist explanation was over-simplistic for Morgenthau, and ignored the importance of fanaticism as a determinant factor in Germany.\textsuperscript{550} Further, Morgenthau criticised Laski for naively believing that the Soviet Union would in the future bestow greater liberties to its subjects.\textsuperscript{551} Unfortunately, Morgenthau’s book was published the same month Laski died,\textsuperscript{552} and as a result, IR missed a potential debate between two of its greatest scholars at the time.\textsuperscript{553}

Therefore, although his writings were not limited to international affairs, Laski made a notable impact on IR in his own time. He wrote significantly about the issues of sovereignty and imperialism and played an important role in some of the key IR institutions of the time. Moreover, Laski enjoyed a close relation with major contemporary IR scholars, and his work received attention in the field. Nevertheless, after his death, Laski’s legacy became soon forgotten in IR partly as a result of his dismissal as an idealist.\textsuperscript{554}

However, since the late 1990s, there have been important efforts highlighting the significance of Laski in IR. The recent impact of Laski’s writings on the discipline has therefore been determined by revisionist efforts to recuperate his international thought. According to most of these scholars, the major impact that Laski has made upon the field is through the pluralism he embraced during his early career. Thus, David Long and Brian Schmidt consider that Laski’s legacy to IR is his pluralist functionalism.\textsuperscript{555} Indeed, it is difficult to disagree with this asseveration given that Laski was the first theorist to apply functionalism to international relations.\textsuperscript{556} Moreover, David Mitrany, who has been widely considered the most prominent functionalist thinker during the 1930s and 1940s, was

\textsuperscript{550} ibid., pp. 29, 33-34.  
\textsuperscript{551} ibid., p. 34.  
\textsuperscript{552} A Prichard, “What can the Absence of Anarchism tell us about the History and Purpose of International Relations?”, \textit{Review of International Studies}, vol. 37, 2011, p. 1665.  
\textsuperscript{553} There was nonetheless one frequently ignored IR debate in which Laski did participate and is a proof of his engagement with other distinguished thinkers in the field. These intellectual discussions, over the relation between war and capitalism, will be reviewed in the next chapter of the thesis. For a compilation of this debate see, H Brinton (ed.), \emph{Does Capitalism cause War?}, Headley Brothers, London, 1935.  
\textsuperscript{555} Schmidt, \emph{Political Discourse of Anarchy}, pp. 152, 164-168; Long, p. 364.  
\textsuperscript{556} Ashworth, p. 169; Long, p. 364.
significantly influenced by Laski’s insights. Therefore, revisionist efforts to recuperate Laski’s international thought have been mainly focused on his pluralist writings on sovereignty. Nevertheless, while it is true that Laski’s pluralism was influential and an important contribution to IR with regards to the theme of sovereignty; these revisionist analyses have largely neglected Laski’s Marxism as a key part of his writings of imperialism.

5.3 Laski’s (International) Political Thought and Marxism

Laski does not fit well within traditional narratives of IR that over-generalise the international experts of the interwar years as merely liberal idealists/internationalists. Another possibility to characterise Laski’s thought is as pluralist. Yet, featuring Laski as a pluralist also obscures the most durable perspective in his thought; given that a flexible Marxism became his dominant theoretical standpoint since the late 1920s until his death in 1950. Moreover, even before his conversion to Marxism, Laski’s thought had already some tints of this theory.

Mainstream narratives in IR claim that it is possible to generalise as idealist the period of the interwar years mainly because the writers of that time were primarily (and naively) concerned with the establishment of a supranational organisation to regulate international anarchy. Laski, however, does not fit smoothly within this categorisation as he was never a blind devotee of the League of Nations. He was certainly neither a constant advocate for this organisation as Woolf, nor even a momentaneous supporter like Brailsford. Although there were times in his life where he expressed some sympathy for the institution, he was at best cautious on its prospects. During the early years of his career he rejected the League as a panacea to world problems, and considered it utopian. In 1921, Laski wrote to his friend Holmes that after a trip he had done to visit Zimmern in Aberystwyth, he found himself ‘nine times out of ten in close agreement’ with Zimmern. ‘Together we dismissed the League of Nations; together we agreed that every social

557 In fact, in the 1950s Mitrany particularly mentioned Laski as one of his main influences. Lamb, Harold Laski, p. 158.
558 Among IR scholars, the exception ignoring the Marxian component in Laski’s thought is Peter Lamb. See for instance, ibid., pp. 100-104.
559 For a more thorough description of Laski’s pluralist/functionalist international theory, which most critically included a critique of the concept of sovereignty, see: Long, pp. 364-367.
panacea is the prelude to social disillusion…”⁵⁶¹ Years later though, in a letter in 1926, Laski wrote to Holmes that he had met Zimmern again who had become ‘now a crusader for the League…and to a sceptic that does not help discussion.’⁵⁶² Laski’s position towards the League had lapses of cautious support during the mid-twenties and early-thirties; but he was never a sightless devotee of the organisation.⁵⁶³ For example, in *An Introduction to Politics* (1931), Laski stressed that ‘despite its weakness and its setbacks, it is difficult to doubt… the value of the League.’ The institution nonetheless ‘…must either develop further or be destroyed.’⁵⁶⁴ Therefore, portraying Laski as an idealist/internationalist is at best inaccurate.

Another way to characterise Laski’s international thought could be by considering what has been his most important contribution. As already seen, most IR revisionist studies on Laski have stressed his pluralism as his major impact on the field.⁵⁶⁵ Nevertheless, while it is true that his pluralism was an influential and an important contribution to IR, characterising Laski’s international thought as merely pluralist veils a significant part of his theoretical work.

Outside the realm of IR, experts on Laski have widely pointed out that while his early theoretical career was primarily pluralist, his later work was mainly socialist. Herbert Deane, for example, has defined Laski’s writings as pluralist (1914-1924), Fabian (1925-1931), Marxist (1932-1939), the Second World War (1940-1945), and the post War (1946-1950).⁵⁶⁶ Similarly, Mathur has identified five stages in Laski’s thought: pluralism (1914-1924), Fabianism (1925-1930), Democracy ‘with or without socialism’ (1931-1939), and the next two periods as Marxists with of other topics.⁵⁶⁷

Deane and Mathur’s categorisations are certainly much more accurate than the IR’s proposals. They show that socialism, either in a Fabian or Marxist version, typify Laski’s thought during most of the inter war years (since 1925). In this way, they help us to challenge the IR orthodox historiography that characterises the international thought of the

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⁵⁶³ It is not possible to make a thorough discussion here of Laski’s position on the League of Nations for reasons of space and because our chapter is mostly limited to the theme of imperialism. For a more thorough discussion on this see, Lamb, *Harold Laski*, pp. 116-135, 143.
⁵⁶⁵ See for instance, Ashworth, p. 169; Long, p. 364.
⁵⁶⁶ Deane, p. 8
⁵⁶⁷ Mathur, pp. 462-463.
interwar years as liberal idealist/internationalist. However, Dean and Mathur’s classifications are not completely faultless either. This is because Laski’s exposure to socialism significantly predates his named Marxist and even Fabian-socialist phases. In fact, in an autobiographical chapter he wrote in the book *I Believe* (1944), Laski explained: ‘I have, I suppose, been a socialist in some degree ever since the last years of my schooldays.’\(^{568}\) This is not to argue that Laski was a socialist during his entire career. What it is suggested is that there were significant socialist elements in his early thought that have been rarely recognised; and that they were increasingly radicalised as time went on.

Laski’s exposure to socialism was considerable during his studies. Just before entering Oxford, he married Frida Kerry in 1911, a Eugenics lecturer who was passionate about socialism.\(^{569}\) As an undergraduate, he was simultaneously exposed to pluralist and socialist ideas. He studied under the mentorship of Ernest Barker and Herbert Fisher. The former was a liberal scholar, whereas the latter a committed Fabian.\(^{570}\) Moreover, during his studies Laski had a great admiration of the liberal pluralist ideas of F W Maitland and J N Figgis; but at the same time of the guild socialism of G D H Cole.\(^{571}\) Another important influence on Laski came from the Fabian society at Oxford, to which he dedicated a significant part of his time.\(^{572}\)

Although what indeed predominated in Laski’s thinking before the mid 1920s was a liberal pluralism, there were some elements of socialism in him at early stages of his intellectual journey. In a second edition of *Grammar of Politics* (1938), Laski added a section in which he confessed that during the early phase of his theoretical career he primarily saw the state through the lenses of pluralism. But he went on to say that he ‘now recognised’ that his ‘…pluralist attitude to the state and law was a stage on the road to an acceptance of the Marxian attitude to them.’\(^{573}\) Elsewhere, Laski asserted that it was after his return to England (1920) that he started to dedicate most of his leisure time into socialism.\(^{574}\) Thus, Laski’s conversion to Marxism was gradual, and began to take place before his so-called Marxist stage.

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570 Hoover, p. 25.
573 Laski, *Grammar of Politics*, pp. x, xii.
Laski’s Marxist perspective appeared in his thinking before he openly recognised himself as a Marxist during the 1930s. In fact, he had struggled with Marxian thought several years before that. Some of the letters he wrote to Justice Homes from 1916 to 1935 shed significant light on the evolution of his estimation of Marxism. In 1917, Laski wrote to Holmes that he considered Marx’s thought to be unoriginal. Proudhon, the French socialist founder of anarchism, seemed ‘….to have anticipated most of Karl Marx and to have said it better.’\(^{575}\) In 1921, as already an executive member of the Fabian society, he told his friend about his plans in writing a Fabian pamphlet on Marx:

> I am pretty sure that the Socialists won’t like it; for (a) I propose to show that the surplus theory of value is nonsense (b) that it wasn’t his own (c) that he was a great man by accident rather than design. But I find toying with his books very interesting, and one pamphlet *The Civil War in France* is very well, even brilliantly, done.\(^{576}\)

In spite of the criticism Laski was aiming to write in the pamphlet, his appraisal of Marx was appreciably more benevolent in the published work. In *Karl Marx: an essay* (1922), Laski considered ‘no name in the history of social ideas occupies a place more remarkable than that of Karl Marx.’\(^{577}\) He of course was not uncritical, especially with regards to Marx’s theory of value and his views on the necessity of a violent revolution. However, he also presented favourable assessments of the theory, in particular in reference to class struggles.\(^{578}\) Now instead of claiming the unoriginality of Marx in comparison to Proudhon, Laski maintained that the well elaborated strong criticism of Marx on Proudhon considerably denigrated the validity of the theoretical analysis of the latter.\(^{579}\) Laski’s conclusion in the pamphlet is that even though Marx was ‘often wrong’ in his predictions, ‘….few will have a more honourable and none a more eminent place.’\(^{580}\)

Laski’s simultaneous admiration and repulsion of Marx in particular, and Marxism in general, kept being manifest throughout the 1920s. In the early 1920s, he now began to explore the ideas of more Marxist figures. In 1923 he wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* comparing Lenin with Mussolini. According to Laski, while Lenin’s idea of an economic emancipation of the oppressed was undoubtedly noble, as opposed to Mussolini’s more selfish desires; his violent methods (taken from Marx) made him no different than the

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\(^{575}\) Laski, “Letters to Holmes”, 1917, p. 82.


\(^{578}\) ibid., pp. 27, 35, 38, 39.

\(^{579}\) ibid., p. 11.

\(^{580}\) ibid., p. 46.
Italian dictator. In 1926 he wrote Justice Holmes that he had been working on a book on Communism in which he ‘…emerge[d] as an admirer of Lenin who was a master of courage and strategy.’ Yet, still in 1927, he plainly wrote to Holmes ‘I dislike Marx intensely’. The next year he wrote “The value and Defects of the Marxist Philosophy”, in which in this occasion he referred to Marxism ‘…as a doctrine, at once simple and true.’ Nevertheless, he expressed his repulsiveness against any inflexible assimilation of the theory. While he claimed the veracity of Marxism with regards to its materialist interpretation of history, as well as its views on imperialism and class struggle, he kept rejecting the Marxist insights on revolution and the surplus theory.

From the very late 1920s until the end of his life Laski kept analysing/employing Marxism, and his criticism of the theory dramatically decreased. After 1927 (until 1935, when Holmes died), Laski’s letters to Holmes present no harsh criticisms against Marx and Engels, but instead sporadic comments about how interesting their work was. For instance, in 1934 he wrote that after reading the Correspondence of Marx and Engels; he found their letters (albeit sometimes erroneous in their ‘political prophecies’) ‘very interesting’. Additionally, in The State in Theory and Practice (1935), there is, to our knowledge, no negative criticism on the person of Marx and he did not consider his predictions to be false anymore. Instead, he believed that,

We have reached the stage of economic evolution which Marx foresew when he predicted that the contradictions of capitalism would result in the emergence of a permanent and growing body of workers for whom no prospect of profitable employment can be found. Technological unemployment, the increasing power of finance-capital, the growth of economic imperialism, his predictions in each of these realms has been fully substantiated.

According to Laski, what strongly pushed him to his conversion to Marxism during the late 1920s and early 1930s was 1) his dedicated reading of Marxism and 2) the international reality of that time:

Out of it all, the great lesson I have learned is the broad truth of the Marxian philosophy. What I have seen at first hand, no less than what I have read, has left me no alternative… The experience of Russia, the advent of Fascism…

general strike of 1926 and the betrayal of 1931 in England, the new imperialisms of Japan and Italy, have all convinced me that, in large outline, there is no answer to the philosophy of Marx.\textsuperscript{588}

During the 1930s and 1940s, an important part of Laski’s conversion to Marxism is evidenced through the many reviews he elaborated on books about Marxism/Socialism. He wrote countless revisions of Marxist texts from a sympathetic perspective.\textsuperscript{589} For example, he described Lenin’s Selected Works as ‘…unmistakable classics of our generation’ which included his ‘masterly analysis of imperialism’.\textsuperscript{590} In another review, he assessed Bukharin’s (et.al.) Marxism and Modern Thought (1935) as an ‘illuminating volume’.\textsuperscript{591} Additionally, Laski sometimes utilised his Marxist lenses to make a critique on the texts he evaluated. For instance, in a review of Stark’s Ideal Foundations of Economic Thought (1943), Laski criticises the author for giving ‘far less space… to Marx than his own subject matter requires.’\textsuperscript{592} Similarly, in another review of a book about Gladstone, Laski showed his disappointment by the lack of space given to Marx.\textsuperscript{593} Nevertheless, just as Woolf (albeit less strongly), he was often against rigid theoretical postures. He for instance criticised Max Eastman’s Marxism-Is it Science? (1935) for portraying Marxist analyses as ‘immutable dogmas’.\textsuperscript{594}

Laski’s attitude towards the Soviet Union is another way in which his conversion to Marxism is manifested. His sympathetic view towards the Soviet Union is for example reflected in “The Position and Prospects of Communism” (1932). There Laski referred to the Russian revolution as ‘the profoundest change in the mental climate of the world since the Reformation.’\textsuperscript{595} For him, although the living standard was still lower in Russia than in the United States; the Five Year Plan provided the Communist state with ‘…an integrated and orderly purpose such as no capitalist country could rival.’ Moreover, Laski highlighted the remarkable economic productivity of the Soviet Union and its eradication of unemployment.\textsuperscript{596} Further, Laski condemned capitalist states for criticising the cruelty of the Russian methods, while not taking into account the benefits of the Soviet Union: ‘the

\textsuperscript{588} Laski, “Harold J Laski”, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{594} H J Laski, “Marxism Dissected”, New Statesman, April 26, 1941, p. 442.
\textsuperscript{596} ibid., p. 95.
costs of Russia’ he maintained, ‘are expended for the advantage of the many, while the costs of the capitalist society are paid for the profit of a few.’ Laski’s somewhat apologetic position towards the Soviet Union continued throughout the rest of his life.

However, Laski was not totally uncritical of the Soviet Union. In common with Woolf, he frequently expressed (although less strongly and consistently) his repulsion against a rigid dogmatic Marxism. Additionally, following Brailsford, Laski strongly rejected the Russo-German pact. Moreover, within the Left Book there were two editorial incidents that demonstrate that Laski was to an extent critical of the Soviet Union. In 1937 Gollancz did not want to publish Brailsford’s Why Capitalism Means War because according to him, it was too critical of the Soviet Union, presenting it as a totalitarian dictatorship. Laski, however, argued that the book was original and threatened to resign if it was not published. Consequently, Gollancz yielded. Similarly, the same year Strachey wanted to ‘postpone indefinitely’ the publication of Woolf’s Barbarians at the Gate for being too harsh against Stalin; but this time with Gollancz’ support, Laski was able to publish the book without modifications. Overall, while Laski occasionally accepted some criticisms against the Soviet Union, his conversion to Marxism significantly persuaded his rather sympathetic views of the regime.

Many contemporary intellectuals considered Laski to be a Marxist or a socialist. Jacob Viner, a respected Canadian economist graduated from Harvard, called him ‘a prominent socialist’. Similarly, Ralph Miliband, a well recognised Marxist of his generation and a student supervised by Laski at London School of Economics, regarded his mentor to be a renowned ‘English Socialist’, judging that ‘until the late twenties, Laski was a Fabian Socialist; [but] from then onwards, he considered himself a Marxist.’ Moreover,
according to Brailsford, one of the main contributions Laski had done to humankind was ‘his always anxious work for socialism’. 606

This is not to say that there were no other theoretical components within Laski’s thought besides his Marxism. The liberal elements held within Laski’s socialism were highlighted by some of his contemporary IR theorists. Carr for example declared that ‘…Laski, for all his socialism, remained all his life, in many respects and in a somewhat confused way, a liberal’. 607 Similarly, in 1932 Brailsford once introduced Laski to an audience as an academic who at the same time had a ‘passion for liberty’ and a ‘passion for social equality’. 608 Morgenthau in 1950 stated that Laski, who ‘…can no longer be a liberal in the “classic” sense in which he was… [has become] a Marxist.’ 609 As it will be shown later, Laski’s socialism included liberty. Yet, throughout the 1930s until his death (1950), he openly and constantly regarded himself as both a Marxist and a socialist. For example, in Parliamentary Government in England (1938) he self-proclaimed to be a socialist; and in “Why I am Marxist”, he depicted himself both as a Marxist and as a socialist. 610 Nevertheless, he set apart himself from rigid kinds of Marxism. In one public meeting Laski was once asked by a Marxist if he was also a Marxist, to what he responded: ‘Yes, my friend, we are both Marxists, you, in your way, I in Marx’s.’ 611

The orthodox IR portrayal of Laski as an idealist is thus misleading. This is so because he barely supported the League of Nations, he declared himself a Marxist at least during the last two decades of his life, and because even before that time he was a socialist to some extent. Even more, labelling Laski as an idealist is deceptive given that throughout most of his career he employed core Marxist tenets into his theoretical views, as it is shown next.

5.4 Laski’s Indebtedness to Marxism on the Theme of Imperialism

Even though Laski did not openly portray himself as a Marxist before the 1930s, prior to this time he had already considerably embraced key Marxian tenets. In particular, Laski had significantly adopted historical materialism, instrumentalism, a Marxist view of class

606 Quoted in Kramnick and Sheerman, p. 579.
608 Quoted in Newman, p. 363.
609 Morgenthau, p. 35.
610 Laski, “Why I am a Marxist”, p. 76.
611 Quoted in Mathur, p. 458.
struggles and socialism into his core theoretical views of imperialism. During the last two decades of his life, it became clear that Laski saw Marxism as the most useful theoretical tool for understanding international relations. Hence, Laski’s writings of imperialism were significantly indebted to Marxism. This poses a challenge to mainstream IR narratives that generalise the contributions of the intellectuals writing during the interwar period as merely liberal idealist/internationalist.

_Historical Materialism: Economics and Law_

One of the key Marxian tenets that Laski incorporated into his theoretical views was historical materialism. Laski’s thought with regards to the primacy of economics in determining other factors, however, underwent some variation throughout his theoretical career. His adoption of this Marxian component was gradual and started before his outspoken Marxist conversion in the early 1930s. As early as 1917, in a letter to Holmes, he had already recognised the primacy of economics. ‘Political power’, he argued, ‘is the handmaiden of economic power’.612 Five years later, in an essay elaborated for the Fabian Society and speaking about the Marxian economic interpretation of history, Laski claimed that ‘no one can doubt the very measure of truth in this outlook. No one can write the history of English Puritanism… or of the American Revolution, without making the defence of an economic incentive fundamental to their explanation.’ Nevertheless, he asserted at this stage that it was ‘…equally clear that the insistence upon economic background as the whole explanation is radically false.’613 Therefore, while Laski indeed embraced the Marxist idea of the primacy of economics to explain world history, he did not hold this posture to the degree of ignoring the importance of other factors. Laski maintained this stance throughout the 1920s. In 1928, he argued:

_The Marxian philosophy of history is, as a doctrine, at once simple and true. It is the argument that at any given time the primary mechanism of change in a society is the system of production which obtains. To its requirements all other forms of social effort necessarily adapt themselves. Law, religion, politics…_614

Laski thus sustained again that it was ‘folly to deny the large degree of truth this analysis contains’. But once more, not yet distinguishing between Leninism and classical Marxism,

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he insisted that Marxian analyses have given little room to non-economic factors. During the 1920s, therefore, he had flexibly already embraced at least part of the Marxian economic deterministic approach.

By the early 1930s, Laski endorsed economic determinism less critically. In “The Economic Foundations of Peace”, for instance, he embraced a Marxist point of view to explain international affairs. He claimed that ‘while the roots of war cannot be traced to any single habit, its main causes lie in the economic field. Its chief object is a search for wealth…” With regards to imperialism, Laski wrote that ‘no one denies that the British occupation of Egypt was undertaken in order to secure the investments of British bond holders; and that the South African War was simply a sordid struggle for the domination of its gold-mines…’ In *The State in Theory and Practice* (1935) Laski again reads imperial practices through the lenses of Marxism. ‘The growth of Fascism and communism, the failure of disarmament, the menace of Japan in the Pacific…’ he argued, ‘are in large part economic in origin.’ Throughout the maturity of his thought, Laski continued to uphold the Marxian primacy of economics as the most useful way for understanding the world’s course.

Besides acknowledging the supremacy of economics, Laski employed a historical materialistic perspective to analyse legal issues as an aspect of the superstructure. Although this is not part of Laski’s theory of imperialism, it is relevant to briefly mention it, since it shows how he adopted a Marxist interpretation on this. Interestingly, Carr suggested that this Laskian understanding provided the ‘ultimate basis’ for ‘the realist view’ of law. As early as 1925, Laski had already recognised from a socialist perspective that law acted according to the system of production prevalent in a determined society and on the interests of the owners of capital. By 1930, he developed a stronger

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615 ibid., pp. 25, 27. As it will be seen in the following section, the distinction between the original economic determinism of Marx and Engels, and the one preached by Leninism will later on become clear in Laski’s mind.


618 ibid., p. 507.


621 Carr, *Twenty Years’ crisis*, p. 176.

Marxist perspective by arguing that in a capitalist state, those who owned the means of production were able to shape the legal system for their own benefit. ‘If the instruments of production are confined to the possession of a few’, Laski claimed, ‘then the ideals of justice will serve the interest of that few.’ In other words, he maintained that in ‘...a socialist society, like Soviet Russia, the substance of law will be determined by... the interests of a society as a whole.’ Consequently, for Laski the legal decisions made by Courts were inexplicable without employing a Marxist analysis. For him, ‘...only the Marxian interpretation of law can explain the substance of law’ and ‘there cannot be equality before the law, except in a narrowly formal sense, unless there is a classless society.’

*Class struggles, Surplus Capital, and the Latest Stage of Capitalism (Fascism)*

Laski’s implementation of the Marxist view of international history as a clash between two antagonistic groups was gradual and occurred before 1930. In 1916, Laski had already recognised a struggle between the two main classes of a capitalist society. ‘The fight between labor and capital’, he wrote to Holmes, ‘seems to me part of a historic process which one day will take us out of the capitalist system just as in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries we got away from the feudal system.’ Laski’s perception of world history/reality as a struggle between two main antagonistic groups, which gives birth to new economic systems, is unmistakably Marxist. Three years later, he again repeated to Holmes his belief that he was soon to experience a change in the mode of production, and at this time he added that this would be produced by the proletariat. ‘I believed there is a real class war... and that progress towards a fuller development of human capacity comes out of the growing strength of the workers.’ The paramount role of the proletariat to produce a drastic change in the economic structure is of course something previously

628 Marx of course saw history as a battle between classes. Historically, struggles were primarily held by two antagonistic classes living in a determined mode of production. The bourgeoisie was the class that overthrew feudalism; and the mission of the working class was to replace capitalism. See for example, K Marx and F Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Offline version 2000, Available at: [http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/books/communist.pdf](http://www.newspeakdictionary.com/books/communist.pdf). [Accessed 02-01-2015], pp. 1, 20, 31.
highlighted by Marx and Engels.\footnote{Marx and Engels, pp. 11, 20, 31.} Therefore, Laski’s adoption of the Marxist view of class struggle was already implanted in his thought before his outspoken conversion to Marxism in 1930-1, and even prior to his so-called Fabian period (1925-1931).

The Marxist perspective of class continued to be strengthened in Laski during the 1920s. By 1922, even though Laski still rejected some elements of Marxism, such as its theory of value; he had already largely embraced the Marxian view of class. In his own words, ‘it is obvious that the substance of this interpretation is accurate. The fact of the class struggle, as Marx himself pointed out, is a common-place of historians and economics… to deny its importance is to make history unintelligible.’\footnote{Laski, \textit{Karl Marx: An Essay}, p. 35.} Later in the same essay, he added: ‘Nor can it be denied that not a little of social evolution has taken the course Marx predicted…[and that] there are no signs of the mitigation of the class-conflict. On the contrary the events of the last decade point directly to its exacerbation…’\footnote{ibid., p. 38.} Laski’s acceptance of Marxian understandings of class kept firm throughout the late 1920s, and until the end of his life.\footnote{See for instance, Laski, “Introduction to the Communist Manifesto”, pp. 52, 90.} In “The Value and Defects of the Marxist Philosophy” (1928), while rejecting some elements of Marxism such as the inevitability of violent revolution; Laski conceded in Marxist jargon: it cannot ‘…be denied that there is a real division of interest in any community between the owners of the means of production and those who have nothing to sell but their labor.’\footnote{Laski, “Value and Defects of the Marxist Philosophy”, p. 26. Compare to one of Engels’ notes in the \textit{Communist Manifesto} which describes the proletariat as ‘the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.’ In Marx and Engels, p. 3.}

In the 1930s Laski started to adapt his Marxian understandings of class into his understandings of imperialism, particularly triggered by the rise of fascism. During the first half of this decade Laski wrote with little originality in comparison with the Marxian classical approach of imperialism, which he almost faithfully emulated. In 1932 he thus generally conceived imperialism as a ‘struggle for the markets’ in which the developed states fought for exploiting undeveloped economies; and in common with Lenin, he perceived the First World War as a typical example of an imperialist war.\footnote{Laski, “Position and Prospects of Communism”, pp. 96-97. Compare with V Lenin, \textit{Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism}, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975 [1917], pp. 9-11.} A year later, his adoption of what has become to be known as the Leninist theory of imperialism went much further. Laski kept seeing imperialism as conflictive; but in addition, he conceived it...
as a phase of capitalism. Moreover, at this stage Laski embraced the theory of surplus capital so widely employed by orthodox Marxist theorists of imperialism like Lenin, and also utilised by some early IR thinkers, such as Brailsford and Hobson. This was important, because Woolf had neglected this approach on his analyses. Thus, Laski made an effort to revive the accumulation theory to explain imperial affairs. Just as his predecessors (Wilshire, Hobson, Brailsford, Hilferding, Lenin, et. al.), he stressed that surplus capital generated and accumulated in developed states pushed the bourgeoisie to look for new investments abroad, which in turn produced a struggle for markets. In addition, Laski resembled Lenin and Brailsford in stressing that capital was being pushed to be exported because it obtained greater profits abroad than in the local market(s). The labour of undeveloped economies, in particular, demanded less rights and wages.

With the strengthening of Nazism in the mid 1930s, Laski kept embracing other elements of the Leninist perspective of imperialism. In 1935 he started to accommodate fascism into his imperialism theory. He again stressed that for him it was clear that imperialism was naturally war prone, and it was a stage in the development of capitalism. And for this he used Lenin’s material as a reference to support his claim. He argued: ‘I have sought to show, the inherent nature of capitalism in its imperialist phase makes foreign war a logical part of its procedure.’ Additionally, he confirmed his Marxist view that imperial adventures were produced by the incentive of obtaining greater profits abroad. During the following years, Laski added some other elements that would distinguish him from Leninism. These will be covered in the following part of the chapter. However, what should be clear now is that during the last two decades of his life, Laski perceived Marxism as the most useful theoretical lenses to understand international affairs.

Sovereignty and Instrumentalism

Just as all the theorists covered so far in this thesis, Laski adopted a Marxian instrumentalist view of the state. His adoption of this Marxist theoretical component was gradual however. As early as 1917 he could recognise the state to be ‘a capitalist

637 ibid., pp. 503, 516, 524.
640 Laski, Democracy in Crisis, p. 27; Laski, State in Theory and Practice, pp. 238.
641 Laski, Grammar of Politics, p. xii.
However, his perception of it at that moment was primarily seen through the lenses of the pluralist theory. At that time Laski’s thought was characterised by a denial of the supremacy of the state over other institutions. Additionally, he viewed sovereignty as a fabricated concept used as a right/pretext to utilise the state as a coercive apparatus.

In 1927, before his Marxist conversion, Laski wrote in *Communism* (1927) a rather sympathetic view of instrumentalism. While he clearly rejected the Marxian analysis of the theory of value and its appeal to revolution; he did not criticise either Bukharin’s perception of the state as ‘merely a union of the [capitalist] class to safeguard exploitation’, or Engels’ definition of this institution as ‘an instrument of class oppression’. He took a similar position in an address given in 1930 when he criticised the classical idealist theory of the state which sees the apparatus as an impartial entity: ‘The Communist inquires if that is really so. Is not, in fact, the operation of the State confined to serving, on the whole, the well-being of that minority which possesses property?... Is not what we call the State the executive of the capitalistic class...?’ Albeit Laski did not yet clearly describe himself as a Marxist in this address; he was evidently employing instrumentalism as a tool for his analyses.

During the 1930s Laski clearly embraced a Marxist instrumentalist view of the state. ‘In any society’, he affirmed in 1932, ‘the state belongs to the holders of economic power’. Similarly, a year later, he maintained that ‘in any state where there is an unequal interest in the economic process, the power of the state will be at the disposal of those who own the instruments of economic power.’ Plainly, in 1935 he conceived the state as ‘...inevitably the instrument of that class which owns the instruments of production.”

The same year, Laski participated in the often ignored debate between several IR theorists about whether or not capitalist imperialism produces war. This intellectual discussion, in which Angell, Woolf and Brailsford also participated, will be covered in detail in the next chapter. For now it is sufficient/relevant to highlight Laski’s brief contribution because it confirms his Marxist instrumentalist view of the state. Although he agreed with Angell that

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in the long run an international system in which ‘justice’ and ‘reason’ prevail is much more profitable for capitalists than imperialism; Laski sided with Brailsford in condemning Angell for arguing that ‘…it is irrational for capitalists to rely on force.’ For him, Angell ignored that capitalists often ‘use the power of the state to further the purposes they are promoting’.

Elsewhere, in the maturity of his thought, Laski reinforced his Marxian position claiming the superiority of Marxism as a theoretical tool to understand the role of the state: ‘Until Marx, it is true to say that most political speculation was inadequate because it failed to understand the dominating influence of the property-relation in determining the purposes of the state.’ Laski’s adoption of instrumentalism kept being manifested throughout the last two decades of his life.

At this point, it might be relevant to show how Laski at a mature stage had clearly embraced the main Marxian elements so far reviewed in this chapter. In a pamphlet that was elaborated for the Fabian Society in 1943, he argued that the future of the LP in Britain depended to a great deal in its ‘willingness to adapt the essentials of the Marxist philosophy’. The LP had failed to apply/understand Marxism in the following paramount ways:

The state-power is not a neutral agency vowed to some abstract common good, but a concrete weapon used by men in the service of that class whose power over property enables them to define the productive relations of society… It is essential for a Labour Party to recognise that however immense be the superiority of a capitalist democracy over a fascist society, the capitalist character of a society is in contradiction with its democracy…There is [also]… the failure to understand that the policies of parties are shaped by deeper economic forces which influence their character far more than the economic forces are changed by political parties…the relations of production permeate all other factors in society, religious, cultural, educational, social, and adapt them…And… [there is] a resultant blindness to the depth of the class struggle and all its implications…

650 Laski, State in Theory and Practice, p. 103.
653 ibid., pp. 16-17.
Solution to the Latest Stage of Imperialism

Although the defeat of fascism was something that Laski promoted as a primary objective for Britain,\(^{654}\) and his support to Chamberlain’s administration for the realisation of this purpose produced him severe criticisms from other Marxists/socialists;\(^ {655}\) Laski was convinced that this was only a temporal treatment to the maladies of the world. The Second World War (WWII), just as the Great War, was an ‘imperialist war’. But even more than that, Laski thought that WWII was a confirmation of the decay of capitalism and that this system of production was incapable of producing lasting peace. As a result, defeating Hitler and Mussolini was a desirable and required measure to take; but an incomplete remedy to imperialism. What was required was a ‘new social order’.\(^ {656}\)

As already shown, Laski did not consider the League of Nations to be the panacea for imperialism. Although the League might have been a unique achievement in international affairs; Laski joined Brailsford in criticising the organisation for being unable to transform ‘…the inherent nature of economic imperialism.’\(^ {657}\) For him, the only way to prevent war was through ‘a frontal attack upon… economic imperialism which is its root.’\(^ {658}\) Laski was thus in this differentiated from other IR theorists of the time who quasi unconditionally supported the League.\(^ {659}\) If neither the defeat of fascism nor the support of the League of Nations were the cure for imperialism, what was Laski’s main remedy?

Since 1925 Laski had already endorsed socialism (at least in a Fabian version) as a solution to the exploitative and war prone nature of capitalism.\(^ {660}\) His conception of socialism though, underwent some transformation. In 1930, at the end of his predominantly Fabian period, Laski conceived socialism as ‘…the deliberate intervention of the state in the process of production and distribution in order to secure an access to their benefits upon a


\(^{655}\) See for instance, Groves, “Is this an Imperialist War”; Mattick, “Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times (Review)”.


\(^{658}\) ibid., p. 523.

\(^{659}\) As already seen, Zimmern was one of them and Laski clashed with him on this regard. Another constant supporter of the League, as indicated in the previous chapter, was Woolf.

\(^{660}\) See, Laski, Socialism and Freedom, pp. 3, 7, 10, 13.
consistently wider scale.\footnote{661} And at the end of his life he defined it in a more Marxist way as a society ‘...in which all the vital instruments of production are owned in common, and democratically operated for the whole society, so that the exploitation of man by man has ceased...’\footnote{662} At any case, since the mid twenties Laski had already conceived socialism to be the cure to capitalism.

It was, however, during the 1930s, with the advent of German fascism that Laski began to preach more strongly socialism as the only lasting solution to imperialism. In “The Economic Foundations of Peace” (1933), for instance, Laski argued that the socialist cause was the rival of capitalistic imperialism and it represented the road to peace.\footnote{663} Another example is found in \textit{The State in Theory and Practice} (1935), where Laski claimed that ‘...the high road to an effective international order lies through the reconstruction of the class-relations of modern society. The more effectively this is pursued the less interest states possess in the pursuit of an imperialist policy.’\footnote{664} Laski’s support of socialism as the genuine mean to overcome imperialism remained constant during the maturity of his thought.\footnote{665}

In these ways, Laski extensively relied on Marxism to elaborate his international thought. Portraying Laski’s writings as idealist or liberal internationalist is thus deceptive. Instead, he significantly embraced the Marxian tenets of instrumentalism, historical materialism, class struggles, and socialism as an alternative to imperialistic capitalism. It is not surprising then that in his mature years he perceived Marxism as the main theoretical device to understand world affairs. In his own words (1935),

\begin{quote}
...no tool at the command of the social philosopher surpasses Marxism either in its power to explain the movement of ideas or its authority to predict their practical outcome. On the nature and function of the state, on legal institutions, on capitalist habits...Marxism holds the field against any of its rivals. On the breakdown of capitalist democracy, the decline of bourgeois culture, the rise of Fascism, the role of non-revolutionary socialism, it has insights not possessed by any alternative method of analysis.\footnote{666}
\end{quote}

\footnote{664} Laski, \textit{State in Theory and Practice}, p. 254.
\footnote{665} See for instance, Laski, “The Crisis of our Civilization”, p. 42.
\footnote{666} Laski, “A Key to Communism”, p. 102.
5.5 The Distinctiveness of Laski’s Socialist Theory of Imperialism

Notwithstanding Laski widely borrowed from Marxism to put forward his theoretical views, he often adopted the theory in a flexible way. His understandings of the elements of Marxism reviewed in the previous section were less rigid than Leninist interpretations. As a result, Laski’s views on imperialism provide an alternative to the mainstream Marxist understandings on these matters.

Historical Materialism and Instrumentalism

Although Laski embraced historical materialism and as a result he privileged economic matters to understand world affairs, that did not mean that he regarded noneconomic issues as unimportant. What he believed was that economics was the primary determining element to explain international reality. The economic factor’ was thus for him, ‘the bedrock upon which the social superstructure is built. This was of course, as already seen in previous chapters, Engel’s interpretation of world affairs. Laski explained to one of his critics that for him it was flawed to think that the original historical materialism of Engels and Marx ignored noneconomic factors. In his own words,

Historical materialism is not, as Professor Gregory seems to imagine, a monistic theory of historical causation… That there is an interweaving reciprocity between all the different factors of any culture-pattern was emphasised by Marx and Engels at every stage of their analysis. The claim of historical materialism is simply that the economic factor defines, in Engels’ phrase, the “fundamental necessity”… Gregory’s attempt to reduce historical materialism… to a simple formula in which economic causes alone suffice to explain events is only one more instance of the critic’s misunderstanding of the doctrine he is anxious to refute.

Therefore, Laski’s interpretation of economic determinism was similar to Woolf and Brailsford’s, in the sense that they claimed to have embraced Marx and Engels’ original postulations, and not so much a rigid Communist/Leninist position which dismissed noneconomic issues.

667 Laski, *State in Theory and Practice*, p. 120.
668 ibid., p. 122.
671 For another example of Laski’s defence of Engels and Marx’s materialist conception of history as opposed to dogmatic Communism, see, Laski, “Introduction to the Communist Manifesto”, pp. 88-89, 97.
Although Laski clearly embraced the Marxian instrumentalist view of the state in the maturity of his career, even at that time he did not completely drop out his previous pluralist perspective on this issue. In 1935 he wrote: ‘The weakness, as I now see it, of pluralism is clear enough. It did not sufficiently realise the nature of the state as an expression of class-relations.’ Laski’s adoption of Marxian instrumentalism was nonetheless flexible and distinctive, since he did not completely abandon his prior pluralist view. This is a unique Marxist position, and arguably a way in which Laski originally contributed to Marxism. Throughout his theoretical development, he kept his pluralist view by indicating, in a parallel way to Mitrany, that the state should be judged not only for its insistence of its sovereign right, but also for its actions. But at the same time, he went further than Mitrany in denouncing from a socialist perspective that in capitalist states it is not possible to give the masses certain rights; since in those states, capitalists obtain preferential benefits.

Fascism and Imperialism: A Laskian Innovation to Lenin’s Theory?

As already indicated, the advent of Nazism in 1933 provided Laski the opportunity to embrace several aspects of the Leninist approach. By this time he however also started to add other components into his views of fascism. In particular, from a Marxist perspective, he now argued that 1) fascism was not socialist, and that 2) it was instead a counter-revolution. For him, there was nothing socialistic in fascism because Italy and Germany had not modified their economic relations of production. Instead, fascists had been supported by industrialists to get into power in order to perpetuate the capitalist system and to avoid the popular demands of socialism in those states. In other words, fascism was a counter-revolution used by the privileged classes against the possibility of replacing capitalism with socialism.

By the late 1930s Laski continued to add other features into his views of the status of imperialism. In 1938 he already saw fascism as the latest stage of capitalistic imperialism in its decay. ‘It is, by its nature’, he emphasised, ‘an attempt only to arrest in the interest of privilege the decay of that capitalist enterprise which has now passed into its phase of final

672 Laski, *Grammar of Politics*, p. x.
673 Lamb, *Laski*, p. 158.
676 Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p. 41.
Laski’s theory explained that capitalism worked well in its stage of economic growth. However, since capitalism had entered into a phase of contraction, as evidenced by the 1929 economic crisis; then its power to distribute economic benefits significantly decreased. Simultaneously, the masses, who had now gained access to democratic institutions, would request to improve their material well being; whereas, capitalists were concerned of making profit. The scenery thus provided two alternatives. Either capitalists would choose to cooperate democratically and accept the progress of socialist reforms; or they would have to suppress democracy by establishing fascist regimes. Laski was thus worried that Britain could go through the same path Italy and Germany took.

Laski’s views on fascism after the mid 1930s could be at first sight counted as novel features of the Marxist theory of imperialism, since Lenin had not theorised about fascism. However, in *Reflections of the Revolution of our time* (1944), Laski conceded that some of his views on the topic came from other ‘Marxist critics of Fascism’. In particular, he acknowledged that they had rightly pointed out that these political regimes were not socialists, since they had not significantly altered class relations, and they had been supported by capitalists and monopolies. In addition, these critics had been the ones who had depicted fascism as ‘monopoly-capitalism in decay’; and that the rise of fascism had been accompanied by an economic contraction. ‘There is a real truth in this analysis’, Laski conceded. He nevertheless argued that there were two elements that Marxists were missing. First, he claimed that they had devoted no attention to the exploration of the national sentiment to which Hitler and Mussolini had employed to gain the masses’ support. And second, Laski argued that even though, as Marxists correctly pointed out, the rise of fascism in its early stage required the support of capitalists; once established, it destroyed many capitalists’ interests, favouring only dictators.

Although Laski did not acknowledge having adopted his views on fascism from any specific Marxist; it is likely that he acquired them from Rajani Palme Dutt, a contemporary theoretician and member of the CPGB. The similarity between Dutt’s and Laski’s theory

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677 Laski, *Grammar of Politics*, p. xxv.
678 ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
680 ibid., p. 88.
681 ibid., pp. 88-91.
682 There is evidence that Laski had some knowledge of Dutt’s material, since the former elaborated a book review of Dutt’s *World Politics 1918-1936*. See, Lamb, *Harold Laski*, pp. 144, 198.
of imperial fascism is striking, with the difference that the former preceded the latter in his publications. It is likely that Dutt was the first Marxist to denominate fascism as ‘capitalism in its decay’.\textsuperscript{683} Just like Laski, as a result of the detriment of economic conditions, Dutt visualised two different scenarios for Britain in particular and the world in general.\textsuperscript{684} One was the path of fascist capitalism and the suppression of parliamentary democracy, whereas the other was ‘communism’. The difference here was that Laski preferred to use the word ‘socialism’ and that he was optimistic about its achievement through parliamentary means; whereas Dutt denominated the next stage to be communism, a phase to be reached through a revolutionary path.\textsuperscript{685} For Dutt, the alternative of socialism through democracy was illusory with the arrival of imperialism.\textsuperscript{686} Additionally, in a similar way to Laski, Dutt stressed that one of the main aims of fascist imperialism was ‘…the maintenance of capitalism in the face of the revolution which the advance of… class antagonisms threatens.’\textsuperscript{687} This is what Laski later called counter-revolution.

Given the remarkable similarities between Dutt and Laski’s analyses, one is led to conclude that a considerable source of inspiration in Laski’s theory of fascist imperialism came specifically from Dutt. At any case, the Marxist roots in Laski’s theory are noticeably evidenced. Laski’s writings of course were slightly smoothed by his belief in the parliamentary possibility of socialism, as opposed to the necessity of revolutionary communism. Nonetheless Laski’s writings on this regard were not very original; they do constitute, if not an alternative, at least an expansion of Lenin’s theory using other Marxist sources.

\textit{Laski’s non-Leninist Socialist Solution to Imperialism}

Nonetheless Laski’s support of the socialist cause was constant since the mid 1920s, his conceptions of socialism were much more flexible than those of Communists/Leninists. He differed from the latter in at least three important ways. First, like some contemporary IR theorists, such as Hobson and Woolf; he did not believe in the teleological inevitability of socialism. But whereas Woolf thought that imperialism could prolong its life in the absence of human will to replace it, and Hobson maintained that it could be reformed into

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{683} R P Dutt, \textit{Fascism and Social Revolution}, Martin Lawrence Ltd, London, 1934, p. x.
\item \textsuperscript{684} ibid., pp. viii, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{685} ibid., pp. viii-xi, 72-73.
\item \textsuperscript{686} ibid., p. x.
\item \textsuperscript{687} ibid., p. 72.
\end{itemize}
something more benevolent; Laski believed in the likelihood of a darker future. Fascism provided an alternative route that Britain could follow if it hesitated taking the socialistic path. Thus, even in his predominantly Marxist phase, he condemned Communists for believing in the historical necessity of communism. Nevertheless, he was apologetic to Engels’ and Marx’s original approach: ‘I do not think it is true either of Marx or of Engels to say that they believed in the inevitability of communism…”

Second, albeit at times ambiguously, he was constantly against the achievement of socialism through revolutionary means. Although Laski has been frequently misconceived as an occasional supporter of revolution, especially during his so-called Marxist years; he never sponsored violence in his work. Like the other IR thinkers analysed in this thesis, Laski opposed the orthodox Marxist appeal of violent revolution for the achievement of socialism. The confusion sometimes has been due to the ambiguity of his writings on the topic, because it is easy to misinterpret isolated passages. For example, in Democracy in Crisis (1935), Laski argued: ‘Capitalism is presented with the choice of cooperating in the effort at socialist experiment, or of fighting it; and I have given reasons for believing that it may well prefer the alternative of fighting.” Another example is found in The State in Theory and Practice (1935), where Laski asked the reader if a peaceful transition to socialism was viable. He answered: ‘the evidence seems to me to suggest that only the most ardent optimist can take an affirmative position on this point.” However, in both books, Laski clearly stressed his preference for non-violent means. In the first instance, he sustained that ‘solutions made by consent are usually better than those which are imposed.’ Moreover, he expressed his disgust for revolution because it brings ‘pain and suffering’.

In the second instance, Laski maintained his preference for ‘rational consent’ as opposed to ‘violence’. ‘I believe’, he asserted, ‘…that it is the duty of the citizen to exhaust the means placed at his disposal by the constitution of the state before resorting to revolution.” Another passage that might be misinterpreted as pro-revolutionary is Laski’s common affirmation that no class in history has voluntarily abdicated their privileged position

691 ibid., p. 220.
692 Laski had been accused of being a revolutionary since he was lecturing in America. During an election in 1945, he was again accused by the opposition of favouring revolution in Britain. This tragic chapter of Laski’s life concluded with a trial and a fine. See, Hoover, pp. 173-177.
693 Laski, Democracy in Crisis, p. 233.
694 Laski, State in Theory and Practice, p. 150.
695 Laski, Democracy in Crisis, pp. 105, 266.
without violence.\textsuperscript{697} Since the late 1920s, Laski conceded that Marx and Engels were right on this.\textsuperscript{698} Although this is confusing, it does not necessarily mean that he supported revolution.

A clear example of Laski’s rejection of violent revolution is found in his \textit{Secret Battalion} (1946), which was written during his predominantly Marxist years. In this pamphlet, he particularly rejected the route of revolution preached by the CPGB. Laski argued that it would be folly to waste the opportunity that Britain had to make history by accomplishing a ‘revolution…by consent’. By this he meant a transition to socialism through nonviolent means with the (gradual and reformist) approval of local capitalists.\textsuperscript{699} To sustain his reformist approach, he referred to Karl Marx’s enthusiastic support of the ‘Ten Hours Act of 1844 as a great working class victory’.\textsuperscript{700}

A third important way in which Laski differed from rigid orthodox Marxists was in his constant support of democracy and liberty. For some, these two concepts might seem in contrast to socialism; but in common with Brailsford and Woolf,\textsuperscript{701} Laski maintained they were actually complementary. In the maturity of his thought, Laski conceived a socialist society as ‘one in which all the vital instruments of production are owned in common, and democratically operated for the whole society…’\textsuperscript{702} He argued that successful ‘…international planning must not only be socialist, but also democratic.’\textsuperscript{703} He frequently supported his position with texts of leading Marxists.\textsuperscript{704} For example, to defend his support of democracy, in “Introduction to the Manifesto” (1948) Laski cited the next passage written by Luxemburg: ‘Without general elections… freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, life in every public institution slows down…’\textsuperscript{705} With regards to freedom, Laski was convinced that it ‘…had no meaning save in the context of equality.’\textsuperscript{706} For him, socialism and freedom were not contradictory, but complementary.\textsuperscript{707}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{697} Laski, “Position and Prospects of Communism”, p. 99.
\item \textsuperscript{698} Laski, Communism, p. 88.
\item \textsuperscript{700} ibid., p. 18.
\item \textsuperscript{701} H N Brailsford, Property or Peace? Victor Gollancz ltd, London, 1936, p. 261; Woolf, Barbarians at the Gate, pp. 181, 190-191.
\item \textsuperscript{702} Laski, Socialism as Internationalism, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{703} ibid., p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{704} For an example of Laski employing Engels’s texts to support his democratic ideas, see, Laski, Marx and Today, p. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{705} Laski, “Introduction to the Communist Manifesto”, p. 104.
\item \textsuperscript{706} Laski, “Harold J. Laski”, p. 167.
\item \textsuperscript{707} Laski, Socialism and Freedom, pp. 3, 9-10, 12.
\end{itemize}
There is no surprise then why Brailsford described him as someone whose ‘passion for liberty burns in him’ and at the same time has a ‘passion for social equality’.  

Therefore, Laski provides a distinctive alternative to Communist/Leninist interpretations of socialism as undemocratic, with limited freedom, and with revolution as the only way for its achievement. He subscribed in a flexible way to the main tenets of Marxism, especially with regards to its historical materialistic view of the world as dominated by economic matters and class struggles, its instrumentalism, and its proposition of socialism as an alternative to imperialistic capitalism.

5.6 Conclusions

The case of Harold Laski challenges traditional accounts of early IR. Firstly, even though Laski was at times sympathetic to the experiment of the League of Nations, he was always cautious of its potential, and pessimistic of its power to overcome imperialism. In this way, he differed from other IR theorists of the epoch who (at least temporarily) fervently supported the League. Secondly, Laski’s thought throughout the 1930s and 1940s is predominantly Marxist, not liberal idealist/internationalist. This chapter has shown several Marxist book reviews written by Laski, his rather apologetic position towards the Soviet Union, and the conceptions that contemporary intellectuals had on his main theoretical perspective, as evidence of his substantial conversion to Marxism.

Thirdly, even before his conversion to Marxism, Laski’s thought had considerable socialist tints. By using Laski’s correspondence and some of his writings, this chapter has shown that there were notable socialist themes in his writing during the 1920s. Even during his studies at Oxford, Laski’s exposure to socialism was appreciable. This is why he stated: ‘I have, I suppose, been a socialist in some degree ever since the last years of my schooldays.’ Rather than an abrupt full adoption of Marxist/socialist values in the 1930s, Laski’s shift to Marxism was gradual and started before his so-named Marxist and Fabian stages. In this sense, this work poses a challenge not only to the mainstream historiography of IR, but also to conventional narratives outside the discipline that characterise Laski’s thought before 1925 as merely pluralist.

708 Quoted in Newman, p. 363.
709 Laski, “Why I am a Marxist”, p. 76.
Fourthly, this chapter has shown that Laski fundamentally relied on Marxism for putting forward his theory of imperialism. Even before his Marxist conversion, Laski had already considerably adopted core Marxian tenets. Historical materialism, socialism, instrumentalism, and the Marxian understandings of class struggles, were all central parts of Laski’s insights. The chapter has also demonstrated that during the last two decades of Laski’s life, these Marxian elements were so strongly implemented in Laski’s analyses to the degree that he considered Marxism to be the most useful tool to analyse international relations. Engels, Marx, Lenin and Dutt particularly played an important influence on Laski.

Laski’s adoption of Marxism was often flexible. First, while he believed economics was the main determinant factor to understand world affairs, he never dismissed other aspects as unimportant. Instead, like Woolf and Brailsford, he maintained that the original historical materialistic approach of Marx and Engels did not ignore noneconomic issues. Second, while at the maturity of his thought he believed in the superiority of Marxism to understand the issue of sovereignty in comparison with pluralism, he did not completely put away his pluralist conceptions. Third, Laski furthered Leninist understandings of imperialism as the latest stage of capitalism by applying them to fascism. Most likely, Laski employed Dutt’s work for putting forward a considerable amount of his theorisations, albeit in a less communist manner. Finally, in common with the other IR intellectuals covered in this thesis, Laski denied the teleological inevitability of communism through revolutionary means. Instead, he supported a society in which socialism, democracy and freedom could cohabit together. Therefore, Laski’s socialist theory of imperialism provides an alternative to Leninist interpretations.

Laski is one more (and a solid) example of the significance of Marxism as a theoretical tool for the IR intellectuals theorising during the so-named idealist period. This enhances our understanding of the formative disciplinary years of IR and confronts its traditional historiography that describes the period as merely liberal internationalist/idealist.
Chapter 6: Angell’s Insights on Imperialism and the Importance of Marxism in Early IR

6.1 Introduction

Sir Norman Angell is perhaps the most well acknowledged intellectual in the early disciplinary history of International Relations (IR). In 1933 his recognition was such that by nomination of Hobson, Laski and others, Angell became the first (and so far only) IR theorist to receive a Nobel Prize. Yet, after the publication of Carr’s Twenty Years Crisis (1939), his writings have been appreciably dismissed as a result of being labelled as idealist and thus naïve.

Despite Angell’s dismissal promoted by realism, since the 1980s his writings have been subject to some re-consideration. Moreover, since the late 1990s Angell has been utilised for assessing the traditional historiography of the field. In addition, a number of articles and papers have also highlighted the value of Angell’s seminal The Great Illusion to the field’s early years. A significant part of these efforts have focused on his insights on liberal internationalism, while others have highlighted his adoption of idealist aspects. Yet, his thoughts on socialism/Marxism have received very little attention.

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716 For example Bisceglia; and also Miller, *Angell and the Futility of War*.
717 For instance: Knutsen; Ceadel; and Miller, “Angell and Rationality”.
718 Here and there, however, it is possible to find some lines on Angell’s posture on socialism/Marxism. The point usually made is that Angell for a time called himself a Socialist. Little explanation however is given to explicate the ways in which he believed to be a Socialist. See for example, Ceadel, p. 1683; Miller, *Angell and the Futility of War*, p. 16; M Ceadel, *Living the Great Illusion: Sir Norman Angell 1872-1967*, Oxford Scholarship Online, September 2009, p. 11.
This chapter aims to retrieve Angell’s engagement with socialism. This is important because it allows us to criticise orthodox IR narratives in several ways. First, by showing that although much of Angell’s thought can indeed be classified as idealist, this label obscures some socialist themes in his work. Second, Angell’s debates with Marxists reveal how oversimplified is the orthodox narrative of the discipline that portrays its early stage as merely a debate between idealists and realists. Thus, by excavating Angell’s involvement with Marxism, the chapter contributes to reconstructing in detail some of the early disciplinary dialogues in IR which have been prematurely disregarded. Third, while a significant part of Angell’s output was aimed be critical of Marxist understandings, his extensive engagement with Marxists/socialists exposes the importance he gave to their theory.

The chapter claims that even though Angell strongly criticised Marxism, he appreciably engaged with some of its arguments. Specifically, he dedicated a substantial part of his work trying to dismantle the Marxian understandings of economic determinism, of the relationship between war and capitalism, and of socialism with peace. While Angell is close to the so-called idealist tradition, the chapter highlights that during the denominated utopian period of the field he had some (albeit limited) socialist inclinations. It is accentuated that Angell’s substantial engagement with Marxism demonstrates the importance of this theory in the formative years of IR. These three challenges in turn testify the significance of Marxism during the disciplinary beginnings of IR.

There are three main parts in this chapter. Firstly, Angell’s importance and his impact on IR are considered. Secondly, his predominant thinking and his relation with socialism and Marxism are explored. Finally, Angell’s writings on economic determinism, the nexus between capitalism and war, and the solution he gave to imperialism are explored to see if there was any Marxist influence on him and the extent to which he was engaged with socialists/Marxists. Doing so, the chapter will demonstrate the importance of Marxist/socialist thinking in early IR, thus casting into doubt the oversimplified depiction of the early years of the discipline as merely a dichotomy of idealist and realist arguments. This chapter, as all the previous ones, is concentrated mainly on Angell’s output on the subject of imperialism. Beyond being a useful focusing device, this is justified because (as discussed below) Angell’s writings on the theme have been appreciably ignored in the field despite the fact they constituted a major part of his output.
6.2 Angell’s Engagement with and Impact on IR

Norman Angell’s impact and engagement with IR-related institutions, issues, and scholars of the time makes him perhaps the most widely known theorist in the origins of the field. When considering the associations, intellectuals and topics he engaged with, it is clear that he does fit to a considerable degree within the traditional narrative of the discipline which portrays the period as idealist/internationalist. In his own time, however, he also made a considerable impact on early IR discussions over the issue of imperialism. Yet, it is because he fits relatively well within the traditional historiography that confines the writings of the time as solely on issues related to internationalism/idealism, that Angell’s insights on imperialism have been neglected in IR.

During the early twentieth century, Angell became a central figure in important institutions which were key forums for early IR theorists. In 1912, he managed to get the support of the royal adviser Viscount Esther, the former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, and the industrialist Richard Garton, to create the Garton Foundation. The main organisation’s aim was to encourage the study of “International Polity” (or international politics) through the dissemination of Angell’s idea that war between industrialised states had become futile. With the arrival of the First World War (WWI) in 1914, Angell founded the Neutrality League aiming to keep Britain out of the military conflict. Britain’s entry into the war in August, however, produced the end of the organisation and Angell’s faith on pacifist neutralism. As a result, together with Ramsay MacDonald and others, he co-founded the Union of Democratic Control, an institution to which all the thinkers considered in the thesis belonged. After the Great War, Angell became a strong advocate of the League of Nations. He also joined the Labour Party (LP) in 1920, becoming MP for Bradford North from 1929 to 1931. According to him, his decision to join the LP was mainly based on his belief that this party provided the best chances to work ‘…towards an

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719 Miller, “Angell and Rationality”, p. 101. N Angell, The Foundations of International Polity, William Briggs, Toronto, 1914, p. 222. This of course is in conflict with the traditional portrayal of the birth of IR in 1919. Interestingly, in 1913 the Garton Foundation established War and Peace, which might be counted as one of the first IR journals that included contributions from Angell himself and other notable intellectual figures such as Hobson, Brailsford, and G H Dickinson. This is also at odds with mainstream IR narratives. Knutsen, p. 11.


721 Miller, Angell and the Futility of War, pp. 10-11.

internationalist policy’. Between 1920 and 1940, together with Hobson, Brailsford, Woolf and Laski, he was also a member of the influential LP’s Advisory Committee on International Questions. After retiring from parliament in 1931, a significant part of Angell’s efforts were directed to the promotion of the League of Nations through the League of Nations Union, which for some was Britain’s most influential internationalist organisation during the interwar years. After the arrival of the Second World War, Angell became a supporter of the United Nations as a mechanism of internationalism.

Angell’s position in the main debates he was engaged in also reflects his internationalism. In his autobiography he affirmed that for forty years he had to debate against three modes of thought. One of these intellectual quarrels was with those who asserted that the cause of both World Wars was the ‘wickedness of Germans’. Angell identified this argument as ‘realist’ because it attributed the cause of war to human nature in which every international actor fought for selfish interests. He however criticised the idea of individuals fighting for their own interest. Instead, he stressed that war was actually an unselfish act in which people are eager to risk their lives. Thus, Angell maintained that the root of war was not human nature. Instead, before the Great War from an idealist perspective, he thought it was to be found in the wrong ideas people held; while after WWI, from an internationalist point of view, he added ‘international anarchy’ as another primary cause of war.

Therefore, even though some IR revisionist studies have diminished the existence of a first great debate in the discipline, there is evidence that there were indeed some intellectual discussions in which Angell acknowledged to be immersed refuting realism. In fact, in a couple of occasions he directly responded to Carr’s criticisms. In a 1940 review of Twenty Years’ Crisis, Angell criticised Carr for supporting the policy of appeasement, which Angell qualified as unrealistic, since it was eventually abandoned in Britain and it had only

724 ibid., p. 264.  
725 Ceadel, Living the Great Illusion, p. 4.  
727 Angell, After All, p. 158-159.  
729 Angell, Steep Places, p. 83.  
731 Using some of the writings of Woolf, Angell and Arnold Toynbee; Jeremy Weiss has also given some evidence of the existence of the first great debate particularly on the issue of appeasement. See, Weiss, “Carr, Norman Angell, and Reassessing the Realist-Utopian Debate”, pp. 1167-1180.
encouraged Hitler to pursue imperial adventures. Encouraged Hitler to pursue imperial adventures. Elsewhere, Angell also criticised Carr for his pessimism, for undermining the power of reason, and for his disregard for the possibility of cooperation between states ‘…in pursuit of common interest’. Encouraged Hitler to pursue imperial adventures. Elsewhere, Angell also criticised Carr for his pessimism, for undermining the power of reason, and for his disregard for the possibility of cooperation between states ‘…in pursuit of common interest’. Encouraged Hitler to pursue imperial adventures. Elsewhere, Angell also criticised Carr for his pessimism, for undermining the power of reason, and for his disregard for the possibility of cooperation between states ‘…in pursuit of common interest’. Encouraged Hitler to pursue imperial adventures. Elsewhere, Angell also criticised Carr for his pessimism, for undermining the power of reason, and for his disregard for the possibility of cooperation between states ‘…in pursuit of common interest’. A second mode of thought that Angell faced was pacifism. Although during the early 1910s Angell seemed to embrace some pacifist ideas, he soon began to quarrel with this mode of thought after the arrival of the Great War. According to him, his critics had failed ‘to differentiate between internationalism and non-resister Pacifism...’ He was thus not a pacifist because he believed that the international society should be able to defend itself by a collective security mechanism. Despite being aware of the differences between the internationalism he was embracing and pacifism, Angell sought to reconcile both traditions. While pacifism was against war, it did not oppose the use of police in the domestic level. Consequently, Angell’s internationalism suggested the creation of a world police to safeguard the maintenance of international law. His effort to convince pacifists was unfruitful; but what is worth noting here is his internationalist position.

The third major debate in which Angell affirmed he was involved for a long period of time was against ‘...those who insisted that the cause of war is capitalism, and that the sole remedy lies in world Socialism.’ Although there have been important revisionist accounts to highlight the significance of this intellectual contest in the formative years of the discipline, these contributions have been focused on the exchange of letters that took place in the New Statesman in 1935. This is no doubt the climax of the debate; however, presenting only these published letters obscures the fact that the intellectual discussion was much wider in time and scope. The debate can be traced back to the publication of Angell’s Europe’s Optical Illusion (1909) and its first review by Brailsford in 1909.

732 N Angell, “Who are - the Utopians and Who - the Realists?”, Headway, 1940, pp. 4-5. Interestingly, according to Luis Bisceglia, after the publication of Carr’s review, Angell received several letters of support from other fellow idealists, such as Arnold Toynbee, Gilbert Murray and Alfred Zimmern. Bisceglia, p. 185. This also confirms the existence of the first “great” debate. For an extract of Toynbee’s private letter to Angell, see: Miller, “Angell and Rationality”, p. 115.


735 Angell, After All, p. 159.

736 ibid.


738 Bisceglia, pp. 166, 186.

739 Angell, After All, p. 159.
Moreover, it included the participation not only of top IR theorists, such as Woolf, Laski and Brailsford; but also of renowned Marxists, like Trotsky and Kautsky. While the last section of this chapter will cover these disputes, it suffices now to briefly highlight Angell’s engagement with paramount IR intellectuals, and that his posture in these debates was appreciably internationalist/idealalist. Instead of holding capitalism responsible for conflictive imperialist practices, as any ordinary socialist or Marxist would, before WWI Angell considered wrong reasoning to be the main cause of war, while after the outbreak of the Great War he added to the equation international anarchy. As it will be seen in the last section, Angell’s idealist and internationalist solutions to war/imperialism were thus primarily based on the correction of wrong ideas and on addressing anarchy through collective security mechanisms.

Angell published more than forty books and many articles, mainly on world politics in general. There were nevertheless three broad themes in which he primarily contributed in IR. The first one was rationality. Angell gave paramount importance to the role of ideas in international relations. In his own words: ‘ideas are the foundation of action…’. Since his first book, *Patriotism under Three Flags: A Plea for Rationalism in Politics* (1903), he identified the public mind as the main aspect to address in order to solve international issues leading to war, in particular nationalism. In fact, one of the two main arguments of *The Great Illusion* was that intellectuals and practitioners of international relations held mistaken ideas that promoted war. More importantly, they had the delusion that military power/conquest produced economic gain. Through a significant part of his work, Angell sought to correct these widespread misconceptions by educating the public.

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742 Navari, p. 43.
743 Miller has identified five topics in Angell’s work: 1) the irrationality of war, 2) the necessity of educating people’s ideas, 3) the futility of war between industrial powers, 4) international anarchy, and 5) collective security. While the first two can be encompassed within my first theme (rationality/ideas), the last three can be put into my second topic (internationalism). Miller does not however consider my third suggestion, which is a reflection of the literature in general that has overlooked Angell’s wirings on imperialism. Miller, “Angell and Rationality”, pp. 103-104.
745 R Lane, *Patriotism under Three Flags: A Plea for Rationalism in Politics*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1903, pp. 26-28. Angell’s first book was published under the authorship of Ralph Lane. According to Angell, his full name was Ralph Norman Angell Lane and he simply decided to drop the first and last names. Ceadel, nevertheless has shown that his birth and marriage certificates appeared as Ralph Norman Lane. For an explanation of Angell’s decision see, Ceadel, *Living the Great Illusion*, pp. 8-10.
with corrected/rational ideas.\textsuperscript{747} His arguments around rationality can be subscribed within the idealist tradition, in the sense that he stressed that ideas inform actors’ behaviour.\textsuperscript{748}

Another subject in which Angell frequently contributed to IR was internationalism. The second main message of \textit{The Great Illusion} was that war had become economically futile among industrialised states as a result of interdependence. According to Angell, the economic conditions in the new industrialised era in which he was living at had changed because ‘international finance has become so interdependent and so interwoven with trade and industry…’\textsuperscript{749} This had at least two consequences. One is that because capital is now international and not national, he claimed that it became unattainable to seize the wealth of a state by military force. Second, he argued that the prospect of an invasion of an industrialised state could potentially also affect the financial capital of the conqueror.\textsuperscript{750} The issue of interdependence was common in Angell’s output,\textsuperscript{751} and it can be considered as part of a liberal internationalist perspective.\textsuperscript{752}

Within the theme of internationalism, Angell also frequently theorised about collective security. The topic however became important to him after the outbreak of WWI. With the eruption of the Great War, Angell became increasingly convinced that the demythification of war prone ideas and the growth of interdependence were not going to suffice for the achievement of peace.\textsuperscript{753} Consequently, he began to understand international anarchy as a paramount cause of war which had to be fought through collective security mechanisms. Hence, after WWI he became an advocate for the League of Nations, the Commonwealth/British Empire, and later the United Nations.\textsuperscript{754}


\textsuperscript{748} Knutsen, p. 13. Interestingly, his thought on this is also remarkably close to Constructivist approaches which have gained prominence in IR since the end of the Cold War. Angell frequently stressed that ‘things do not matter so much as people’s opinions about things’. Angell, \textit{Great Illusion}, p. 342. Similarly, Constructivists claim that the most important aspects of world politics are not constituted by material forces, but by ideas. R Jackson and G Sorensen, \textit{Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches}, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 209.

\textsuperscript{749} Angell, \textit{Great Illusion}, p. ix.

\textsuperscript{750} ibid., pp. 28-29.


\textsuperscript{752} Navari, p. 342.

\textsuperscript{753} Ceadel, \textit{Semi-Detached Idealists}, p. 184.

The other major subject that Angell theorised on was capitalistic imperialism/Empire. The theme appears from his first publications, continuing throughout the final years of his life. In his autobiography, Angell particularly described the debates he had with Marxists and socialists around the relationships of capitalism with war, and socialism with peace, as ‘the worst split or dissipation of energy…’ he had ever had. As it will be shown in the last section of the chapter, Angell’s writings around imperialism were substantial and gained remarkable attention. In this part, Angell does not fit well in the traditional narrative of IR that confines the writings of the period as merely related to internationalism. His output on imperialism is a confirmation of the importance of this theme for early IR.

Angell has made a significant impact on IR. Yet, his reputation as an expert on international issues was not immediate after he began writing. His first book, for example, was very little noticed. The notoriety of his writings came after 1909. That year he had published Europe’s Optical Illusion with insignificant success. He thus asked The Nation for a review of his book, which Brailsford sympathetically elaborated. After this, the book quickly began to be noticed and less than a month after Brailsford’s review, Lord Esther wrote to Angell that he considered the book could be ‘epoch making’. In 1910, Europe’s Optical Illusion was expanded and renamed as The Great Illusion selling over two million copies in four years. It underwent several editions and it was translated into twenty-five different languages by 1939. The Great Illusion opened the doors for the formation of the Garton Foundation in 1912, which in turn stimulated the creation of academic and non-academic groups dedicated to the study of international politics/policy. This informal institutionalisation of the study of IR which predates the orthodox foundation of the discipline, gained considerable success in Glasgow, Manchester, Cambridge, Oxford and some cities in Germany. Ultimately, according to

756 Angell, After All, p. 266
758 H N Brailsford, “The Motive Force of War”, The Nation, December 18, 1909, pp. 490-492. Angell, After All, p. 148. After Brailsford’s review, many others were elaborated on Angell’s Great Illusion and his future work. For many other sympathetic reviews coming from important IR intellectuals such as Hobson and Laski, see: N Angell, The Work of Norman Angell by his Contemporaries: A Random Collection of Reviews, Criticisms, Comments, Discussions, Letters from Readers, Caricatures, Sketches, Privately printed, 1961, pp. 5, 8, 22, 83.
760 Ceadel, Living the Great Illusion, p. 2.
Martin Ceadel, the effect of *The Great Illusion* was to launch the self-awareness of IR as an autonomous field of study.\(^{762}\)

Angell’s writings on his three main avenues of research made a significant impact on IR. His major lasting impact was on the theme of internationalism. Indeed Angell’s writings have been given some credit to have persuaded Woodrow Wilson’s collective security efforts.\(^{763}\) Moreover, his insights on interdependence had a considerable influence on Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye.\(^ {764}\) With regards to his writings on rationality, it has already been shown that Angell was an important figure in the so-named first great debate. Moreover, although Angell’s thought was harshly criticised by realists such as Carr and Morgenthau,\(^765\) there have been also some recent revisionist efforts to revive his contributions on the theme.\(^766\) Thus, Angell’s writings on rationality have also impacted significantly on IR. His significant effect on internationalism and rationalism coincide with the traditional narrative of the discipline which describes its formative years as liberal idealist/internationalist.

In reference to Angell’s output on imperialism, the last section of the chapter will show that he made a robust effect on his own time. His writings produced responses from distinguished IR theorists such as Brailsford and Laski, and renowned non-academic Marxists like Trotsky and Kautsky. Yet, despite Angell’s insights around imperialistic affairs made a strong impact in his time, they have been neglected after his death.\(^767\) This ignorance can be explained as a result of his portrayal as a utopian, which has mythified all his writings as idealist or at best liberal internationalist. Angell’s depiction as an idealist has encouraged greater attention on his output on internationalism and rationalism, while his writings on imperialism have been neglected as they do not fit within the profile of a utopian. The next section will proceed to explore whether or not Angell is accurately portrayed as idealist (as well as his relation to Marxism). After that, the final section will aim to retrieve some of his insights around the theme of imperialism.

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\(^{762}\) Cædel, “The Founding Text of International Relations?”, p. 1671.

\(^{763}\) Ashworth, *Creating International Studies*, p. 46.

\(^{764}\) Navari, p. 342.


\(^{766}\) For example, Miller, “Angell and Rationality”, pp. 100-121; Knutsen, pp. 1-22.

\(^{767}\) As already mentioned, an important exception is Ashworth, whose work has highlighted Angell’s participation in the 1935 debate in the New Statesman. See for instance, Ashworth, *International Relations and the Labour Party*, pp. 128-134.
6.3 Angell’s (international) Political Thought and Marxism

As already shown, Angell’s affiliations and writings reveal to a significant degree his closeness to the liberal idealist/internationalist tradition(s). Depicting Angell as a liberal idealist/internationalist is thus at least more accurate than doing the same for the previous IR thinkers this thesis has considered. It should be highlighted however that even such portrayals of Angell obscure some (albeit minor) socialist influence.

Angell has been labelled in different ways. During his life he was occasionally portrayed as a pacifist by some Marxists/socialists. Additionally, recent bibliographic studies on Angell have stressed his closeness to pacifism before the Second World War. In fact, in an article in 1933 in which he criticised realism for believing in the inevitability of war, he admitted: ‘I… am a pacifist.’ Yet, he went on to clarify in what sense. According to him, he had embraced this perspective not because he thought war was rare, but because it was a regular event. Thus, he argued: that ‘is precisely why we must have a League of Nations…’ Therefore, Angell’s “pacifism” was in reality closer to what we understand for internationalism in IR today. For some years, Angell unsuccessfully wanted to widen the concept of pacifism and reconcile it with internationalism. This is why in his autobiography (1951) he completely detaches from pacifism, supporting instead internationalism.

As previously discussed however, his years before the Great War were not characterised by a support of collective security, but by his faith in rationality and the futility of war because of interdependence. This is why his pre-WWI thought might be typified as idealist/utopian, as do IR conventional narratives. After the Great War even though ideas were still paramount for him, he added an emphasis on collective security and as a result he frequently depicted himself as an internationalist. At any case, the portrayal of Angell

769 See, Ceadel, Living the Great Illusion, p. 12.
771 Bisceglia, pp. 166, 186.
772 Angell, After All, p. 159.
774 For an explicit declaration see, N Angell, “Angell Correspondence to G. S. Dara (Secretary of Gandhi)”, December 31, 1930, quoted in Bisceglia, Norman Angell and Liberal Internationalism in Britain, p. 213. For
as a liberal idealist or liberal internationalist by IR conventional narratives seems to resemble with certain accuracy his international thinking. There are nevertheless certain aspects of his thought obscured by these labels.

Where depictions of Angell are not totally accurate is in the “liberal” part of them. He was significantly influenced by classic liberals such as Richard Cobden and John S Mill, particularly by their emphases on the importance of free trade and freedom. However, at least during the Great War and most of the interwar years, Angell was also critical of liberalism. Referring to ‘the individualist and laissez-faire political economy…’, he stated:

The mischief of the old doctrine resided in the implication that if the individual went his way and let things work out for themselves, by some sort of happy chance, without any conscious control of collective action, things would work out for good…[that] thinly disguised fatalism…abandoned any real attempt at conscious control of the direction of society. To say that societies grow and are not made, was to imply that the progress is largely beyond our will.

It might be surprising to many current IR students that Angell has at times been called socialist. Yet, that is the case especially outside IR circles. Angell’s contemporary socialist William English Walling, for instance, as early as 1915 catalogued Angell among those ‘Socialists…[who] have been prepared for certain war-producing contingencies…’ Lloyd Ross, another contemporary socialist, similarly described Angell as one of ‘those Socialists…[who] contended that a moderate socialist government could be assisted by the British democratic traditions…’ More recently, in The National Interest in 2013, Jacob Heilbrunn named Angell ‘a Socialist, an agnostic, and a republican.’

Even more surprising to some perhaps might be that Angell himself thought himself a socialist for some years. In his autobiography, he stated that his arrival to the LP in 1920 represented a symbolic confirmation of his move towards the Left. ‘Once having joined the

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775 Carr does not distinguish between utopianism and liberal internationalism. He considers that one of the main characteristics of utopians is eradicating anarchy through collective security. Carr, pp. 29-30.
779 Ross, p. 288.
party,’ he affirmed, ‘I seemed to have travelled pretty rapidly to the Far Left.’ Yet, his socialist tendencies were present since he was attending classes at the University of Geneva, sometime just before his temporary migration to the United States in 1890. According to Angell, his time at Geneva was a period when he was able to ‘consort with Russian and other revolutionaries… [and when] he deemed himself a revolutionary.’ His socialist inclinations must have significantly declined sometime after his experience in Geneva, and then come back with the outbreak of WWI. In 1919 he asserted: ‘some of us who were not Socialists before the war…. are nevertheless turning to some form of Socialism as the best hope of saving the world.’

Throughout the interwar period, Angell claimed to be a socialist of a certain type. In *The Fruits of Victory* (1921), he warned ‘Socialists (among whom, incidentally, the present writer counts himself)…’ of the militarisation of Germany. In the 1935 exchange of letters within the *New Statesman*, in spite of his differences with other socialists/Marxists, Angell seemed to implicitly declare himself a socialist. He explained to Brailsford that because war was harmful for socialism and ‘no Socialist of authority’ denied that, ‘our advocacy’ should thus be emphasising the possibility of cooperation between socialism and capitalism. His self esteem as a socialist was explicitly expressed in later writings. In 1939, for example, referring to ‘Socialists’ he affirmed: ‘we felt that…’ Even as far as 1942, he wrote: ‘the present writer happens to be a Socialist…’ Yet, during the early 1940s Angell was already dubious of his socialist convictions. In 1940, in a private letter to Gilbert Murray, he confessed to him that ‘having tried to make the best of all the Socialist slogans and Marxist incantations, I have been pushed more and more to the conviction that it is your type of Liberalism which alone can save us.’ Therefore, Angell claimed to be a socialist during a significant part of his life; but, in what sense?

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781 Angell, *After All*, p. 231.
782 ibid., p. 1.
787 Angell, *Let the People Know*, p. 111.
788 Quoted in Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 300. Murray was a strong supporter of international law, global cooperation and particularly of the League of Nations. Although Murray was not a target in Carr’s *Twenty Years Crisis*, they did have an exchange of letters in 1936 on the League of Nations, which adds another piece to confirm the existence of the first great debate. Murray accused Carr for being pessimistic and uncritical of certain aspects of world affairs, while the latter criticised the former’s optimism and faith in international law. See, P Wilson, “Gilbert Murray and International Relations: Hellenism, Liberalism and international cooperation as a path to peace”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 37, 2010, pp. 886-887.
Angell’s self estimation as a socialist was mostly limited through the lenses of the LP. As far as 1942, he regarded himself a socialist; but only ‘in the British Labour Party or the American New Deal sense of the term…’ \(^{789}\) At least during his “socialist” years, Angell believed that the world was experiencing an inevitable socialisation of property. ‘In the case of such things as roads, bridges, water, [and] telegraphs’, he thought the ‘obvious social need has declared that they shall pass more and more into the possession of the community… from private towards public control.’ \(^{790}\) This socialisation of property, manifested for example in the nationalisation of railways and control of food prices in the national economies, was happening even in the most capitalist states. \(^{791}\)

According to “socialist” Angell, this tendency towards socialism was not only unavoidable; but also desirable. First, because along the lines of the LP, he considered socialism could allow a better redistribution of resources for the achievement of a ‘more equitable economic order’. \(^{792}\) Second, he thought socialism could help to correct two widespread misconceptions of the state. Angell criticised the laissez-faire doctrine of classical liberalism for its belief in progress without any intervention. Conversely, ‘more modern forms of socialism at least imply that it depends on us, or our conscious action, collectively determined, what kind of society we should have… that we are the arbiters of our own destiny…’ \(^{793}\) Similarly, he criticised those who believed that the main aim in politics was determined by states’ survival. Socialism, he thought, helped to rectify this mentality by putting its main emphasis on increasing the quality of life, instead of the state. \(^{794}\) This explains why Angell affirmed in his autobiography that he was ‘greatly drawn’ into Guild Socialism during his socialist years. \(^{795}\) According to him, Guild Socialism was a peaceful democratic canon which had significantly influenced the LP and which had emphasised ‘that the main unit of government should be, not… the state, but the workers’ organizations…’ Trade unions in particular should play a paramount role in controlling industries. \(^{796}\) Finally, the tendency towards socialism was desirable because it allowed more national control of important services, which was especially necessary in times of war. According to Angell, while he was in campaign during the four elections in

\(^{789}\) Angell, *Let the People Know*, p. 111.


\(^{791}\) Angell, *Let the People Know*, pp. 99-100.


\(^{793}\) Angell, *The British Revolution and the American Democracy*, p. 179.

\(^{794}\) ibid., p. 154.

\(^{795}\) Angell, *After All*, p. 232.

\(^{796}\) Angell, *The British Revolution and the American Democracy*, pp. 71, 143.
which he was a candidate for the LP, he stressed that he ‘was a Socialist’ because he believed ‘…no modern industrialised economy could function at all without large and increasing doses of control by the community.’ In 1939, Angell thought the socialisation of Britain, in the sense of a greater nationalisation of services, was paramount in order to effectively face the Second World War.

Therefore, Angell’s depiction as a liberal internationalist/idealist obscures his socialist inclinations, which were present during the so-named idealist years of IR. Angell’s tendencies towards the left, while they lasted, were however limited to an influence of the LP and of Guild Socialism. Yet, he was never Marxist. Even during his socialist years he opposed Communist Russia. Moreover, as it will be seen below, he constantly and robustly repelled the then popular Marxian understandings of imperialism.

6.4 Angell’s Engagement with Marxism on the Theme of Imperialism

Even though Angell did not embrace any key Marxian components in his theoretical analyses of imperialism, his writings on this reflect an extensive and constant engagement with Marxist accounts. This in turn highlights the theoretical importance that Angell gave to Marxism as an approach to understand international affairs. Angell’s writings on imperialism received an outstanding response from several IR and non-IR Marxist/socialist theorists. These discussions commenced prior to the conventional beginning of the discipline (1919), and remained present sometimes even beyond the denominated idealist period. This section aims to retrieve some of these debates thus contributing to the reconstruction of important early discourses, which have been significantly neglected by orthodox historiographies of IR.

_Economic Determinism_

From the beginning of his career until the end of it, Angell constantly rejected the Marxian principle of economic determinism. He frequently condemned the ‘economic determinist’

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797 Angell, _After All_, p. 235.
798 Angell, _Must it be War?_ pp. 198, 205-206.
for believing ‘…that nothing but economic motives weigh in human conduct.’ For him, this was ‘an over-simplified materialistic interpretation of history’ which ignored paramount forces that explained international affairs. While at times he conceded that it was not possible to explicate the conduct of individuals without taking into consideration material factors, throughout his career he constantly stressed that those aspects were only able to explain a limited part of the world reality. In particular, he frequently criticised the Marxian economic deterministic explanation of war/imperialism. ‘It is not true that the causes of war are basically economic’, Angell regularly stressed. In *Patriotism Under Three Flags* (1903), he criticised Hobson for the ‘great prominence’ he gave to economics in order to explain imperialism. Angell thought Hobson’s conclusions were wrongly generalised by the peculiar events of the Boer War. Imperialism, Angell considered, if judged widely would reveal different explanations. He believed the Marxian/Hobsonian economic based understandings of imperialism failed to take into account two key factors.

For him, the importance of ideas was overlooked by economic deterministic explanations of war/imperialism. Throughout his career, Angell stressed two important ways in which psychological factors condued to war. First, it was through ‘the abstract idea of nationalism’. In 1931 he stated: ‘Although I object to assigning any single cause for war, if I had to assign one cause it would obviously, it seems to me, be nationalism.’ Angell frequently exemplified the relationship between nationalism and war through the cases of the ex-colonies of Spain in America, which after their independence they had been frequently engaged in war. As a result, ‘the patriotic fire’, a ‘psychology’ aspect present in the ‘national masses’, was disproportionally a more coherent explanation of imperialism than other economic based accounts.

According to Angell, there was another way in which ideational factors contradicted economic determinism. For him, economic based Marxian analyses assumed that capitalists always calculated their actions correctly for increasing their profits. Angell however thought that industrialists in reality frequently misjudged their material interests.

802 See for example, ibid., pp. 47-48; Angell, *For What do We Fight?* p. 56; Angell, *The British Revolution and the American Democracy*, p. 134.
803 Angell, *Steep Places*, p. 84.
Consequently, capitalists often supported imperial activities miscalculating their benefits.

The idea that a privileged group gained from war, that conquest paid, was thus an economic illusion.808

Economic determinism implies broadly that men see correctly what their economic interests are… The truth is that men do not usually read their economic interests aright for the reason that human judgement is vitiated by subjective psychological factors… Looking back on the history of capitalism the last thirty years I fail to see how it can be argued that capitalists have acted in the best interest of their class… Men are not guided by facts, but by their opinions about facts, which are usually erroneous opinions.809

Besides ideational factors, Angell stressed Marxists neglected the significance of certain ‘political’ issues. After the arrival of the Great War, Angell realised that dispelling wrong ideas was not enough to avoid war. While ideational factors still played a major role in promoting war in Angell’s thought, he now also considered: ‘If there is no common law and no common force, the best intentions will be defeated...’810 The political aspects which were paramount causes of war were national-states and international anarchy. Angell explained that war occurred between states rather than between economic classes, as Marxists claimed.811 Moreover, he sustained that economic determinist analyses ignored that war is often the result of the lack of a central authority. The disintegration of the Roman Empire, Angell frequently stressed, evidenced anarchy as an essential cause of war.812 Therefore, Angell’s formula to explain war after WWI included ideational and political factors. ‘It is not true’, he regularly maintained, ‘that the causes of war are basically economic; they are basically political and psychological.’813 Hence, he contended that the interpretation of economics as ‘the sole or main cause of war is simplification of the wrong kind, and ignores forces of psychology and politics which… invalidate the commonly accepted Marxian thesis.’814

Angell’s criticism of economic deterministic understandings drew the attention of some British socialists. In 1912 Jack Fitzgerald, a founding member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and then a well known socialist, criticised Angell for ‘insisting upon

810 Angell, “International Anarchy”, p. 34.
811 Angell, Must it be War? p. 112; Angell, Defence of the Empire, p. 209.
813 Angell, Steep Places, p. 84.
economic considerations as though they had ever been absent’. For Fitzgerald, the international reality actually proved economic factors to be the fundamental cause of war. International conflicts were the product of the economic interest of the capitalist classes. Thus, classes within states, rather than states themselves, were responsible for war.\(^815\)

Although Brailsford’s review of *Europe’s Optical Illusion* in 1909 was mostly benevolent, at the end of it he briefly asserted that economic factors played a key role to explain imperialism. He claimed that the great Empires have benefited economically from some imperial activities. Moreover, the tensions between France and Germany over Morocco were solved as a result of German and French capitalists agreeing to share the exploitation of the latter.\(^816\) Thus, Brailsford highlighted the importance of economic factors to explain international conflict. In 1932, he again made a review of a book written by Angell, and he once more stressed the significance of economics to understand international affairs. In the review of Angell’s *The Unseen Assassins* (1932), Brailsford argued that the case of India derived economic advantages to Britain. For him, Britain had not only economically profited during the early stages of India’s conquest; but also in the long run. This was evident through the monopoly the British enjoyed in concessions for constructing railways, telegraphs and other services in India. Moreover, Brailsford claimed that paramount Indian industries, such as shipping and banking, were mainly possessed by British capital. Hence, he concluded: ‘Norman Angell’s reluctance to consider the Socialist case against Economic Imperialism leads him to a serious misunderstanding of Indian Nationalism.’\(^817\)

In 1935, Brailsford again criticised Angell for underplaying economics. He claimed that the economic dividends received by imperial adventures were not an illusion. Thus, imperialism was a ‘rational economic activity’.\(^818\) Brailsford’s letter in the *New Statesman* generated responses not only from Angell, but from other IR thinkers. Woolf took a middle position and argued that Brailsford and Angell were partly right and partly wrong. According to him:

Brailsford in his letter has shown Angell to be wrong, by insisting - I think, rightly - on the enormous effect of the economic structure of present-day society upon the policy of imperialist and protectionist states. Angell’s


\(^{816}\) Brailsford, “The Motive Force of War”, pp. 491-492.


thesis… applies only to an ideal world…But… Just as Angell ignores the truth in Brailsford’s thesis, so Brailsford ignores the truth in Angell’s thesis. The causes of war are much too complex and multifarious to be covered exclusively either by economics or by psychology.819

Angell’s final contribution in the *New Statesman*’s exchange of letters rejected the prominence of economic factors to explain imperialism. He concluded that international anarchy was the main cause of war.820

Therefore, Angell’s substantial writings rejecting Marxian determinism, especially around the issue of whether or not war was mainly caused by economic factors, stimulated considerable responses from socialist thinkers. These discussions, which are ignored by mainstream IR narratives, were an important part of the formative years of the discipline. Moreover, they reveal that the Marxian understandings of imperialism were considerably discussed by important IR theorists of the time.

*Does Capitalism Cause War?*

Related to the last debate in which the prominence of economic factors was discussed, Angell was engaged in wide discussions over whether or not capitalism had a direct relation with war/imperialism. His writings on this issue generated an outstanding reaction from IR and non-IR socialists/Marxists. Although some recent revisionist studies have considerably contributed highlighting part of this debate, these efforts have however been only concentrated on the exchange of letters that important IR intellectuals had in the *New Statesman* in 1935. The intellectual disputes around the issue were wider in time and scope. They can be traced before the orthodox beginning of the discipline and they included remarkable Marxists who are outside the traditional disciplinary boundaries of IR. Angell’s disputes with Marxists/socialists on the subject encompassed several aspects.821 This section will however be primarily focused on the disputes around the nexus between capitalists and imperialism, and Angell’s critique to the then common Marxian conviction that the bourgeoisie of different states was looking for places to exploit around the globe.

821 Another related issue discussed by Angell included his critique on the argument that conquest was necessary for obtaining new markets and disposing surplus domestic capital. For a critique on this on Laski see: Angell, *Preface to Peace*, pp. 203-206.
One of the oldest aspects disputed around the debate in consideration was with respect to whether or not capitalists benefited from war. The intellectual contest started as a result of the publication of *Europe’s Optical Illusion* (1909), later republished as *The Great Illusion* (1910), in which Angell had claimed the economic futility of military conquest. Even though Brailsford’s review (1909) of the *Europe’s Optical Illusion* had been benevolent; he clarified that in the conquest of other economies the ‘financiers’ of the conqueror states made profit as a result of the export of capital. Three years later, another British socialist also criticised Angell. Jack Fitzgerald condemned him for stressing that ‘wars do not pay; that not even the winner gains…’ Fitzgerald utilised the words of ‘Mr. Lough’, ‘a wealthy capitalist’, to denigrate Angell’s thesis. According to Lough, some capitalists had a significant economic interest in the promotion of war. Fitzgerald thought this proved Angell’s thesis wrong, since Lough, as a capitalist, was in a better position to know whether or not imperialism paid.

Angell’s thesis even drew the attention of some renowned orthodox Marxists. In the conclusion of one of the chapters of Bukharin’s seminal *Imperialism and World Economy* (written in 1915), the Bolshevik disapproved Angell’s writings for believing that the international system had reached a condition in which states could coexist pacifically. Bukharin cited Erwin Szabo, a Hungarian socialist who had previously criticised Angell, to assert that the latter overlooked ‘…that the thing that may be superfluous, useless, even harmful, for the people as a whole, can be of very great benefit… for individual groups (large financiers, cartels, bureaucracy, etc.).’

As a result of the Marxian/socialist criticism Angell received, he tackled the issue of the relation between capitalists and war in some of his later writings. In 1914, in a review of Brailsford’s *The War of Steel and Gold*, Angell disagreed with the book’s thesis which blamed certain capitalists for the existence of imperialism. The responsibility, Angell thought, should fall onto the public in general. He kept engaging with the issue in future years. In 1919, for example, he qualified as a myth the ‘socialist proposition that war is a capitalist plot engineered… for the special interests of a little group of financiers…’ This false belief, Angell considered, had spread so quickly that that ‘almost all sections’ of the LP had adopted it. Yet, for him what caused war were not capitalists, but nationalist-chauvinistic ideas. Moreover, during the interwar period Angell affirmed that even

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823 Fitzgerald, n. pag.
824 ibid.
828 ibid., pp. 147-149.
though capitalists might have believed in the economic benefit of imperial adventures, the Great War demonstrated their belief was an economic miscalculation. As a result, more capitalists were becoming conscious that another World War would be detrimental for them.\(^{829}\) It was this point which Trotsky deemed as naïve and miscalculated by Angell:

> The English pacifist Norman Angell has called the war a miscalculation. The experience of the last war has shown that the calculation… was indeed a false one. After the war it might have seemed that the triumph of pacifism was about to arrive and that the League of Nations was its manifestation. Today we see that the calculation of pacifism was a miscalculation. Never before has capitalist mankind engaged in such frenzied preparation of a new war as at the present time.\(^{830}\)

Angell’s arguments on the relation between capitalists and war received such attention that in the 1933 edition of *The Great Illusion* he added a chapter called “But Some Profit by War”, which would be maintained in further versions.\(^{831}\) In the chapter Angell addresses the theory that financiers gain from war, arguing that it was a false idea, since conflict had a financial destabilising effect: ‘All bankers, merchants, investors, those who insure their lives, who have holdings in stocks or shares of any kind… are interested in the security of wealth.’\(^{832}\) This did not mean however that all capitalists believed that imperialism did not pay. Some did, but their belief was an economic irrational miscalculation.\(^{833}\) In January 1935 Angell published *Preface to Peace* in which he reinforced the same arguments: that capitalists did not benefit by war and that another war would be detrimental for capitalism now to the point of potentially destroying it.\(^{834}\) Additionally, *Preface to Peace* also criticised Trotsky and Laski for believing that one of the purposes of military interventions was the collection of debts. In the new financial era, Angell argued, military power was useless to oblige payment from debtor states, as it was shown through many cases in Latin America.\(^{835}\) Angell’s new edition of *The Great Illusion* (1933) and *Preface to Peace* (1935) generated considerable discussion in 1935 in the *New Statesman*.

Part of the 1935 IR intellectual clash in the *New Statesman* in which Angell participated was centred on the issue of whether or not capitalists were responsible for war. Brailsford

\(^{829}\) See for example, Angell, *Preface to Peace*, pp. 182, 196; Angell, “International Anarchy”, pp. 35-36.


\(^{833}\) ibid., pp. 254-255.


\(^{835}\) ibid., pp. 207-209.
started the debate by criticising Angell for ignoring that capitalists did gain economically from imperial activities. Angell in turn complained he had been misinterpreted. He explained that albeit British capitalists did profit in India, they gained more from other non-military conquered economies such as Argentina and the United States. Thus, the capitalists’ support for imperial conquest was economically futile. Additionally, he added that WWI had shown how capitalism had been economically damaged as a result of imperial activities. Consequently, capitalists were ‘…convinced that another war like that last would about finish off the existing system.’ Brailsford in turn qualified this last point as ‘nonsense’ arguing he had ‘never said that the [capitalist] “system” benefits by war’, but instead that ‘some wars have probably “paid” the victors…’ He however conceded that another war would be highly detrimental to capitalism.

Thus, although there was considerable debate between Angell and Brailsford, in reality their position was not very distinct on this issue. Angell had now come to the point of implicitly recognising that some capitalists did profit from imperialism (albeit less profitably than in many non-military instances), while Brailsford had (also implicitly) agreed that not all capitalists benefited by imperialism and that war was economically futile for the capitalist system. Laski also briefly contributed on the issue of whether or not the bourgeoisie benefits by imperialism. While he agreed with Angell that in an economic system without war, capitalists would obtain greater profits; the unfortunate situation was that this class was interested in economic benefits in the short term, which included the use of force. Capitalists were thus economically rational. Throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, Angell kept criticising socialists/Marxists for believing that capitalists/capitalism profited by war.

Another related issue Angell discussed with several socialists was whether the ownership of a country/territory represented any economic benefit for the capitalists of the conqueror state. During the early 1910s Angell crossed swords with two socialist writers of the Die Neue Zeit, the leading German socialist journal between 1883 and 1923. In 1911, I. Kairski, whom Angell qualified as ‘an eminent European Socialist’, rejected Angell’s
thesis that conquest did not benefit capitalists. Kairski agreed with Angell that in the prospect of a German invasion on India, the great majority of Germans would not benefit. But he stressed that it would benefit some capitalists because: ‘the German bankocracy would divert from England to Germany the millions of the profits of exploitation which are to be made in the future by the further capitalist development of India...’ Angell in turn described Kairski’s claims as ‘childish’:

Does he seriously mean by this that the stocks and bonds of Indian railroads, mines, etc., now held by English capitalists would, in the case of the German conquest of India, be confiscated by the German Government and transferred to German capitalists?... such a thing is impossible. The interlocking of interest is so great that German financial institutions would be hit by such confiscations in the long run as much as British.

In 1912 Angell had a debate with Karl Kautsky on the same issue. Part of the contest is mentioned in War and the Workers (1916?), where Angell criticises the German socialist for assuming ‘that the area of capitalistic exploitation is determined by the political dominion of the capitalist Government; that a German capitalist cannot invest money in a country unless his Government conquered it.’ That was to ignore the British capitalist operations in states such as Argentina, Brazil and China. Therefore, Angell argued that for capitalists ‘the flag under which the dividend is paid is a matter of complete indifference to them as long as it is paid.’ Angell debated the issue of whether or not capital investments follow “the flag” with other important socialists during following years.

The common Marxian belief that capitalists were looking for places in the globe to exploit for their economic advantage, led many of them to believe in the inevitability of war between capitalist states. During the 1930s and 1940s Angell devoted considerable attention to intellectually attack this Marxian conviction. In particular, he described the prospect of a war between the United States and Britain as something almost all Marxists and socialists assumed to be avoidable as a result of their commercial rivalries. For him,

844 Angell, Great Illusion, 1933 [1911], pp. 259-260.
845 Angell, After all, p. 269.
847 Most significantly perhaps with Brailsford. See for example: Angell, “The Public and the War Trades”, p. 489; Angell, “Capitalism and War”, February 23, p. 242; Brailsford, “Capitalism and War”, March 2, p. 278. Palme Dutt also argued against Angell’s claim that capital did not follow the flag. See, R P Dutt, World Politics 1918-1936, Random House, New York, 1936, pp. 91-92. There is no evidence of a direct response from Angell to Dutt; but Angell criticised Marxists in general on this issue in later years. See for instance: Angell, Defence of Empire, pp. 26-27.
that Marxist explanation ignored that those states were conceding independence to economies such as Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines.\textsuperscript{848} Moreover, when the Second World War erupted, rather than fighting, Britain and the United States actually cooperated.\textsuperscript{849} Although Angell specifically condemned Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky for embracing this view, his criticisms were commonly launched towards Marxists and socialists in general.\textsuperscript{850} While he did not obtain Russian responses,\textsuperscript{851} he did however receive the attention of Palm Dutt, the 1930s leading theoretician of the Communist Party in Britain. Dutt condemned Angell for believing in the illusion of the eradication of commercial rivalries between different capitalist units. For Dutt:

\begin{quote}
The actual line of development is in the opposite direction, towards the increasing sharpness of the economic-political conflicts, trade wars, tariff wars, currency wars, as well as diplomatic and armed struggles, of the rival finance-capitalist blocs… this process is inevitable in the development of imperialism…\textsuperscript{852}
\end{quote}

Dutt is an example of how widespread was the Marxist proposition of capitalist-imperialism as synonymous of war during the first half of the twentieth century. It was an idea that Angell conceived has been highly embraced not only in Russia’s dominions, but also in the West.\textsuperscript{853} While Angell affirmed in his time ‘…that the popular Marxian interpretation of the relation of war to Capitalism is out date’, he feared that because it was so widespread, it could potentially kindle a Third World War.\textsuperscript{854}

\textit{Remedies for Confictive Imperialism and War}

Another issue related to the nexus between capitalism and war, was the Marxian affirmation that the only lasting remedy for imperialism was socialism. This was a proposition that most socialists held during the interwar years, and that was influential among those in the academia studying international affairs. Angell devoted a considerable part of his writings to criticise Marxists for this belief and received some socialist/Marxist responses in return. Rather than socialism (or liberal-capitalism) as a panacea for

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{849} Angell, \textit{Steep Places}, p. 64.
\footnote{850} ibid., p. 182; Angell, \textit{Great Illusion}, 1933, p. 33.
\footnote{851} Angell’s critique was launched during the 1930s and afterwards, which means that Lenin was already dead and Trotsky being persecuted. Stalin was more interested in politics than intellectual debates.
\footnote{852} Dutt, p. 125.
\footnote{853} Laski, \textit{Steep Places}, p. 11.
\footnote{854} Laski, \textit{Preface to Peace}, p. 216; Laski, \textit{After All}, p. x.
\end{footnotes}
imperialism, Angell favoured close cooperation between capitalism and socialism, as well as collective security and public education.

Even though Angell for a while favoured a type of socialism, his inclinations towards the left were mostly in relation to his support of national planning and a better redistribution of economic resources.\textsuperscript{855} Not even during the peak of his socialism was Angell a supporter of socialism as the only solution for imperialism. After an address he delivered in Washington during WWI, he was asked if he did ‘…not consider socialism as one of the greatest influences tending towards peace at the present day’, to what he responded:

Yes, undoubtedly I do. But I would like to add a caution to that replay… I certainly believe socialism is a great force against war, but there are other forces as well, as we need not wait for the full flowering of the socialistic state before we attack the problem of improving international relations.\textsuperscript{856}

Thus, even though Angell temporarily perceived socialism as a potential promoter of peace, not even in his most “socialist” years did he conceive it as the sole remedy for imperialism/war. In fact, during most of his career, he sought to discredit the Marxian idea of socialism as the panacea for conflictive imperialism. In his autobiography he confessed that his ‘worst split or dissipation of energy was due to the Socialists of Marxian complexion who insisted that the greater hope of peace lay… in the expansion of Socialism…’\textsuperscript{857} Hence, in 1935 in a critical tone Angell stressed elsewhere: ‘There can be no hope of peace, says quite a large school, without the abolition of private property, of Capitalism.’\textsuperscript{858} In an article written in 1945 Angell exposes how pervasive was the Marxist idea of socialism as the remedy for peace among academia. In an effort to promote his ideas, during the late 1930s Angell ‘visited most of the universities in Britain and the United States’ and several others in Western Europe. In his experiences he found that ‘there was often intense interest in international affairs. But for at least two decades thousands of emotional and earnest young students really were convinced that... the way to deal with war was to abolish capitalism…’\textsuperscript{859} Angell mentions that he visited these

\textsuperscript{855} See for instance: Angell, The British Revolution and the American Democracy, pp. 154, 179; Angell, Must it be War? pp. 198, 205-206.
\textsuperscript{857} Angell, After All, p. 266.
\textsuperscript{858} Angell, Preface to Peace, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{859} Angell, “Education and International Understanding”, p. 419. There were four other ideas Angell mentions as influential on the Universities he visited. All of them seem to have been influenced by Marxian understandings of imperialism. They were: 1) ‘wars were caused mainly by the armament makers’; 2) ‘if we could take the profit from the armament industry there would be no war’, 3) ‘the capitalist states were ganging up to attack Socialist Russia’, and 4) ‘the next war would arise from British imperialism’.
universities around 1939. This reveals that the Marxian proposition of socialism as the only way to achieve peace was notably influential in the academia interested on international affairs at least during the interwar period.

Angell was particularly more critical of socialists during the 1940s and 1950s, when he had appreciably abandoned his leftist tendencies. Two important IR theorists were especially frequent targets of Angell’s attacks for believing in the peaceful power of socialism. He often quoted the following phrase elaborated by Laski in order to criticise him and those who promoted socialism as a panacea: ‘free enterprise and the market economy mean war: Socialism and the planned economy mean peace. All attempts to find a compromise are a satanic illusion.’ Angell regularly chose Laski to condemn socialists partly because he was a widely respected socialist theoretician, but also because the last word in Laski’s phrase seems to be a direct attack on Angell. Another target of Angell’s criticisms on the subject was Brailsford. In *The Steep Places* (1948), for example, Angell discredits Brailsford for arguing in *Property or Peace* (1934) that ‘…Socialism offers in the modern world the one sure road to escape from war.’ Two responses Brailsford and Laski gave to Angell can be found in the exchange of letters that took place in the *New Statesman* in 1935. In those wirings Brailsford and Laski implicitly stressed that they believed in socialism as the route for peace because in a capitalist society the state was manipulated by the dominant class to follow its economic interests.

There were at least two primary reasons that Angell often provided to show that socialism does not necessarily equate to peace. The first reason, which was offered during the 1910s, was in relation to the potential socialist states had on embarking on warfare activities. Pre-1920 Angell argued that, no matter the economic system, it would always be possible for a handful of ‘unscrupulous’ individuals to persuade state actions in their own interest, or at least in what they believed was to be beneficial for them. Moreover, given that under socialism a state would exert greater control of certain economic activities, the risk of aiming to achieve its economic interest abroad through imperial adventures would be greater. The other common reason Angell provided to negate the nexus between socialism and peace was Russia. From the late 1930s onwards, as Angell increasingly


862 Brailsford, “Capitalism and War”, March 2, p. 278; Laski, p. 278.


detached from the left, he became more critical of Russia’s behaviour. Internationally, he explained how Russia’s appeasement actions towards Hitler demonstrated that socialist states could promote imperialism. For Angell, ‘it was this supreme appeasement of Hitler by Russia which made the German aggression possible.’ In addition, Angell at times exposed Russia’s imperial annexations internationally as evidence of how a socialist state may directly implement warfare activities. Domestically, Angell criticised Russia’s ruthless actions among different socialist factions within the state. He thus reasoned that if Stalin massacred other socialists, nothing would prevent him quarrelling against a potential socialist Britain. In *The Steep Places* (1948), he criticised Laski for supporting the Soviet Union. Angell pointed out that ‘the Communist… usually hates the Social Democrat much more than he hates the capitalist…’ because if the gradual socialist succeeds it would prove that the revolutionary path is unnecessary.

While Angell maintained that a state’s conversion into socialism would not improve the prospects of peace, he did not explicitly oppose the gradual socialisation of Britain (as already seen). He did, however, plainly reject a sharp transition into socialism. In 1934, Angell criticised Brailsford’s *Property or Peace* for favouring radical socialist measures in Britain. According to Angell, Brailsford claimed that the gradual approach of the LP should ‘be abandoned in favour of the immediate use of its power -to be achieved by persuasion not by force- for the suppression of all private property in land, capital and means of production…’. The destruction of property and capitalist institutions, Angell affirmed, would only bring disorganised forces against Socialism: ‘It is not Socialism that would emerge out of the anarchy, anymore than Socialism has emerged anywhere in Western Europe out of the post-War chaos.’ Elsewhere, Angell reaffirmed this argument warning British socialists of supporting radical measures. In particular, Angell opposed a revolutionary path for Britain because it would only produce the chaotic conditions out of which Fascism emerged in other states. In addition, he rejected conceiving Fascism as

866 Angell, *For What do We Fight?* pp. 41, 184, 201.
870 Angell, “Is Capitalism the Cause of War?”, p. 626.
871 For a thorough example of Angell’s rejection of revolution in Britain see *Must Britain Travel the Moscow road?* (1926), which was written to criticise Trotsky’s *Where is Britain Going?* (1925). See: N Angell, *Must Britain Travel the Moscow road?*, Noel Douglas, London, 1926; L Trotsky, “Preface to the American Edition”, in *Where is Britain going?* 1925, Marxists Internet Archive, Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/britain/wibg/intro.htm [Accessed 05/05/2015]. For a Communist reply to Angell see Jack Murphy’s review of *Must Britain Travel the Moscow Road?*: J T Murphy, “An Angel’s Dilema”, 1926, Marxists Internet Archives, Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/murphy-it/1926/11/30.htm [Accessed 05/05/2015].
the last stage of capitalism. Rather than a progressive stage towards socialism, Angell warned socialists that Fascism was a step back for the achievement of socialism. It represented the demolition of the accomplishments done by the French Revolution.\(^{872}\)

If Angell did not support socialism/communism as a mean to achieve peace, he did not back capitalism for this purpose either.\(^{873}\) Instead, he constantly favoured close cooperation between these two economic systems. Perhaps the main reason why he persistently repudiated the Marxian proposition that capitalism meant war was because this idea prevented any collaboration between the Soviet Union and capitalist states.\(^{874}\) He often criticised Laski for affirming that ‘there is no middle way’ between (war prone) capitalism and (peaceful) socialism.\(^{875}\) Alternatively, Angell maintained that the differences between the two systems were exaggerated. He often pointed out that the tendency of every state in the globe was to become more socialist. The maintenance of railroads, the control of prices and of financial institutions domestically, were activities in which the state was justifiably intervening more and more.\(^{876}\) On the other hand, the New Economic Policy introduced by Lenin was an example of the necessity of introducing capitalist measures in a Communist state.\(^{877}\) Angell therefore sustained that there were no absolute socialist or capitalist states.\(^{878}\) While he occasionally supported collaboration between these two sides during the 1910s,\(^{879}\) it was after the arrival of WWII when he began to favour this more frequently. Throughout the Second World War he often highlighted that a coalition between capitalism and socialism was to their own benefit to defeat Fascism.\(^{880}\) And after WWII, he regularly pointed out how cooperation between communist Russia and the capitalist West had occurred as a result of their interest in survival. This, he often stressed, proved false the common Marxist/socialist posture that capitalist states were plotting to destroy Communist Russia.\(^{881}\) This Marxian understanding was among the ideas Angell described as being most widespread in the academia interested in international affairs during the late 1930s.\(^{882}\)

\(^{873}\) Angell, \textit{The British Revolution and the American Democracy}, p. 179; Angell, \textit{After All}, pp. 236-237.
\(^{875}\) Angell, "Leftism in the Atomic Age", p. 565.
\(^{877}\) Angell, \textit{Steep Places}, p. 196.
\(^{879}\) Angell, \textit{War and the Workers}, pp. 61-62.
\(^{882}\) Angell, “Education and International Understanding”, p. 419.
Angell had some responses on his arguments favouring cooperation between socialism and capitalism. Dutt, for instance, discarded Angell’s proposition contending that the latter was hopelessly endeavouring ‘to apply the conceptions of free trade capitalism to the conditions of imperialism…’ In his autobiography, Angell mentions that during the late 1930s he exchanged some letters with his friend Konni Zilliacus on the possibility of making a book ‘…to bridge over the intellectual gap between Socialists and Liberals, or… Marxists and non-Marxists on the issue of peace.’ Unfortunately, they did not manage to write the book partly as a result of the arrival of the Second World War and because Angell was hardly able to cope with Zilliacus’ Marxism. Besides Angell’s engagement with Marxism, what should be noted is that by favouring collaboration between socialism and capitalism; he positioned himself in a middle stand between socialism and liberalism. His emphasis on cooperation, however, is in close harmony with liberal-idealism according to traditional narratives in IR.

The other two principal solutions Angell identified for solving the issue of imperialism/war are also in tune with the liberal idealist approach in IR. If Angell had identified wrong ideas and anarchy as the main causes of war/imperialism, he prescribed that the main ways to combat these were through education and collective security. Before WWI, he sought to publicly demythify wrong ideas which contributed to imperialism as the means to promote peace. He thought that this, together with the growing economic interconnectedness internationally, would be the way to achieve peace. As already highlighted, with the arrival of the Great War, Angell added collective security to his equation for peace, particularly by promoting the League of Nations, the Commonwealth, the British Empire, and the United Nations. Therefore, throughout Angell’s career, his solutions to imperialism and war can be situated within the idealist or liberal-internationalist perspective in IR.

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883 Dutt, p. 92.
884 Zilliacus letter to Angell, 1937. Quoted in Angell, After All, p. 270.
885 Angell, After All, p. 270.
886 As already seen, among other things, Angell sought to show that the widespread belief that imperialism produced economic profits was an illusion. Angell, Europe’s Optical Illusion, p. 125.
888 See for instance: Angell, The Great Illusion, 1933, pp. 252-255, 266. See also, Angell, Preface to Peace, pp. 117-121, 204, 217; where Angell criticises Marxism for neglecting ‘psychology and politics’.
6.5 Conclusions

The remarkable figure of Norman Angell in IR both confirms and challenges the mainstream historiography of the discipline. His life and work fit considerably well in the traditional IR narratives. First, Angell’s affiliations reflect his closeness to an idealist and internationalist perspective in IR. Through the Garton Foundation, for example, he sought to spread right ideas internationally for the eradication of war. In addition, he was a firm supporter of collective security organisations, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. Second, two of the main themes in Angell’s work were rationality and on internationalism, which are closely related to the so-called liberal idealist/internationalist tradition(s). As a result, most of his insights can be ascribed within the major themes of the so-called idealist and/or liberal internationalist tradition(s). Angell favoured collective security, cooperation and education as the main tools to eradicate war. Third, his responses to Carr’s criticisms reflect an idealist position in that he stressed the power of reason and favoured cooperation. This confirms the existence of at least a limited debate in the discipline between idealist and realist perspectives. Finally, Angell sometimes described himself as being an internationalist, or even a pacifist; although his meaning of pacifism is closer to what is currently understand as internationalism.

Yet, Angell’s life and work also pose a challenge to conventional narratives in the discipline. First, although most of his writings can be subscribed within the idealist/internationalist tradition(s), a considerable part of his output was on the theme of imperialism and predates the orthodox beginning of the discipline. Indeed, imperialistic-capitalism was a topic regularly covered by Angell since his first book (1903) until the 1950s. Angell’s insights on this topic have received little attention in IR partly because the conventional history of the discipline has generalised his output as merely idealist/internationalist. This chapter however has contributed to retrieve some of Angell’s writings on imperialism.

Second, while overall Angell’s thought is appropriately described as idealist and internationalist, this depiction obscures some socialist elements that were at least temporarily part of his thinking. Although Angell was significantly influenced by liberal theorists, he was often critical of laissez-faire liberalism. Moreover, during the Great War and the interwar years, he often called himself a socialist and was at times called like that
by other contemporaries. His leftist inclinations, however, were mostly limited to the socialism advanced by the LP, in which less economic disparities and greater national control were promoted.

Third, although Angell strongly rejected Marxian understandings of imperialism, his extensive engagement with this tradition reflect its importance within the early stages of IR. Because Angell perceived the pervasiveness of Marxism as a theory to understand international affairs, he strove laboriously to dismiss it. Among other issues, he widely debated with Marxists/socialists economic determinism, the question of whether or not capitalistic-imperialism meant war, and the relation between socialism and peace. He in particular described the last two issues as ‘the worst split or dissipation of energy…’ he had. The discussions roughly took place during the first four decades of the twentieth century. They included remarkable IR figures such as Brailsford, Woolf and Laski; and also renowned Marxists like Trotsky, Kautsky and Dutt. This chapter has contributed to retrieve some of these conversations which have been neglected and obscured by conventional narratives in the discipline. While the existence of the first “great” debate in IR has been confirmed in this chapter, it has also been demonstrated that the orthodox disciplinary history ignores other debates which were perhaps more substantial in time and scope and in which Marxists and socialists of several kinds played a paramount role. The oversimplification of the interwar years as merely idealist thus obscures a Marxian/socialist based tradition of thought which was pervasive in the minds of many students of international affairs of the time.

While this chapter has confirmed the existence of an idealist and internationalist thought in the early stages of the discipline, it has also demonstrated the importance of Marxism in the IR thinking of the period. Angell’s case highlights the significance of both, a liberal internationalist school of thought and a Marxist/socialist based tradition in the formative years of IR. The traditional realist/idealist dichotomy of the early history of the discipline is thus over-simplistic and misleading.

890 Angell, *After All*, p. 266
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Given the importance of Marxist thought in the early twentieth century and its absence in historical disciplinary accounts of early IR, the primary aim of this thesis was to answer the question: can it really be the case that Marxism did not have an impact on early IR? The thesis has argued that while unrecognised, Marxism played a fundamental part in the thinking of IR benchmark intellectuals during the so-called idealist stage of the discipline. Consequently, conventional accounts are not only over-simplistic in depicting the formative years of the discipline as merely liberal idealist; but they are also misleading in portraying early IR as a dichotomy between idealism and realism, since another predominant socialist based approach has been obscured. This concluding chapter briefly starts reiterating the main findings of the thesis followed by their implications. The chapter then provides some plausible explanations as to why the role of Marxism in early IR has been ignored. Finally, it reflects on the limitations of the thesis, offers recommendations for future research, and closes by briefly answering the central research question of this work.

7.2 Main Findings

While largely absent from the historiography of IR, Marxism was an underlying theoretical force in the formative years of the discipline. Most importantly because it significantly informed the predominant political thought of paramount intellectuals in early IR, and because the IR output of the period was appreciably indebted to Marxian accounts, albeit frequently differentiated from Leninist understandings. Moreover, the thesis has also shown that Marxism inspired frequently overlooked vibrant debates in which leading IR theorists participated.

Marxism and socialism were key aspects of the political thought of the prominent IR thinkers considered in this thesis. As a result, labelling early IR intellectuals as liberal idealists is at the least over-simplistic. While Hobson was not a Marxist and in fact he explicitly disentangled from this tradition, his depiction as a liberal idealist is equally misleading. He and other contemporaries frequently portrayed his dominant political
thought as ‘socialism in liberalism’ or new liberalism. As a result, he often took a middle position between socialism and liberalism.

It is even more misleading to catalogue Brailsford, Woolf and Laski as liberal idealists/internationalists. Even though in different degrees and times they all supported the League of Nations, as most liberals/idealists did at the time, they also thought of themselves as socialists and Marxists. Although Brailsford certainly supported the creation of the League, soon after its founding he dismissed it for being liberal idealist. Further, even though Brailsford was influenced by Hobson, he rejected the latter’s ‘socialism in liberalism’, arguing that it lacked definite solutions. Instead, Brailsford and his contemporaries consistently depicted his thought as socialist.

Woolf was more persistent than Brailsford in his support of the League of Nations. Yet, for him being an advocate of the League was not in contradiction to being a socialist or even a Marxist. In fact, rather than a liberal idealist/internationalist, Woolf constantly depicted himself as a ‘Marxist socialist’ of a sort. It might be even more misleading to portray Laski as a liberal idealist/internationalist since he was never a devotee of the League of Nations. While he was at times sympathetic to the organisation, he was always cautious of its potential. Moreover, Laski’s predominant thought since the mid 1920s was socialist Fabian gradually becoming more Marxist, especially during the 1930s and 1940s. Further, even before his so-called Fabian stage (1925-1930), Laski considered himself a socialist to some degree.

Angell was initially conceived being an extreme deviant case in the thesis. Yet, despite that Angell’s thought is notably different from the other theorists analysed, even he embraced some socialist elements, especially during the field’s so-called idealist period. While there are clear liberal idealist and internationalist aspects in Angell’s thinking, he was firmly against liberal tenets such as laissez-faire at least during the interwar years. Moreover, during this period Angell himself claimed to be a socialist, and other contemporary

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892 As already seen in previous chapters, however, the support of the League of Nations often crossed ideological boundaries.
intellectuals perceived him as such. Yet, his embrace of socialism was mostly limited by the values preached by the Labour Party and Guild Socialism. At any rate, even though Angell is the one thinker we can least easily label as socialist, his extensive engagement with Marxist thinking itself demonstrates the importance he (and by implication, the field) gave Marxism to understand international affairs during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Using the theme of imperialism as a focal point, this thesis has shown that, excluding Angell, the preeminent IR thinkers analysed in the thesis embraced core Marxian tenets as key elements of their international theories. First, they endorsed a Marxian economic determinist perspective in their analyses of international affairs. Brailsford, Woolf and Laski openly recognised in different periods to have embraced this point of view particularly from Marx and Engels. While most of his career Hobson emphasised that Marx and Engels’ economic determinism restricted understandings of international affairs, he recognised being guilty of following this approach at the end of his life.

Second, they incorporated into their theories Marxist understandings of the effects of concentration of capital. These IR thinkers aligned with orthodox Marxism in recognising that a competitive capitalist phase was being replaced by more protectionist/monopolist stage. Moreover, influenced by Marxist/socialist sources, Brailsford, Laski and Hobson embraced the accumulation theory. According to this view, surplus capital generated in developed states pushed capitalists to look for new investments abroad, which in turn produced imperial adventures. Third, influenced by Marxian/socialist understandings, they perceived class as a fundamental root of conflict. In particular, they blamed capitalists as being key promoters of imperial adventures. In this way, they established a direct...

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902 Apparently Woolf did not express his views on the accumulation/surplus theory.
relation between capitalism and war. Fourth, they adopted a Marxian instrumentalist view of the state by conceiving this institution as an instrument of the privileged classes. Finally, they followed socialist/Marxian accounts in their firm criticism of capitalism and their proposal to implement socialist measures. While their proposed means varied, including Angell, all of the benchmark thinkers considered in this thesis sought to denounce inequality and the exploitative nature of capitalism and replace or reform it with different degrees of socialism.

Yet, despite the fact that these thinkers clearly incorporated socialist/Marxian elements as fundamentals in their theories, their analyses differed at least in three major ways from Leninist interpretations: in their theoretical flexibility, their rejection of violent methods, and their uncompromising support of democracy and liberty in a socialist society. First, the IR output was much more flexible in their Marxist/socialist interpretations of Marxist tenets. This was clearly evidenced particularly by IR understandings of economic determinism. Brailsford, Laski and Woolf differentiated the original economic based approach preached by Marx and Engels, from the economic reductionist approach favoured by Leninist/Communist proponents. While they embraced the former, they rejected the latter. Hobson did not make this distinction; but as illustrated in the second chapter, he aligned with Brailsford, Laski and Woolf’s understandings. Another way in which the IR output was more flexible than Leninism, and even orthodox Marxism, was in their refusal to accept the teleological inevitability of socialism/communism after capitalism. Their rejection however was individually distinctive. While Woolf thought that capitalism could prolong its life if there was lack of human will to replace it, Hobson believed in the possibility of reforming capitalism. Laski considered that socialism was not inevitable, because Fascism was another undesirable alternative. In addition, Brailsford and Angell


908 Woolf, Barbarians at the Gate.; Hobson, Imperialism, p. 61.

visualised the possibility of a future international capitalist system without wars between the great powers. But whereas Brailsford believed this would be due to an armed race, Angell conceived that a new peaceful capitalist phase would be the product of interdependence and psychological factors.\textsuperscript{910}

Second, the early IR output differed from radical Marxist/Leninist proposals in their rejection of violent means to accomplish socialism. As already shown, these five thinkers considered in the thesis at one time or another sought the establishment of a socialist society in different degrees. Yet, they rejected Leninist/Communist violent practices for the sake of establishing/maintaining socialism. Although in various degrees, they all condemned the Soviet Union’s ruthless domestic and international methods. Moreover, albeit in some cases ambiguously, these thinkers explored discarded revolution as the proper way to establish socialism.\textsuperscript{911} Third and related, they frequently rejected Leninist/Communist interpretations of socialism as undemocratic and with restricted individual freedoms. Instead, they conceived that democracy and liberty were essential characteristics of an adequate socialist society.\textsuperscript{912}

Another important finding of the thesis was that there were several intellectual debates related to the theme of imperialism in which the IR thinkers in consideration participated. These debates are important not only because they are part of the discussions in which early IR intellectuals were involved, but also because they reveal the significance of Marxism at that time, since the ideas and concepts debated were largely Marxist. Although previous revisionist studies have already highlighted the importance of some of these discussions, these efforts have been centred on the exchange of letters that took place in the \textit{New Statesman} in 1935. This thesis has however shown that these debates were much wider in time and scope, and that they even included distinguished orthodox Marxist figures such as Kautsky and Trotsky. Thus, by retrieving these intellectual discussions, particularly on economic determinism, and the relations between capitalism and war, and

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of socialism with peace, this thesis has reconstructed in detail early dialogues in IR which have been disregarded.

7.3 Implications

Early IR significantly engaged with and was influenced by Marxism. The characterisation of the field as idealist at this time is erroneous because it obscures fundamental roles played by Marxism in the formative years of the discipline. Marxism provided theoretical frameworks for theorising about the international and it infused lively and rich intellectual debates. Moreover, it inspired an IR socialist-based approach which has been neglected.

At least one current revisionist scholar has similarly emphasised the significance of socialism for early IR. Lucian Ashworth has claimed that during the early stages of the discipline there was a ‘“school” of interwar IR’ which ‘can be best described as liberal-socialists…’ Ashworth’s label is overall in accordance with the findings of this thesis given that it properly accentuates the socialist elements of these thinkers which have been ignored and at the same time it stresses the importance they gave to some liberal values. This depiction however might put too much emphasis on the liberal part of this tradition, since as shown in this thesis, several of the IR thinkers considered conceived themselves as being socialists, not Liberals. At any rate, our findings are complementary. According to Ashworth there are ‘four key values’ that identify this school in IR: First, that national sovereignty is the source of several international problems. Second, that international institutions/agreements were needed to address these issues. Third, that nationalism and capitalist interests were major impediments to world peace. And fourth, that accurate knowledge about the international system was key for the successful performance of international institutions/agreements.

This thesis on the other hand has revealed other major ways in which this socialist-based approach left a legacy in IR. Ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically, this school of thought contributed to the discipline by flexibly applying a Marxist historical materialist approach to highlight the importance of economics/capitalism to explain

914 While Hobson and Angell might have agreed that this label corresponded to their thinking, Woolf, Brailsford and Laski would have certainly rejected it.
international phenomena. This is important because the emphasis on IR has been predominantly on politics issues, as a result of the dominance of realist approaches.\textsuperscript{916} Normatively, this socialist-based tradition contributed by denouncing the exploitative nature of capitalist activities and by stressing the importance of achieving a more equal and socialist world. In addition, the work of this line of thought tried to demonstrate the compatibility of freedom and democracy with socialism.\textsuperscript{917}

Consequently, if the field is to have an accurate historical account of its origins, then the realist/idealist dichotomisation of the early history of the field should be abandoned. If others have shown that there were some exchanges between so-called idealist intellectuals and realists to a limited extent, this thesis has recovered/reconstructed a distinctive socialist-based tradition which experienced longer and probably richer intellectual debates that sometimes crossed the disciplinary boundaries of IR.

7.4 Why have the Marxian-inspired Early IR Accounts been neglected in the Historiography of IR?

Partly based on the findings of previous chapters, three plausible explanations are provided to answer this question. Traditional disciplinary narratives, the Cold War, and Norman Angell, have been instrumental in obscuring the socialist-inspired views of early IR.

The most obvious answer to the question posed, one implicitly provided in every chapter of the thesis, is that the role of Marxism/socialism in early IR has been obscured as a result the over-simplistic caricaturisation of the formative stages of the discipline as a debate between idealism and realism. This thesis has shown that this narrative not only obscures another debate of the period wider in scope and time, but also a socialist tradition beyond liberal idealism and realism. Consequently, this narrative has not only denigrated liberal

\textsuperscript{916}Traditionally, it is thought that IR intellectuals began to put attention on economic matters until the 1970s. As a result, we are told that it was until this time when International Political Economy, a sub-field of the discipline, was born. See: J Germann, “International Political Economy and the Crisis of the 1970s: The Real “Transatlantic Divide””, Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies, issue 4, 2011, pp. 10, 13-14.Yet, as this thesis has shown, the importance of economics was highlighted by IR intellectuals since the early twentieth century. Hence, IPE could potentially benefit by taking into consideration the output of early IR. This has also been previously stressed by Ashworth particularly by depicting Brailsford’s international thought as an IPE approach. See: L M Ashworth, “Missing Voices: Critical IPE, Disciplinary History and H N Brailsford’s Analysis of the Capitalist International Anarchy”, in S Shields, I Bruff and H Macartney (eds.), Critical International Political Economy, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, pp. 9-25.

\textsuperscript{917}The case of Angell is rather \textit{suis generis} and does not fit entirely within this line of thought as he did not embrace historical materialism. He did however aim to demonstrate the compatibility between socialist and liberal values/perspectives.
internationalism as Ashworth has rightly maintained,\textsuperscript{918} but it has also completely wiped out an influential socialist-based approach in early IR. As a result of this, the inquiry of international affairs in the discipline has privileged actors and issues strongly emphasised by realism. Thus, influenced by realist approaches, politics and the state have been at the centre of the study of international affairs, whereas the loose tradition analysed in this thesis placed economics at the core of their analyses and frequently disregarded the state as merely an instrument of privileged classes.

There is another historical disciplinary, but also contextual, explanation to the dismissal of the role of Marxism in early IR. It has been relatively widely acknowledged that IR has been predominantly an American field of inquiry.\textsuperscript{919} This of course means that American based approaches, such as realism and constructivism, have been privileged in the discipline. In contrast, other non-American theoretical perspectives in IR, such as the English School, have been considerably marginalised.\textsuperscript{920} In the case of Marxian inspired approaches this is exacerbated as a result of the paramount role that Marxism played as an ideology for the Soviet Union. Thus, given perceptions of the USSR as the greatest enemy of the United States during the Cold War, Marxian approaches faced arguably a considerable resistance in (American-dominated) IR. Additionally, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, according to Stephen Hobden and Richard Jones, ‘it became commonplace to assume that ideas of Marx, and his numerous disciplines, could be safely consigned to the dustbin of history.’\textsuperscript{921}

Norman Angell might have played a role in denigrating Marxist understandings of imperialism. As previously seen, in his autobiography Angell considered that his ‘worst split or dissipation of energy was due to the socialists of Marxian complexion who insisted that the greatest hope of peace lay… in the expansion of Socialism… that “capitalism is the cause of war.”’\textsuperscript{922} While as previously seen Hobson clearly related capitalism with imperial adventures in his major works, apparently he began to be doubtful of this view as a result of Angell’s efforts. According to Ashworth, during the mid 1930s Hobson did not

\textsuperscript{918} L M Ashworth, “Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations”, \textit{International Relations}, Vol. 16, no. 1, 2002, p. 34.


embrace this view anymore and instead he explicitly sided with Angell rejecting this Marxian based understanding.\textsuperscript{923} His doubts about the conflictive nature of capitalism are confirmed by his curious absence in the exchange of letters that took place within the *New Statesman* in 1935, given his close relation with the other participants and his frequent contributions in the magazine.

Angell’s rejection of establishing a direct correlation between war and capitalism was confirmed by subsequent international events. Marxian/socialist inspired approaches apparently proved to be right during the Second World War when capitalist states fought against each other. However, since the arrival of the Cold War, Angell’s standpoint proved to be more accurate, as there has not been a direct military confrontation between two major capitalist powers.\textsuperscript{924} Moreover, the connection between socialism and peace commonly made by Marxists/socialists, proved also to be an exaggeration, as Angell had argued. This was particularly testified by the military invasions of the (“socialist”) Soviet Union during the Cold War, such as in Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1979).

### 7.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis was limited to five benchmark thinkers in IR. Similar studies of other prominent IR figures could offer similar recoveries of forgotten Marxist/socialist influence. David Mitrany in particular seems to be a promising case of study. He is well known for his functionalism in IR, but his socialist Fabian influences\textsuperscript{925} and how they are reflected in his work have received little attention in the discipline. Although at first glance Alfred Zimmern does not seem to be an adequate case to show the influence/importance of socialism/Marxism for early IR, Ashworth has qualified his thinking as ‘liberal-socialist’.\textsuperscript{926} Consequently, the unappreciated socialist elements of this thought could be subject of future research.

\textsuperscript{924} Here is important to remember, as stressed in the third chapter, that while Brailsford indeed believed capitalism was war prone, he visualised a peaceful capitalist era in which armaments would prevent a direct military confrontation between the great powers. Therefore, in common with Angell, his theoretical standpoint proved to be valid in the long run.
\textsuperscript{926} Ashworth, *A History of International Thought*, p. 160.
There are other intellectuals around this period who clearly exhibited a socialist/Marxist outlook, and whom this thesis has shown had a relationship with the thinkers here analysed. These are the cases of G D H Cole, John Strachey, Rajani Palme Dutt, Konni Zilliacus and H G Wilshire whose writings on the international have been very little explored in the discipline. The caveat in these cases is that they have been rarely recognised as prominent IR experts. 927

This thesis has been centred on IR thinkers who have been labelled as liberal idealists; but is it possible that Marxism was also influential beyond the first four decades of the twentieth century? Can it be the case that during the so-called realist period of the discipline Marxism also played a role which has been obscured? Was the socialist based IR output of the first half of the 20th century re-taken/developed later in the discipline? These are important questions beyond the limits of the thesis which could potentially redefine the historiography of the discipline. The Marxian importance beyond the conventionally understood “idealist” period is at least reflected on E H Carr’s thinking, who referred his Twenty Years Crisis (1939) as a ‘not exactly a Marxist work, but strongly impregnated with Marxist ways of thinking, applied to international affairs.’ 928 Consequently, the role of Marxism in Carr’s writings on the international is clearly an issue demanding research in the discipline.

As this thesis approached completion, it became evident that IPE could potentially benefit by considering the writings of the thinkers investigated. As already mentioned, it has been commonly argued in IPE that the intellectual origins of this sub-field can be found in the 1970s, as prior to that time IR had little interest in economic issues. 929 Yet, this thesis has shown that economics was at the heart of early IR contributions. Inherited from Marxism, the theorists in consideration employed a political economy approach and they applied it to understanding international affairs. Here again Ashworth has placed the first block by illustrating Brailsford’s international theory as ‘an early variant’ of IPE. 930 Similar studies can be conducted to corroborate Ashworth’s claim with the other four thinkers analysed in this thesis. In this way, the disciplinary historical roots of IPE would be reassessed.

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927 The first three cases however have been described by Peter Wilson as ‘more or less prominent figures who made a significant contribution… on international relations.’ P Wilson, “Introduction: The Twenty Years’ Critics and the Category of “Idealism” in International Relations”, in D Long and P Wilson (eds.), Thinkers of the Twenty Years’ Crisis: Inter-war Idealism reassessed, Calderon Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 19.
930 Ashworth, A History of International Thought, p. 121.
7.6 Closing Remarks

To close, it is appropriate to revisit the main research question and contributions of the thesis. Given the theoretical importance of Marxism in the early twentieth century, can it really be the case that this tradition did not make an impact on early IR? The concise answer to this question is that albeit obscured, Marxism did make a significant impact on early IR as an underlying theoretical force. This is because early accounts of the discipline were significantly indebted to Marxism, because the dominant thought of benchmark IR thinkers of the period was predominantly Marxist/socialist, and because Marxism inspired lively debates in which early IR specialists participated. As a result of this, this thesis has unveiled a Marxist/socialist based approach, which was/is an alternative to realism, liberal idealism and even Leninist understandings. The implication of this is that the idealist/realist dichotomy portrayal of the formative years of the discipline should be abandoned. By uncovering the obscured underlying role of Marxism in early IR, this thesis aspires to join previous historical revisionist efforts and contribute in that effort to enrich our understandings of the origins of our discipline.
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