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SAKIKO KAIGA. *Britain and the Intellectual Origins of the League of Nations, 1914–1919*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 224. \$99.99 (cloth).

The significance of the Bryce Group and the League of Nations Society in promoting the League of Nations idea during the First World War has frequently been noted but has previously escaped detailed historical attention. Kaiga's volume on the British intellectual origins of the League of Nations addresses this important historiographical deficit. After a brief overview of the longer-term intellectual roots of the League idea, Kaiga considers the Bryce Group and the League of Nations Society in turn, followed by evaluation of the transatlantic dimensions of their work and the transformation of their ideas towards the conclusion of the First World War. The discussion of the Bryce Group's proposals in the second chapter is especially valuable for its nuanced and original consideration of their development of ideas subsequently labelled "collective security". A further highlight is Kaiga's rich elucidation in the subsequent chapters of the compromises League advocates had to make to popularise the League idea when confronted by public opinion that was far from the pacific force that was hoped to underpin the League's success. For students of transnational history, the analysis in the fourth chapter of the relations between the League of Nations movements in Great Britain and the United States provides an immensely insightful case study of the tensions inhibiting transnational cooperation even between groups with apparently complementary objectives. The narrative is based on detailed and careful archival research throughout.

The account of League origins presented in this volume is a story of elite British men and their networks. Despite Kaiga's claim that these were "the original pro-Leaguers" (159), reliance on this book alone provides a far from complete picture of the immediate-term intellectual origins of the League of Nations. The contribution of women to the origins of the

League of Nations is a notable omission from the volume. The April 1915 International Congress of Women that took place in the Hague put forward extensive proposals for the “organization of the Society of Nations” including enforcement mechanisms, and a British woman, Chrystal Macmillan, was among those who were appointed to serve as envoys to present these proposals to heads of state including US President Woodrow Wilson. Kaiga’s decision to limit the book’s focus to organizations such as the Bryce Group and the League of Nations Society and to overlook the contributions of individual activists such as Chrystal Macmillan obscures important parts of the wider British intellectual roots of the League of Nations such as the role of women and broader social movements.

Kaiga is also highly dismissive of contributions to the intellectual origins of the League of Nations from outside Great Britain. French contributions, for instance, are cast aside as “government-led and only intensified after 1917” (13). Although the ideas of French statesmen such as Léon Bourgeois are acknowledged, wider continental European contributions to the immediate-term intellectual origins of the League of Nations are largely absent from consideration. For instance acknowledgement of the work of Belgian internationalists Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine, both of whom put forward detailed proposals for post-war international organization, is missing from the volume (apart from noting La Fontaine’s membership of the League of Nations Society) despite their significant influence on British League advocates such as Leonard Woolf. While Kaiga may be justified in arguing that British internationalists largely eschewed institutionalist approaches prior to the First World War (36), the same cannot be said of many continental European thinkers whose approaches were to be taken up in Britain following the onset of the conflict.

Kaiga’s volume is to be commended for its nuanced consideration of problems of the approaches to international organization put forward among British internationalists during the First World War, including their Eurocentrism and questionable conceptualization of

progress. Kaiga is nevertheless keen to assert in chapter four that the proposals of the British League of Nations Society were more “realistic” than those of the US League to Enforce Peace given the latter’s emphasis on international armed force, but this argument appears to contradict Kaiga’s assessment in chapter two of the “realistic” nature of collective security proposals in comparison to those that rely on public opinion. The discussion of how “realistic” Kaiga considers the various proposals to be is further undermined by the unsustainable parallels Kaiga draws between the conception of “realistic” in this book and realist international relations theory (162), an approach that is wholly incompatible (in all its many variants) with proposals for collective security. These arguments are a distraction from the exceptionally rich archivally-informed narrative which makes this volume essential reading for those interested in discovering more about a key component of the British intellectual roots of the League of Nations.

Thomas Davies

*City, University of London*

thomas.davies.1@city.ac.uk