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Delivering on Ideas: British Plans for Post-war Regional and International Order, January – August 1944¹

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This article examines British planning for a post-war international order which took place throughout the spring and summer of 1944. The history of this planning process has been largely overlooked in the historiography examining both the creation of the United Nations organisation as well as British diplomacy in the period. When historians have addressed the creation of the organisation, focus has been on the efforts of the Roosevelt administration, usually at the expense of the other great and small powers who contributed in important ways. The work here describes how British officials ordered their thinking on the post-war world and assembled detailed plans for what would become the United Nations organisation. Importantly, the planning in these months involved a concurrent effort to develop an alternative ordering mechanism for the European continent – known as the ‘Western Security Group’ – which, in theory, might balance against a revanchist Germany and hostile Russia. There was thus, by the summer of 1944, a new grand strategy for the post-war period, one which rested on the seemingly paradoxical positions of a world organisation and a balance of power on the European continent. Understanding how British officials arrived at this policy – and specifically how they aligned these disparate strategic strands of regional and international planning – shines light on an important element in the intellectual thought and diplomatic practice of British statesmen in this most consequential of periods.

This article examines certain aspects of British planning for post-war regional and international order which took place in the spring and summer of 1944. Beginning in January of that year, the Foreign Office set out to develop more detailed plans for a post-war international organisation, ones which would be presented to the American and Soviet delegations at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. By the time that the British delegation arrived at the meeting at the end of August 1944, they carried with them a detailed outline of the structure and functions of a future institution – plans which allowed the British delegation, led by the civilian head of the Foreign Office, Alexander Cadogan, to play a leading role at the conference.² This article goes some way in describing how British officials arrived at that point, specifically how they ordered their thinking on the post-war world and delivered plans for what would become the United Nations organisation.

Importantly, the article also addresses a concurrent effort by these same officials to develop an alternative ordering mechanism for the European continent. Despite their attempts to create what was the most extensive international security organisation to date, senior Foreign Office officials were debating the merits of what was being termed a ‘Western Security Group’ – a regional alliance which, in theory, might balance against a revanchist Germany and a potentially aggressive Russia.³

¹ Portions of this work have been submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy.

² For a seminal account of this conference, see Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

³ Though a number of historians have examined the Western Security Group as it developed between 1943 and 1944, much of their focus has been on how these early ideas laid the foundation for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949. See John Baylis, ‘British Wartime Thinking about a Post-War European Security Group’,

Though previous historians have examined this subject, the issue is revisited here in the context of planning for a world organisation. The purpose of this Western Security Group was, in addition to protecting against Germany and insuring against Russia, a way to tangibly increase British power vis-a-vis the United States and the Soviet Union. By the summer of 1944, such a structure had become a key pillar of wider plans for a world organisation. There was thus, at this stage, a new grand strategy for the post-war period, one which rested on the principles of a global internationalism and a balance of power. The three main components of this revised strategy were: a tripartite great power alliance, to underpin a wider international organisation; a United Nations Commission for Europe, to oversee the rebuilding of the continent; and a Western European defence system, to explicitly protect against Germany and to secretly balance against the threat of future Soviet expansion westward.

In tracing this subject of diplomatic history, the work shines light on the wartime origins of the United Nations, a process which historians have tended to view as dominated by the will and skill of American leaders.⁴ Though there is a growing body of scholarship examining the contribution of other governments and individuals, a great deal of this history has yet to be written.⁵ Several historians have focused on the British role in the creation of the post-war organisation, but their work has tended to describe the ideas and efforts of the principal statesmen such as Winston Churchill.⁶ Less attention has

Review of International Studies, 9, 4, (1983), 265–81; Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–49* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1993), 8–36; Cees Wiebes, Bert Zeeman and John Baylis, ‘Baylis on Post-War Planning [with Reply]’, *Review of International Studies*, 10, 3, (1984), 247–52; Julian Lewis, *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence, 1942–47*, 2nd edn (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 98–177; Martin Folly, *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union, 1940–45* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 118–30.

⁴ Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter: The Role of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1958); S.C. Tiwari, *Genesis of the United Nations* (India: Naivedya Niketan, 1968); Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003) and ‘FDR’s Five Policemen: Creating the United Nations’, *World Policy Journal*, 11, 3, (1994), 88–93; Robert Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1967); Michael Howard, ‘The United Nations: From War Fighting to Peace Planning’, in Ernest R. May and Angeliki E. Laiou, eds., *The Dumbarton Oaks Conversations and the United Nations, 1944–1994* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), 1–7; Thomas Campbell, *Masquerade Peace: America’s UN Policy, 1944–45* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1973); Christopher D. O’Sullivan, *Sumner Welles, Postwar Planning, and the Quest for a New World Order, 1937–1943* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR’s Global Strategist* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997). An exception to this tendency is Robert Hilderbrand’s exhaustive account of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, which examined the negotiations between the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and China in the autumn of 1944. While it remains the seminal contribution to the history of this particular conference, Hilderbrand’s volume does not examine in detail the planning activities of the Foreign Office between 1942 and 1944. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*.

⁵ See for example, Adam Chapnick, *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union and the United Nations: An Inquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1962); Geoffrey Roberts, ‘A League of Their Own: The Soviet Origins of the United Nations’, *Journal of Contemporary History, Special Section: Dumbarton Oaks in Historical Perspective*, 54, 2, (2019), 303–27. See also Charles Prince, ‘The Soviet Union and International Organizations’, *American Journal of International Law*, 36, 3, (1942); John N. Hazard, ‘The Soviet Union and the United Nations’, *The Yale Law Journal*, 55, (1946), 1016–35; David J. Dolf, ‘The Creation of the United Nations Organization as a Factor in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1943–46’ (Dissertation, University of Alberta Libraries, 2010). For an account which explores the role of France, see Andrew Williams, ‘France and the Origins of the United Nations, 1944–1945: “Si La France ne compte plus, qu’on nous le dise”’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 28, 2, (2017), 215–34; A.W. Deporte, *De Gaulle’s Foreign Policy, 1944–1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 102–25.

⁶ For scholarship which has examined the British side, see E.J. Hughes, ‘Winston Churchill and the Formation of the United Nations Organisation’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9, 4, (1974), 177–94; Adam Roberts, ‘Britain and the Creation of the United Nations’, in Roger Louis, ed., *Still More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 229–47; Geoffrey L. Goodwin, *Britain and the United Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); Victor Rothwell, *War Aims in the Second World War: The War Aims of the Major Belligerents, 1939–45* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 64–85; Elisabeth Barker, *Churchill and*

been given to senior officials and intellectuals associated with the process during the war, although there are some notable exceptions.⁷

The evidence presented here shows clearly that not only was the British government thinking very seriously about these issues but also that those in the Foreign Office, in particular, drove the process. In addition to these basic diplomatic and bureaucratic dimensions, the work also discusses an important intellectual characteristic of the British planning for post-war international order as it developed in the years 1944–5. Specifically, the individuals most responsible for ordering these regional and international systems harboured nuanced, and even clashing perspectives of international politics.⁸ Yet their collective opinion, and the plans they went on to deliver, reflected a unique approach to the post-war world. Understanding the interplay of these ideas, and how these officials worked to plan for and negotiate certain structures, provides a new, more comprehensive analysis of the British wartime planning for a post-war organisation. In this way, the work marks a contribution to both British diplomatic history and the history of the creation of the United Nations.

This article begins with a brief overview of British post-war planning between the outbreak of war in September 1939 and the end of the Tehran Conference in December 1943. It then moves into its main contribution to the historical scholarship: the work of the Economic and Reconstruction Department of the Foreign Office in the period between January and August 1944. The bulk of these efforts were directed towards the related issues of carrying out more detailed planning for a post-war international organisation and the need to ensure future stability on the European continent. These aspects will be addressed in turn, before describing how each became key pillars in a revised British grand strategy. An essential element in this history – and the focus of the latter third of the article – is the way that Foreign Office officials battled to see their post-war recommendations accepted. Only through steady persistence and their cultivation of outside support, most notably from the Dominion prime ministers, were these officials able to see their plans become the decided policy of the government. And it was these blueprints which the British delegation carried with them to the conversations at Dumbarton Oaks in late August 1944 – the moment which laid the foundation of the United Nations organisation.

Overview of the Early Years of British Post-war Planning, 1939–43

Despite a lack of concrete planning in the early years of the war, by January 1944 the British government had made great strides towards developing a grand strategy for the post-war period. The fixed

Eden at War (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978), 204–17; Charles Webster, 'The Making of the Charter of the United Nations', *History*, 32, 115, (1947), 16–38; William McNeill, *America, Britain and Russia: Their Cooperation and Conflict, 1941–1946* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

⁷ There have been several studies examining the work of the Foreign Office and the Economic and Reconstruction Department in the period between January and August 1944, but none have offered as much detailed discussion as that presented in this article. See Sean Greenwood, *Titan at the Foreign Office: Gladwyn Jebb and the Shaping of the Modern World* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008); P.A. Reynolds and E.J. Hughes, *The Historian as Diplomat: Charles Kingsley Webster and the United Nations, 1939–1946* (London: Martin Robertson, 1976). Elsewhere, the historian Raymond Douglas has given credit to the Economic and Reconstruction Department in these years, but crucially, he has refrained from more detailed analysis and notes incorrectly that the historian Arnold Toynbee 'laid down the foundations of Britain's United Nations policy'. See Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism, 1939–1951* (London: Routledge, 2004), 97–135.

⁸ Though scholars have addressed these basic interwar and wartime conceptions of international relations – and especially their connections, as opposed to contradictions – there has not been as much focus on the way that government officials wrestled with these notions. Importantly, and as this article describes, officials tended to think that public and intellectual opinion, especially in the United States, viewed these conceptions as contradictory. For scholarship examining the connections between such conceptions as internationalism and power politics, see Peter Wilson, 'The Myth of the First Great Debate', *Review of International Studies*, 24, 5, (1998), 1–15; and 'The Twenty Years' Crisis and the Category of "Idealism" in International Relations', in David Long and Peter Wilson, eds., *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-war Idealism Reassessed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1–24; Lucian Ashworth, 'Did the Realist-Idealist Great Debate Really Happen? A Revisionist History of International Relations', *International Relations*, 26, 1, (2002), 33–51; and *International Relations and the Labour Party: Intellectuals and Policy from 1918–1945* (London: Tauris, 2007).

points of this strategy were the need for the United Kingdom to retain its Empire and its status as a world power, along with the need to bind the United States into the maintenance of peace on the European continent. The nightmare of autumn 1919, when American senators voted against the ratification of the Versailles Settlement and the League of Nations Covenant, loomed large in the minds of Foreign Office officials. One way of ensuring American support for the post-war European and international order, they believed, was to accept the broad parameters of American designs for the post-war political and security order. This is not to say British diplomats did not favour an international organisation, or that it was solely an American idea. Rather, the fact that the Roosevelt administration favoured such an organisation, with the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union at its centre, helped to direct what were evolving and still undecided British aims.

The Foreign Office, and in particular its Economic and Reconstruction Department, had undertaken the first serious efforts towards the development and articulation of a post-war political and security strategy – what one senior official described as a ‘grand strategy of peace’.⁹ Under the direction of Gladwyn Jebb from the spring of 1942, the department began to produce iterations of what was known as the ‘Four Power Plan’.¹⁰ The central organising principle of this strategy was that the United Kingdom should advocate for the creation of an international organisation in which the great powers (principally the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union, China and possibly France) would serve as the nucleus of a wider grouping of states. Mention was made of a world council, an assembly, a permanent secretariat, and various regional organisations; but overall, the plans at this stage constituted more of an outline than a detailed scheme.

Importantly, the nature of this early planning was shaped to a great degree by Jebb’s perspective on international politics. The forty-two-year-old official had entered the civil service just as the League of Nations was established; but by the mid-1930s, he, like a number of his colleagues in the Foreign Office, was writing of the institution’s irrelevance and the need for the United Kingdom to return to a ‘lively pursuit of “Realpolitik”’.¹¹ Though his Four Power Plan came to embody more than a base minimum of internationalism – for example, the idea that the organisation might be buttressed by social and economic bodies – these references were the product of external input, including input from Labour ministers Ernest Bevin and Sir Stafford Cripps.¹² Jebb’s recommendations, on the other hand, were more often than not infused with stark calculations of economic and military influence. ‘We must, on the one hand, either have some powerful ally or allies, or cease to be a World Power, and, on the other hand, we cannot expect to have powerful allies unless we are powerful ourselves’, he had urged.¹³ This view of British power and the centrality of national interest was woven throughout Jebb’s conceptions of a future international organisation.

By July 1943, he and his colleagues in the Economic and Reconstruction Department had produced the third version of the post-war plan, now titled the ‘United Nations Plan for Organising Peace’.¹⁴ They had also engaged with their American counterparts on the issue, meetings which helped to

⁹ Richard Law, ‘Speech to Cambridge Society for International Affairs, 18 March 1942’, *Time and Tide*, 21 Mar. 1942, copy in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter TNA), Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/35363/U830.

¹⁰ Memorandum by Gladwyn Jebb, ‘The “Four-Power” Plan’, 20 Oct. 1942, copy in TNA, FO 371/31525/U783.

¹¹ Memorandum by Jebb, ‘Probable consequences of closing or failing to close the Suez Canal to Italy’, undated, 1936, TNA, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter FCO) 73/262/It/36/8. For background on the Foreign Office in the period, see B.J.C. McKercher, ‘The Last Old Diplomat: Sir Robert Vansittart and the Verities of British Foreign Policy, 1903–30’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 6, 1, (1995), 1–38.

¹² See for example Ernest Bevin to Anthony Eden, 8 Dec. 1942, TNA, FO 371/31525/U1798; Hugh Dalton to Eden, 19 Nov. 1942, TNA, FO 371/31525/U1796; and Memorandum by Sir Stafford Cripps, 13 Nov. 1942, WP (42) 516, TNA, FO 371/31525/U1505. For a detailed study of the post-war views of Labour Party intellectuals and politicians in the 1930s and 1940s, see Douglas, *Labour Party*.

¹³ Memorandum by Jebb, ‘The “Four-Power” Plan’, 20 Oct. 1942, 4, copy in TNA, FO 371/31525/U783. In fact, his original conception of a four-power nucleus was based on what he called a ‘Concert of the World’. Draft memorandum by Jebb, ‘Relief Machinery: The Political Background’, Aug. 1942, TNA, FCO 73/264/Pwp/42/8.

¹⁴ Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, ‘The United Nations Plan for Organising Peace’, WP (43) 300, 7 Jul. 1943, TNA, Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 66/38/50.

order their own thinking on the subject and to gradually align Anglo-American views on a post-war organisation.¹⁵ Despite this progress, the Cabinet had yet to formally approve these schemes.¹⁶ The chief hindrance was Churchill, who not only harboured his own ideas for the post-war world, but also remained hesitant to commit the country to ambitious objectives prior to the conclusion of the military struggle.¹⁷ By the end of the summer 1943, however, with the surrender of Italy and the increase of tensions between the three great allies over how to administer to post-war Europe, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed to send their foreign ministers to Moscow for discussions about the period after the war.

The declaration signed at the end of the Moscow Conference in October 1943 marked the first American-Soviet-British agreement on a post-war international organisation. The discussions at this conference, however, were vague on the structure and functions of this proposed institution, as well as the date it would be established. Just months later, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met together for the first time in Tehran, and while formal discussions did not weigh into the subject of a post-war organisation, side conversations, especially between Roosevelt and Stalin, solidified their intention to move forward with more substantive negotiations in 1944.

The 'World Order Papers': Defining the Structure and Machinery of an International Organisation

Though the Foreign Office were conscious that negotiations over a future international organisation would take place sometime in the New Year, the date had yet to be decided. They were thus surprised when, in early January 1944, a telegram arrived from Washington stating that State Department officials were progressing with their own plans and wanted to begin three-power talks by the end of the month.¹⁸ Despite his alarm at the lack of more detailed planning, Jebb advised that discussions with the Americans and Soviets should not be delayed. Given the priority the Foreign Office placed on ensuring that the United States committed to the maintenance of post-war peace on the European continent, British officials wanted to avoid dampening American enthusiasm at this stage.

The views of British and American officials towards a future organisation were surprisingly similar in these months. Even though Jebb had traveled to the United States in March and August 1943 to discuss the broad outlines of a future peace settlement, there had been no formal exchange of plans between the State Department and the Foreign Office. Instead, members of the Economic and Reconstruction Department were left to piece together an idea of American intentions, much of which they based on previous discussions with and public statements by members of the Roosevelt administration.¹⁹ Generally speaking, British officials perceived their American counterparts as favouring the formation of an assembly, a court and a council, the latter of which would be composed principally of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China. It was this body of great powers which was to be responsible for the maintenance of worldwide peace and security. More so than an entirely unique American conception, the structures of the institution were in line with previous British thinking, much of which was based on the experience of the League of Nations.

¹⁵ Jebb, 'Discussions with the United States Administration on Armistice Problems', 24 Mar. 1943, WP (43) 217, TNA, CAB/66/37/17.

¹⁶ Though Cabinet ministers had reviewed these Foreign Office plans, they had yet to be formally approved as post-war policy.

¹⁷ For a useful overview of Churchill's views towards a post-war international organisation, see E.J. Hughes, 'Winston Churchill and the Formation of the United Nations Organization', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9, 4, (1974), 177–94.

¹⁸ Telegram from Lord Halifax to Foreign Office, No. 5629, 13 Dec. 1943, TNA, FO 371/40685/U7427; See also Telegram from Lord Halifax to Foreign Office, No. 130, 9 Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40685/U180.

¹⁹ See for example Minute by Jebb, 'Views of Mr Pasvolsky on the Future of the World', 29 Mar. 1943, TNA, FO 371/35396/U1546; Memorandum by Jebb, 'Report on a Visit to the United States', 29 Aug. 1943, TNA, FO 371/35461/U4056; Foreign Office memorandum, 'Recent American Speeches about the Post-war World', 10 Dec. 1942, TNA, FO 371/31515/U1682; Forrest Davis, 'Roosevelt's World Blueprint', *The Saturday Evening Post*, 10 Apr. 1943.

There were several tactical and administrative decisions made in the first weeks of January 1944 that would subtly influence the shape of British plans going forward. First, Jebb laid out specific questions, themes running from 'A' to 'G' in a memorandum, which would direct the planning efforts of the department. Crucially, he and his immediate superior, Nigel Ronald, decided that these plans would be undertaken by the Foreign Office, as opposed to opening it up to other officials and Cabinet ministers. The 'responsibility of the government should not be engaged too soon', Ronald advised.²⁰ Second, a member of the Economic and Reconstruction Department, J.G. Ward, met with key American planners Leo Pasvolosky and Harley Notter at the State Department, where it was agreed that the two governments should first consider exchanging ideas and plans amongst themselves, prior to opening discussions with the Russians. Though the Americans recognised the 'dangers and difficulties of such a proceeding', it was understood that without solid Anglo-American coordination on a future organisation, such a scheme would have little chance of coming into existence.²¹ Ward and his State Department counterparts then agreed to exchange papers on the general outline of an agenda for three power talks, which would read as a kind of 'table of contents'.²² Taking this up in London, the Foreign Office decided in early February to put forward an agenda to the Americans and Russians. Jebb explained that this might allow them to 'start the discussions on lines favoured by us . . . rather than putting forward ours as amendments to the American list'.²³ In this way, they might have some control over the scope of the talks, and to a greater extent, some influence on the shape of the organisation.²⁴

Another development was the incorporation of Professor Charles Webster into the ongoing work of the Economic and Reconstruction Department. A historian of nineteenth-century British diplomacy, Webster had distinguished himself early in his career as a scholar of the Congress of Vienna; and during the interwar period, he became a noted commentator on both British foreign policy and League of Nations affairs. While a steadfast supporter of the latter organisation, he was also honest about its practical shortcomings, including the inability of leading powers to marshal military responses in defence of the Covenant. But the most surprising aspect of Webster's view of international politics, at least as it relates to this history, is that he expressed radical notions of future internationalism, including support for an eventual 'world state'.²⁵ It was a view of which Jebb, given his distaste for academics espousing 'idealist' or 'utopian' schemes, was most likely unaware.²⁶ Instead, Webster had gradually made himself indispensable to the work of Jebb and his colleagues by producing concise historical studies on previous international organisations.²⁷ Not only was he an expert on such

²⁰ Ronald minute, 28 Jan. 1944; Jebb minute, 27 Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40685/U637.

²¹ Paul Gore-Booth to Michael Wright and Redvers Opie, 22 Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40685/U1973.

²² Paul Gore-Booth, 'Note of a meeting held at the State Department on Saturday, January 29th', 29 Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40685/U1973.

²³ The decision was made during a meeting in Richard Law's room on 10 February. Jebb minute, 12 Feb. 1944, TNA, FCO 73/266/UN/44/9.

²⁴ On 12 Feb., the Economic and Reconstruction Department sent a 'summary of topics' to the State Department which returned their own 'topical outline' a few days later. Both draft agendas were very similar, a product of the exploratory discussions between American and British diplomats and officials over the previous year. Each agenda outlined a world organisation comprised of an Assembly, a Council, a Court and a Secretariat; and both mentioned the need for a system of general security as well as economic and functional organisations.

²⁵ Webster, 'The World State: A Matter of Gradual Evolution', *The Times*, 16 Jul. 1938. Webster first articulated this view as a postgraduate at Cambridge in 1909. See Webster, 'The Evolution of a World State', unpublished paper, London School of Economics (hereafter LSE), Papers of Charles Kingsley Webster (hereafter Webster) 21/1.

²⁶ See for example Jebb's criticism of the historian Arnold Toynbee, who headed up the Foreign Research and Press Service (FRPS) – a group of British historians, political scientists and economists who worked as a kind of government research unit during the war. He wrote of Toynbee that, 'All the sentimentalists and idealists, both in this country and in the United States. . . will plunge like the Gadarene swine down this short-cut to salvation'. Jebb minute, 4 Nov. 1942, TNA, FCO 73/264/Pwp/42/48. Quoted in Sean Greenwood, *Titan at the Foreign Office*, 164.

²⁷ As one of the leading members of the FRPS, Webster had overseen all papers dealing with the subject of international organisation. For more on the FRPS, see Inderjeet Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of the Role and Influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs*

institutions dating back to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, but he had, as Jebb later recalled, an ‘encyclopaedic knowledge of the League’.²⁸ The professor thus came to be seen as an increasingly valuable mind in a planning process that was becoming more urgent.

Webster’s growing involvement in the department was a reflection of a broader trend within the British government. As attention began to turn to a future institution, many began returning to the precedent of the League of Nations. Though the organisation’s impotence in restraining the actions of Japan, Italy and Germany in the previous decade was a common refrain, there were a number of officials who recognised that the experience of the League offered a valuable blueprint, and that a number of its institutions and functions should be carried over. For influential figures like Labour Party MP Philip Noel-Baker, a man involved with the creation of the League and who served as assistant to the Secretary General of the institution, it was essential that the organisation be reconstituted.²⁹ The Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Alexander Cadogan, who had been responsible for League affairs for a decade beginning in 1924, agreed to some extent. He noted that it would be ‘unwise to throw away all the experience that we gained at Geneva in the 20 intervening years’. But crucially, they would need to make the institution more efficient and formidable, an improvement which would depend on the ability of the great powers to act decisively and in unison. ‘The “machine” of the League became the golden calf, and we mustn’t lapse into that idolatry again. But if we are to have an “international organisation”, we must have a machine to serve it, and it is important to get the best design . . . I don’t think it’s difficult to construct a perfectly good machine. But it’s useless without the power and dangerous without the steering gear’.³⁰

Between March and April, a number of documents which came to be known as the ‘World Order Papers’ were drafted by the Economic and Reconstruction Department and submitted to an inter-departmental body for approval.³¹ Chaired by the Minister of State Richard Law, this latter grouping was eventually made a Cabinet sub-committee under the title ‘Committee on Future World Organisation’.³² Several fundamental points emerged across the five memoranda, which were efficiently labelled ‘A’ through ‘E’. First, while all states would in theory be equal, the four principal powers were to retain a special position and responsibility within the organisation. Their continued cooperation, Memorandum A read, was more important than ‘any other single factor’. The grouping

(New York, NY, 2004), 86–90; William H. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (Oxford, 1989), 179–82; Ian Hall, ‘“Time of Troubles”: Arnold J. Toynbee’s Twentieth Century’, *International Affairs*, 90, 1, (2014), 23–36; Robert H. Keyserlingk, ‘Arnold Toynbee’s Foreign Research and Press Service, 1939–43 and Its Post-War Plans for South-East Europe’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21, 4 (1986), 539–58.

²⁸ Gladwyn Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (New York, NY, 1972), 120; Lord Gladwyn, ‘Founding the United Nations: Principals and Objects’, in Erik Jensen and Thomas Fisher, eds., *The United Kingdom – The United Nations* (London, 1990), 34.

²⁹ Philip Noel-Baker, ‘Planning for International Co-operation After the War’, 26 Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2198.

³⁰ Cadogan minute, 4 Feb. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2198. Elsewhere, Jebb wrote that, ‘The League system. . . was about as perfect as the human mind could derive. The only trouble about it was that it wouldn’t work. The reason why it wouldn’t work was in the first place because the existing Great Powers could not agree as among themselves on certain essential things. And until we do get agreement between the World Powers on these essential things no international machine however perfect will ever work’. Jebb minute, 1 Feb. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2198.

³¹ The phrase ‘World Order Papers’ was used by some officials, such as Nigel Ronald. See Ronald to Richard Law, 29 Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2293. They were separated into five memoranda, A through E, and covered the ‘Scope and Nature of the Permanent Organisation’; ‘The Pacific Settlement of Disputes, The Question of Guarantees and How and When the Guarantee Should Come Into Operation’; ‘The Military Aspect of Any Postwar Security Organisation’; ‘Co-ordination of Political and Economic International Machinery’; and ‘Method and Procedure for Establishing a World Organisation’. For an overview of the memoranda, see Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Volume V (London, 1976), 89–116.

³² Reynolds and Hughes, *The Historian as Diplomat*, 26. The committee – which included members from the Treasury, the War Cabinet, the Dominions Office and the Ministry of Labour, among others – met over a number of weeks, with its primary task being to coordinate the drafting of various papers that were to be presented to the Americans and Soviets. The rough outline followed that which was laid out by Jebb in January, and as time went on, the focus of papers expanded or contracted based on what was deemed essential in the upcoming negotiations.

of great powers – eventually including France (once its ‘greatness was restored’) and possibly the addition of other states based on election by the Assembly – would make up the World Council. This body would be considered a ‘centre of action’ while the wider World Assembly was to be the ‘centre of discussion’. The primary purpose of the Assembly, moreover, would be to ‘focus public opinion on the objects of the organisation’, while the purpose of the World Council would be the ‘preservation of peace’.³³

To help ensure the latter, there would need to be in place a method to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes between states. This subject was a favorite of Webster who, in drafting Memorandum B, wrote that, ‘If war is to be abolished for a considerable period there must be in existence . . . a means to make those decisions which in the past have been made by violence’. All ‘justiciable’ disputes, he suggested, should be handled by a Permanent Court of International Justice, the establishment of which had just been recommended by an Inter-Allied Committee.³⁴ Other disputes, Webster wrote, would be handled by the World Council, which would be free to decide amongst themselves – and without input or consent from the parties involved in the dispute – how the matter would be settled.³⁵ The general idea of states submitting decisions to an international court was an old point for Webster, one which had roots in his days as a postgraduate at Cambridge. In one of his earliest descriptions of what he termed a ‘world state’, he wrote that the final step in this evolutionary progression was the submission by states to ‘compulsory arbitration’.³⁶ Later, in the second half of the 1930s, Webster joined a number of prominent commentators in supporting the notion of ‘peaceful change’, whereby states, including those seeking territorial adjustments, would submit their claims to an international organisation.³⁷

Closely related to the peaceful settlement of disputes was the question of when and how the international organisation might be moved to take action. Webster suggested that the entire procedure was to be guided by ‘certain essential principles’, more so than adherence to a strict constitution.³⁸ ‘Flexibility’ was a favoured concept of British planners, all of whom believed that the League had been hampered by rules governing when they should use force. It was an opinion shared by the most senior officials as well. ‘If we are to learn any lesson from the failure of the League’, Cadogan had written in these months, ‘it is . . . that procedure is rather a secondary matter. Everything depends on the unity of purpose of those powers who are able to impose their will’.³⁹

How exactly this principle might be translated into a specific policy was left to Webster. He singled out Article X of the League’s Covenant, which had guaranteed the territorial integrity and existing political independence of member states as one of the major faults of the organisation.⁴⁰ As Japan, Italy and Germany progressively challenged the boundaries agreed by the Treaty of Versailles, it had become clear that many League members, including the United Kingdom, simply refused to take action in line with Article X. The entire question, Webster said, could not in the future be dealt with by some constitutional clause. ‘Too rigid a definition of the occasion for action’, he wrote, ‘is likely to hinder as to facilitate the preservation of peace and security’. Instead, such questions

³³ ‘Memorandum A: Scope and Nature of the Permanent Organisation’, 24 Mar. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40687/U2585.

³⁴ ‘Report of the Informal Inter-Allied Committee on the Future of the Permanent Court of International Justice’, 10 Feb. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2296.

³⁵ Draft memorandum by Webster, ‘The Pacific Settlement of Disputes, the Question of Guarantees, and the Definition of the Occasion for Action’, 17 Mar. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2295.

³⁶ Webster, ‘The Evolution of a World State’, unpublished paper, LSE, Webster 21/1.

³⁷ See chapters by Webster, Arnold Toynbee and others in C.A.W. Manning, ed., *Peaceful Change: An International Problem* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1937).

³⁸ Draft memorandum by Webster, ‘The Pacific Settlement of Disputes, the Question of Guarantees, and the Definition of the Occasion for Action’, 17 Mar. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2295.

³⁹ Cadogan minute, 26 Mar. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2295.

⁴⁰ Introduced by President Woodrow Wilson, this article worried British officials at the Paris Peace Conference, most notably Lord Robert Cecil, who thought that the promise to maintain the territorial status quo – while not allowing for reasonable adjustments – would lead to major difficulties. George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 131–2.

might be addressed by 'a continual process' of discussion and negotiation between the great powers, as well as the other states involved in the matter.⁴¹ This reliance on great power negotiation was, Webster argued, in line with the 'great tradition of British policy' dating back to Lord Castlereagh, Lord Palmerston, Lord Salisbury in the nineteenth century and, more recently, Lord Balfour and Sir Austen Chamberlain.⁴²

As the Economic and Reconstruction Department continued to address these points, they came to the question of the methods by which force would be organised and administered within the organisation. This subject was addressed by Jebb in Memorandum C, which concerned the 'military aspect' of a future world organisation. Work on this paper had been ongoing since the autumn of 1943 and involved the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee, a body chaired by Jebb but comprised primarily of military officials. In their discussions, they considered but eventually ruled out the possibility of an 'international police force', an idea which had strong support in certain influential circles within the United Kingdom and one which Roosevelt and Churchill had expressed support for in recent years.⁴³ The thinking among members of the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee, however, was that such a scheme was both too ambitious and too unlikely to be accepted by any great power.⁴⁴

What eventually emerged was a suggestion by Jebb to form a 'Military Staff Committee' which, working under the World Council, would direct 'earmarked' contingents of national forces. It was this machinery which Jebb and the Economic and Reconstruction Department believed might facilitate military cooperation among the four powers and serve as the principal enforcement mechanism of the world organisation.⁴⁵ The scheme, however, ran up against the opposition of interested parties. Like the earlier ideas for an international police force, the Chiefs of Staff were initially opposed to this idea for earmarked forces. For one, they feared the constraints such quotas would impose on an overstretched British military. 'Owing to the scattered nature of the Empire', one document read, 'we must retain the maximum strategic flexibility to switch forces from one place to another. A system by which certain forces were earmarked for tasks under the World Council might therefore prove embarrassing'.⁴⁶ Equally, the Chiefs of Staff also doubted the chances that the Soviet Union could be brought into such a system with the Americans and British.

Suspicion of Soviet motives pulsed through this period of planning, eventually becoming a fault line between military officials and diplomats.⁴⁷ Among the latter, the working assumption was that Soviet leaders had post-war designs of their own which were based primarily on security concerns, that their

⁴¹ Draft of memorandum by Webster, 'The Pacific Settlement of Disputes, the Question of Guarantees, and the Definition of the Occasion for Action', 17 Mar. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2295.

⁴² Webster drafted the covering brief for the memoranda which were presented by the Minister of State. See Richard Law, Covering brief for 'Future World Organisation: Forthcoming Conversations at Washington', 16 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40689/U3128.

⁴³ For record of British officials being aware of Roosevelt's thinking on this subject, see 'Meeting with the Soviet Delegation at No. 10 Downing Street', 9 Jun. 1942, TNA, FO 954/25B/257. For Churchill's view in autumn 1942, see 'Memorandum prepared by the British Embassy after luncheon on 22 May 1943', *FRUS*, 1943, Conferences at Washington and Quebec, Document 65, 167–72. For some discussion of this topic in the 1930s, see David Davies, *The Problem of the Twentieth Century* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931) and 'An International Police Force?', *International Affairs*, 11, 1 (1932), 76–99; Hugh Dalton, *Towards the Peace of Nations: A Study in International Relations* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1928), 290–93; Clement Attlee, *An International Police Force* (London: New Commonwealth, 1934). See also Michael Pugh, 'Policing the World: Lord Davies and the Quest for Order in the 1930s', *International Relations*, 16, 1 (2002), 97–115.

⁴⁴ 'Post-war World Security', Memorandum by the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee, P.H.P. (43) 24A (Draft), 14 Dec. 1943, TNA, FO 371/35444/U6488.

⁴⁵ Revised draft of 'The Military Aspect of Any Post-war World Security Organisation', 4 Jan. 1944, PHP (43) 24A, TNA, FO 371/40605B/U279. For more on the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee, see Julian Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 63–74.

⁴⁶ 'World Security Discussions', Report by the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee, P.H.P. (44) 29 (Final), 24 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40690/U3630.

⁴⁷ Their idea was instead for the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff to continue in the future and for the Soviets to exercise a similar influence over their particular sphere. This did not preclude the existence of a World Council, but the

immense power might make such visions a foregone conclusion, and that the United Kingdom needed to exert diplomatic leverage before Soviet military advances rendered their influence obsolete.⁴⁸ The Anglo-Soviet Treaty in May 1942, the Moscow Declaration in October 1943, and indeed, the future international organisation itself, were seen by Foreign Office officials as ways both to forge a cooperative spirit with Moscow and to bind them into post-war commitments which would, in turn, act as a kind of restraint on future ambitions.⁴⁹ This political objective, at least for the time being, won out. The Vice-Chiefs of Staff, although they held more cynical views of future Soviet intentions, also grasped the need to establish some post-war organisation which might ensure American military commitments. In the end, they decided to tailor some of the language of Memorandum C and agreed to discuss plans for a Military Staff Committee with the Americans and Soviets.⁵⁰

As is clear from the writing above, the Economic and Reconstruction Department under the leadership of Jebb tended to prioritise political and security systems over economic and social institutions at this stage. This view – which, at its root, concerned the base structures of regional and international order – was not one shared across government, however. Ministers within the Labour Party, as well as some Foreign Office officials such as Webster, continued to stress the need for a future organisation to incorporate robust economic institutions, ones which would serve to foster European and international collaboration in the future. Though Jebb tended to see such ideas as of secondary importance, he had nonetheless begrudgingly worked such points into each of the major planning documents.⁵¹ Yet as planning became more urgent by the spring of 1944, the decision was made to outsource responsibility for this dimension of the plans – otherwise known as Memorandum D – to the Economic Section of the War Cabinet Office. Led by the famed economist and internationalist Lionel Robbins, this body had been engaged in their own post-war planning related to finance, trade, currency, employment and food and relief efforts.⁵² Marcus Fleming, then a junior economist working under Robbins, delivered the first draft for Jebb and Webster; and in it, he recommended that they avoid regionalisation of trade and finance and instead promote global economic systems.⁵³ The key structure in this proposal was referred to as the ‘Central Economic Organisation’ which, taking over from the League’s Economic and Financial Organisation, would serve as the centralised body responsible for coordinating economic and financial activity with respect to the larger international security organisation.⁵⁴

Chiefs of Staff preferred that this grouping of great powers meet periodically, with military advisors accompanying the delegations.

⁴⁸ Victor Rothwell, *War Aims in the Second World War*, 66. See also Folly, *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union*, 87.

⁴⁹ This is a view put forward by a number of scholars, including Folly, *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union*, 35–8, 89–96, 167–68; Martin Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 194–96, 204; Rothwell, *War Aims in the Second World War*, 66–7; and Graham Ross, ‘Foreign Office Attitudes to the Soviet Union 1941–45’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16, 3 (1981), 521.

⁵⁰ For initial opposition, see Jebb minute, 19 Feb. 1944, TNA, FCO 73/264/Pwp/44/1/A. For the text that the Vice-Chiefs of Staff wrote for inclusion in Memorandum C, see ‘Earmarking of Specific Forces for the World Council’, Report by the Vice-Chiefs of Staff, 5 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40691/U3991. See also Note of a meeting between Mr. Jebb, Brigadier Jacob, Brigadier Redman, Colonel Cornwall-Jones and Colonel Norman, 8 May 1944, TNA, FCO 371/40692/U4287.

⁵¹ The UN Plan of January 1943 had identified economic and financial issues as one of the principal causes of modern war.

⁵² For the work of Robbins and the Economic Section during the war, see Susan Howson, *Lionel Robbins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 387–552.

⁵³ Memorandum by Marcus Fleming, ‘Co-ordination of International Economic Institutions and their Relation to Political Organisation’, Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2293, paragraph 35. Alec Cairncross, *Economic Ideas and Government Policy: Contributions to Contemporary Economic History* (London: Routledge, 1996), 33–52.

⁵⁴ From a structural standpoint, this Central Economic Organisation would have three principal organs: a Central Economic Council of no more than fifteen countries; an Economic Consultative Council made up of representatives from principal international institutions such as the International Labour Organization; and an Advisory Economic Staff which would serve as the secretariat of the Central Economic Organisation. Memorandum by Marcus Fleming, ‘Co-ordination of International Economic Institutions and their Relation to Political Organisation’, Jan. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40686/U2293.

Together with a final document – Memorandum E which outlined a procedure for establishing the organisation – the department had now delivered a collection of detailed plans. The ‘World Order Papers’, as they were known, were presented to the Cabinet’s Armistice and Post-War (APW) Committee on 22 April 1944.⁵⁵ The Committee approved Jebb and Webster’s drafts but pushed back on Fleming’s paper which covered the economic side of the world organisation, seeing it as ‘too theoretical and detailed’.⁵⁶ An unprepared Webster was tasked with a redraft of the paper, which, compared to Fleming’s original draft, came to be much shorter and referred only to ‘an economic and social secretariat’ which might be linked to the World Council.⁵⁷ Though Webster had long advocated for any future organisation to deal in some degree with economic and financial matters, it was clear at this stage that the Foreign Office and the War Cabinet were preoccupied with the organisation’s political and security functions. Given that the other memoranda, particularly A through C, dealt overwhelmingly with these subjects, the APW Committee decided that the five memoranda would now be submitted to the War Cabinet and then circulated to the Dominion governments, before finally being shared with the Americans and Russians.

A Western Security Bloc and a Revised British Grand Strategy

Even as their plans for a future international security organisation became more developed, Jebb, Webster and other officials in the Foreign Office were focusing on the future security order on the European continent. At the root of this concern was a fear that the United States, or more likely the Soviet Union, would back out of a world organisation – a development which would undermine the efficacy of the organisation, especially with regard to British concerns over future European security. Though Foreign Office officials had been wrestling with these challenges for months, it was not until the spring of 1944 that they arrived at a specific policy, one which addressed these disparate concerns.

As has been described, both Jebb and Webster held different conceptions relating to the ultimate object of British post-war planning. Where Jebb sought to maintain British power and influence through an international organisation, Webster desired such an institution because he saw it as a step in the direction of a more unified world government. But despite their fundamental, if unacknowledged, differences on this issue, they shared certain views with regard to the character or methods of international politics. In other words, though Jebb and Webster held different political objectives, they converged on a more immediate strategic basis – namely, the view that an international organisation might be underpinned by a global balance of power.

In the months after the Moscow Conference, officials in the Economic and Reconstruction Department had begun to more seriously consider two issues: the relationship of the great powers to the smaller powers and the United Kingdom’s future position vis-a-vis the United States and the Soviet Union. The momentum in the direction of a more internationalist order was thus met with more fundamental calculations concerning power politics. It was a position which appeared to contrast with the view of the State Department, and in particular that of Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who

⁵⁵ This Cabinet Committee was created in April 1944. John Saville, *The Politics of Continuity: British Labour Foreign Policy and the Labour Government, 1945–46* (London: Verso, 1993), 27. The committee included Clement Attlee (chairman), Ernest Bevin, Viscount Cranborne, Oliver Lyttelton, Leo Amery, Archibald Sinclair, Richard Law, Alexander Cadogan, Lord Bruntisfield, Edward Bridges, John Stephenson. Minutes of APW Committee meeting, 22 Apr. 1944, APW(44) 1st Meeting, TNA, FO 371/40690/U3604.

⁵⁶ Minutes of APW Committee meeting, 22 Apr. 1944, APW(44) 1st Meeting, TNA, FO 371/40690/U3604.

⁵⁷ Memorandum D: ‘Co-ordination of Political and Economic International Machinery’, copy in Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 153–4. ‘This is an extraordinary way to get out so important a paper’, Webster remarked in his diaries. Webster acknowledged that he had been intentionally vague. ‘I think I have left the way open for the future to do what is necessary’. Webster noted that the committee had ruled out asking Fleming for a redraft of the paper, and as Lionel Robbins was away at the time, they turned to Webster for a new draft. Webster diary, 22 Apr. 1944, in Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 30.

had returned from the Moscow Conference promoting an agreement which he believed would bring an end to spheres of influence, balances of power and alliances.⁵⁸ Officials in London considered such views to be the product of ‘wishful thinking’ and geared more towards winning over American public opinion.⁵⁹ In their view, if there was to be an organisation capable of maintaining order after the war, it would need to take into account certain fundamental realities of great power politics.

In Webster’s view – one that he was to repeat throughout the planning process – ‘Power and responsibility must be commensurate with each other’. He continued, ‘If the Great Powers are to obtain the consent of the lesser Powers to their assumption of world leadership they must convince the latter of their intention and capacity to guard the world’s peace, while at the same time respecting the rights of their smaller neighbors’.⁶⁰ Jebb was in agreement with this basic premise, but he went further and articulated the need for a balance of power to underpin the future international order. The *distribution* of power between the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, was, for Jebb, the predominant factor. As he told a group of students at Oxford University in February 1944:

We . . . arrive at a post-war picture in which the three Great Powers will perforce have to take the lead, and the burden of my argument is that it is on their relation between each other that the prospects of future peace will primarily depend. On what, then, will these relations themselves depend? Surely, they can only depend on comprehension of and respect for each others’ ‘vital interests’. This is what is meant by politics, and it is on the handling of the tension thus created that the balance of power will rest.⁶¹

How exactly these intellectual – some might say theoretical – concepts were translated into practical recommendations can be seen in the way that Jebb and Webster connected the plans for a world organisation with new policies towards the European continent. The latter issue took on increasing importance towards the end of 1943. In November, the Prime Minister of South Africa, Jan Smuts, suggested in a public speech that the United Kingdom bind itself with Western European democracies. At the heart of his proposals was a desire to increase the power of the British Commonwealth vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and the United States.⁶² Months later, in March 1944, Smuts took up the issue directly with Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, suggesting in blunt terms that such a grouping might help to balance against a hostile Soviet Union.⁶³

Suggestions for the formation of such blocs was not exactly outlandish for the time. Similar proposals, including ones which advocated a European federation, had been widely discussed and even advanced by diverse intellectual and political factions during the interwar years. Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi’s concept of a European federation in 1923, to take a more famous example, had helped to give rise to a Pan-European movement across the continent.⁶⁴ Within the United Kingdom, notable figures including Leo Amery and Churchill echoed similar views. In 1930, the latter wrote in *The Saturday Evening Post* of his support for a ‘United States of Europe’ – although one that would not include the British Empire.⁶⁵ Later in the decade, a celebrated text from the American

⁵⁸ For Hull’s comments, see ‘Allies on the Offensive’, *The Times*, 19 Nov. 1943. Hull had given his first press conference after Moscow on 15 November. See ‘Mr Cordell Hull on Moscow’, *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1943.

⁵⁹ Wilson minute, 20 Nov. 1943, TNA, FO 371/37031/N6879.

⁶⁰ Webster had spoken about this on a number of occasions. See Webster, ‘Some Problems of International Organisation’, Montague Burton Lecture at the University of Leeds, 15 Oct. 1943, LSE, Webster papers E(1)/946.

⁶¹ Gladwyn Jebb, Lecture on ‘The Balance of Power’ delivered to the Canning Club, Oxford University, 21 Feb. 1944, TNA, FCO 73/263/Mis/44/1.

⁶² The speech was titled ‘Thoughts on the New World’. See ‘General Smuts on Shaping the New World’, *The Times*, 3 Dec. 1943.

⁶³ Telegram from Smuts for the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, 20 Mar. 1944, No. 320, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4105.

⁶⁴ Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe* [1923] (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1926).

⁶⁵ Churchill, ‘The United States of Europe’, *The Saturday Evening Post*, 15 Feb. 1930; Leo Amery, ‘The British Empire and the Pan-European Idea’, *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 9, 1, (1930), 1–22.

journalist Clarence Streit called for alliances of democracies to meet the fascist and communist threats.⁶⁶ It was an argument which stirred the hearts and minds of key intellectuals and politicians, among them Arnold Toynbee and Anthony Eden.⁶⁷ Just months after war had returned to the continent, the leader of the Labour Party, Clement Attlee, told a crowd gathered in London that 'Europe must federate or perish', while in 1942, the leader of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, Eduard Beneš, called for a European confederation.⁶⁸

Though there was a lack of Foreign Office agreement on this topic in the early years of the war, the emerging view amongst officials by the spring of 1944 was that such a grouping would be an important structure for future continental stability. But given the priority placed on establishing a world organisation, it was essential that such a formation be framed in a tactful way. For one, officials thought that Smuts' remarks had given off 'an unfortunate balance-of-power flavour' which might prove distasteful to the American government and public. As important, however, was the need to ensure that such a defensive alliance was explicitly directed towards Berlin and not Moscow. Though the grouping of Western democracies would have, as a secondary purpose, protection against future Russian encroachment in Europe, if leaders in Moscow suspected such a structure, it would not only throw the world organisation into jeopardy but it would likely create a situation in which Europe was divided into two 'spheres'.⁶⁹

Given the connection to the larger subject of world organisation, the Economic and Reconstruction Department were asked to develop a response. In the weeks that followed, Webster and Jebb each submitted memoranda on 'Britain and Western Europe' and 'The Western Bloc', respectively. In his paper, Webster recommended the creation of an alliance between the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and possibly Norway which, although not involving political or economic unification, might 'buttress a worldwide security system'. He cited the historical precedent of Austen Chamberlain negotiating the Locarno Treaties in 1925, agreements which were intended to reinforce the League rather than undermine it. As Webster put it:

Our main interest in Post-War Security is to obtain such definite commitments and practicable arrangements that we can rely on the United States and the USSR joining with us in the maintenance of world peace. This object, however, by no means excludes special arrangements for particular areas in which we have a special strategic interest if they are made in support of and not as alternate to the general world system. On the contrary such special arrangements may be essential in order that the worldwide security system may be able to function effectively in our defence.⁷⁰

Jebb largely agreed with Webster's prescription, noting that alliances of mutual defence, far from undermining the world security system, would actually 'reinforce' it. But the crucial consideration, in his view, concerned wider British grand strategy, and in particular, the way in which policy towards the continent might be 'fitted in to our policy towards the rest of the world'.⁷¹ His recommendation

⁶⁶ Clarence K. Streit, *Union Now: A Proposal for a Federal Union of the Democracies of the North Atlantic* [1939] (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940).

⁶⁷ Eden to Halifax, Sept. 1939, TNA, FO 800/325/71-3.

⁶⁸ Attlee, 'The Peace We Are Striving For', Speech at Caxton Hall, 8 Nov. 1939, copy in Attlee et al, *Labour's Aims in War and Peace* (London: Lincolns-Prager, 1940), 96–110. Eduard Beneš, 'The Organization of Post-war Europe', *Foreign Affairs*, 20, 2 (1942), 226–42.

⁶⁹ At the same time, it was noted that Stalin, in comments made to Eden as far back as December 1941, had entertained the idea of Britain playing a greater role militarily in Western Europe. This comment, combined with the fact that the Soviet Union had recently concluded a treaty with Czechoslovakia, seemed to already justify any British moves towards the formation of a Western bloc. See record of meeting in the Foreign Office, 10 Feb. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40606B/U1333. The Czechoslovakia-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Collaboration was signed on 12 December 1943. See 'Czechoslovakia-Soviet Union: Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Collaboration', *The American Journal of International Law*, 39, 2 (1945), 81–3.

⁷⁰ Draft memorandum by Webster, 'Britain and Western Europe', 11 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4102.

⁷¹ Draft memorandum by Jebb, 'The "Western Bloc"', 12 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4102.

here was twofold. First was the need to ‘revive’ earlier proposals – which he had been largely responsible for developing – for a central European body such as the United Nations Commission for Europe, which would operate under the ‘umbrella’ of the world organisation and help the great powers administer to the recovery of Europe.⁷² Secondly, Jebb proposed that ‘defensive systems’ be erected in both the West and the East of Europe; formations which might be directed against Germany. The United Kingdom and France would take the lead among the Western democracies, with the United States possibly involved in the ‘background’. The Eastern system, he admitted, would ‘depend primarily on the USSR’.⁷³

The system which Jebb proposed was based on a foundational conception – namely, that for a future world organisation to be effective and lasting, there needed to exist a balance of power between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom.⁷⁴ ‘Whatever “World Organization” may be set up. . .’, he wrote, ‘peace is not going to be preserved unless the Big Three are in a position to cooperate. This entails (a) that they must regard each other as equals (b) that they pay due regard to each others “vital interests”’. Emphasising this point, he affirmed that, ‘This is what is meant by the Balance of Power, and if its balance is unbalanced then trouble is bound to follow’.⁷⁵

It was a position with which many officials in the Foreign Office agreed, although some expressed concern with the way in which it was phrased. ‘This doctrine’, one official wrote, ‘if it is ever acted on, must be most carefully concealed from the US’. Notions of power politics or the balance of power were considered to be ‘both wicked and peculiarly British practices’.⁷⁶ The Head of the American Department, Nevile Butler, agreed with this suggestion, noting that while the United States was ‘beginning to think much more realistically about power’, they were still inherently averse to traditional stereotypes of European statecraft. Thus, the Foreign Office might pursue the policy as described by Jebb, but it was essential that they not be ‘caught in the act’.⁷⁷

When they came up for decision in early May, it was Webster’s paper that was adopted by the Foreign Office.⁷⁸ Deputy Under-Secretary Orme Sargent even noted the insurance potential that such a policy offered, writing that, ‘this regional system might very well, in altered circumstances, develop into a bulwark against Russian penetration’.⁷⁹ There was now a growing consensus within the Foreign Office, driven chiefly by the work of the Economic and Reconstruction Department, that the United Kingdom’s grand strategy for the post-war period rested on three foundational pillars: a world organisation led by a tripartite alliance; a United Nations Commission for Europe on which the three great powers (with the possibility of France at a future date) would sit on a ‘steering committee’; and a Western European defence system which, serving

⁷² The European Advisory Committee, which had grown out of Jebb’s earlier proposal for a United Nations Commission for Europe, had fallen flat since it had been agreed upon at the Moscow Conference in October 1943. The E.A.C., as Eden was to write just months later, had been a ‘flop’. Eden minute, 9 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40699/U6441.

⁷³ Draft memorandum by Jebb, ‘The “Western Bloc”’, 12 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4102.

⁷⁴ Responding to Smut’s earlier proposal for a Western grouping, Jebb had written that such an arrangement would ‘not only increase our political bargaining power but would also link our fortunes in an enduring way with the continent of Europe’. Jebb minute on Smuts’s speech, 19 Dec. 1943, TNA, FO 371/35443/U6254.

⁷⁵ Jebb’s minute on ‘The British Commonwealth and World Order’, Sidney Ball Lecture delivered by Sir W Layton at Oxford on 3 Mar. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40607B/U2283.

⁷⁶ He wrote that, ‘If we must do it, we must not be caught in the act’. Malcolm minute, 22 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40607B/U2283.

⁷⁷ Butler minute, 23 May 1944. Webster wrote that ‘The consensus of opinion is striking’. Webster minute, 25 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40607B/U2283.

⁷⁸ It is worth noting that Webster’s paper was drafted with the assistance of Jebb and Nigel Ronald. Eden thought the recommendation ‘useful’, though he admitted that, ‘I don’t quite know what to do with it’. Eden minute, 7 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4105.

⁷⁹ Sargent minute, 6 May 1944, *ibid.*

to protect against Germany and the Soviet Union, would also help to fortify British power within the new world organisation.⁸⁰

The Foreign Office Challenge to Churchill

For all of the progress made in planning for the machinery of a future organisation within the Foreign Office, the plans would dissolve without the approval of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister, in particular, had for years served as the chief bulwark against Foreign Office planning. Intent to put forward his own ideas for the reorganisation of Europe and the world, Churchill remained steadily removed from the planning being undertaken in the Foreign Office – a reality which was both encouraging and worrisome for officials in the Economic and Reconstruction Department. With the Prime Minister's attention elsewhere, Jebb and Webster could draw up their plans unimpaired; but equally, such distance ran the risk of Churchill ignoring them altogether.

After some wrangling to bring the question of world organisation before the Cabinet, the issue finally came up during a meeting on 27 April.⁸¹ Here Churchill's views were surprisingly more in line with those of the Foreign Office, but important differences remained. There had long been a divide between the Prime Minister and members of the Economic and Reconstruction Department over the composition of a regional council in Europe.⁸² Though Jebb had initially been supportive of regional structures forming the basis of a larger international organisation, his discussions with members of the Roosevelt administration had made clear that such structures might jeopardise future American support. As such, Jebb and Webster began to strongly resist Churchill's continued proposals for a 'Council of Europe' which he thought might become a 'United States of Europe'.⁸³ More concerning were comments made by Churchill to Richard Law in the corridor after the Cabinet meeting – namely an idea, unheard of until that time, that there should be no international organisation at all but instead a 'continental League of Nations' and a four-power alliance.⁸⁴ While the latter was essentially what the Foreign Office was calling for, the former arrangement would, in effect, be the Council of Europe which Churchill had long advocated in opposition to Foreign Office warnings.

After his conversation with the Prime Minister, a concerned Law approached Webster about drafting a memorandum which would point out the inconsistencies in Churchill's proposal. Late into the evening on 28 April, Webster set about making his case. Across six pages, Webster argued that the only way to get a four-power alliance was through the creation of a wider international organisation. The Americans, he stressed, would simply have it no other way.⁸⁵ Should the Americans back out of a

⁸⁰ Jebb wrote that these had become the 'consistent departmental view' on the general post-war objectives of British policy. Jebb minute, 28 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40691/U3704.

⁸¹ Cadogan and Webster had been pressing Edward Bridges, the Cabinet Secretary, about ways to force the Prime Minister to examine and decide on the papers which the Economic and Reconstruction Department had been drafting. Cadogan diary, 25 Apr. 1944, in David Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938–1945* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 623; Webster diary, 26 Apr. 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 31.

⁸² The earliest schism had centred on Jebb's objection to Churchill's proposal to form Scandinavian, Danubian and Balkan confederations on the continent. See Memorandum by the Prime Minister, 'Notes on Post-War Security', 1 Feb. 1943, and Jebb minute, 3 Feb. 1943, TNA, FO 371/35363/U549.

⁸³ War Cabinet conclusions, WM (44) 58, Minute 2, 27 Apr. 1944, TNA, CAB 65/42.

⁸⁴ This is mentioned in Webster's diary on 28 Apr. 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 31.

⁸⁵ In a separate minute, Jebb wrote that, 'The Prime Minister simply ignores the realities of the world. . . We have been repeatedly told that while the United States will take responsibility for world peace including that of Europe inside a world organisation they will refuse to take part in a purely European organisation'. Jebb minute, 3 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40691/U4098. Indeed, a State Department delegation, led by the Under-Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, had recently visited London and had not only noted the divide between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office but also expressed their support for the latter's view which 'would put the weight of world security upon the World Organization rather than upon regional councils'. Moreover, they wrote that, 'it was clear that Mr. Churchill has not thought out the operations and complexities of regional councils'. 'Report on Conversations in London, Apr. 7 to Apr. 29, 1944', *FRUS*, 1944, Volume III, 17. See also Summary of discussion between Cadogan, Jebb, Webster and [Isaiah] Bowman, 19 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40690/U3409.

world organisation, it would throw American participation in the maintenance of peace on the European continent – a fixture of British grand strategy for the post-war period – into doubt. Without this American support, Webster warned that the United Kingdom would be without its greatest ally ‘in a world of uneasy and unstable alliances’.⁸⁶

When the memorandum crossed Eden’s desk on 30 April, the Foreign Secretary said he agreed ‘emphatically’ with Webster’s thoughts. Here the documents reveal an interesting detail: in his analysis, Eden had drawn a diagram of the proposed world organisation in the margin of the paper, a sketch which actually misunderstood the structure that Jebb and Webster were proposing.⁸⁷ It is no surprise then that, despite the support of the Foreign Secretary, both Jebb and Webster remained concerned that Eden did not fully grasp the intricacies of their plans. Worse, they were doubtful as to whether he would confront the Prime Minister on this matter directly.⁸⁸ A gloomy Webster confided in his diaries that, ‘This is a really big issue on which the fate of the world may ultimately depend’.⁸⁹

Somewhat surprisingly, a meeting of the Dominion prime ministers in May served as a crucial boon to the efforts of the Economic and Reconstruction Department. In the early days of the conference, it became apparent to Eden that the prime ministers of New Zealand, Australia and Canada (Peter Fraser, John Curtin and Mackenzie King) were in general agreement with the direction of Foreign Office thinking on the question of a future world organisation.⁹⁰ Among other factors, Dominion governments tended to favour more international security schemes, as opposed to ones which, like Churchill’s, were directed mainly towards the European continent.⁹¹ Though they were strongly opposed to certain points in the Foreign Office plans – for example a suggestion that the United Kingdom, from its seat on the World Council, might act on behalf of the entire Commonwealth – they indicated that they would lend their support to the broad principles developed by the Economic and Reconstruction Department. Encouraged by this news, the Foreign Secretary sent Jebb and Webster’s papers to Churchill on 4 May and urged him to circulate them among the Dominion delegations.⁹² The Prime Minister agreed, provided that his own memorandum on this matter was circulated with those of the Foreign Office. In comparison to Jebb and Webster’s papers, a key divergence remained Churchill’s support for regional councils of Asia, Europe and the Americas. Added to this were new and old ideas, such as a ‘fraternal association with the United States’ and a ‘United States of Europe’.⁹³

The papers were discussed among the Dominion prime ministers between 9 and 11 May, and much to the delight of Jebb and Webster, the leaders had favoured their recommendations concerning the structure and function of a world organisation.⁹⁴ Now clearly the odd man out, Churchill withdrew his memorandum, having grown increasingly frustrated by the widespread opposition to his suggestions.

⁸⁶ Memorandum by Webster, ‘Reasons for Establishing the General International Organisation for the Maintenance of Peace and Security in Accordance with Article 4 of the Moscow Declaration’, 29 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40691/U4036.

⁸⁷ Eden minute, 30 Apr. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40691/U4036.

⁸⁸ As Webster later confided in his diaries, ‘[Eden] has very little knowledge of the original papers’. Webster diary, 10 Jul. 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 37–8.

⁸⁹ Webster diary, 2 May 1944, *ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁰ Eden diary, 4 May 1944, reprinted in Eden, *The Reckoning*, 442.

⁹¹ See for example the comment by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in War Cabinet conclusions, WM (44) 58, Minute 2, 27 Apr. 1944, TNA, CAB 65/42.

⁹² Eden to Churchill, 4 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40691/U3872.

⁹³ ‘The Post-war World Settlement’, Note by the Prime Minister, 8 May 1944, PMM (44) 5, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4194.

⁹⁴ PMM (44) 12th meeting, 11 May 1944, TNA, CAB 99/28. Webster diary, 11 May 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 34. Reynolds and Hughes have noted that the opinions of the Dominion prime ministers were the ‘coup de grâce’. See *ibid.*, 86, 99–100. These Dominion delegations expressed certain reservations, however, including on the issue of regional bodies and on the issue of whether the United Kingdom, from its seat on the World Council, might act on behalf of the entire Commonwealth. The latter proposal was one to which nearly all of the Dominions were opposed. Cadogan diary, 19 May 1944, Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Alexander Cadogan*, 630; Peter Fraser to Eden, 18 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40693/U4562; Meeting of Dominion Officials with Sir Alexander Cadogan on Wednesday, 17 May 1944. See also Letter from MacKenzie King to Anthony Eden, 29 May 1944, No. 96, TNA, FO 371/40693/U4406.

He made clear, however, that 'his views remained unchanged in essentials', and asked for the Foreign Office papers to be redrafted to accommodate some of his preferences.⁹⁵

Even with what seemed like a great success, the Foreign Office could not afford to ignore the Prime Minister's views altogether. He remained the most influential voice within the government, and his support would be indispensable when it came to future negotiations with the Americans and Russians. This was not lost on Webster, who, despite his opposition to the Prime Minister's views, understood that some concessions needed to be given in order to bring him more fully on board with the plans of the Economic and Reconstruction Department.⁹⁶ Jebb, on the other hand, could not contain his frustration with the Prime Minister, whose views, he told his friend Hugh Dalton, were 'romantic and ill-judged'.⁹⁷ Because no one had ever 'challenged him properly', Jebb set out to write a memorandum intended for Churchill. Titled 'British Policy Towards Europe', Jebb's paper explained in blunt terms why the idea of a 'United States of Europe' was both 'dangerous and impracticable'. The Prime Minister's objectives, he argued, might instead be met through the 'mutually consistent' plans for a World Organisation, a United Nations Commission for Europe and a Western European Defence System.⁹⁸

When the paper was forwarded to Churchill on 16 May, he ignored the concerns of the Foreign Office and delayed a decision until after his upcoming speech in the House of Commons. Fearful that their window of opportunity was closing, Jebb and Webster were surprised when the Prime Minister delivered a speech which was largely in line with their plans.⁹⁹ But a crucial sticking point, namely his idea for a European Council, remained fixed in his mind. Writing to Eden on 21 May, Churchill stated that, 'The only thing I am pressing for is a United States of Europe in some form or other, with a Council of its own of which I trust Russia, Great Britain and the United States will be members'.¹⁰⁰ Given the Prime Minister's obstinacy on this point, the decision was made to incorporate some of Churchill's views, but to do so superficially and on the terms laid out by the Foreign Office. The Prime Minister's views on regions, they decided, would be mentioned briefly in Memorandum A of the world organisation papers.¹⁰¹ Going forward, though, Jebb and others would aim to dilute Churchill's European idea through negotiations with the Americans and Russians.

Just as the Foreign Office were finalising their own papers, telegrams from the State Department in Washington reflected a renewed sense of urgency on the part of the Roosevelt administration, and in particular the Secretary of State Cordell Hull.¹⁰² On 29 May, he relayed that their ongoing discussions with members of Congress had advanced, and that his officials were now ready to begin negotiations.¹⁰³ Ever sensitive to the mercurial nature of American public opinion and the need to secure American support, Cadogan wrote that the State Department seemed to be in a 'hurry'. 'We must not give the impression of drawing back', he warned.¹⁰⁴

Though the aftermath of the Allied invasion of France on 6 June 1944 consumed much of the War Cabinet's attention throughout June, on 7 July, ministers finally met to consider the papers on 'Future World Organisation'. This climax was nearly ruined, however, when the Prime Minister decided to leave the meeting early, just before the topic of a post-war organisation was taken up. According to Cadogan, as Churchill exited, he said that he was leaving it up to the group to discuss 'the Peace of

⁹⁵ Cabinet minutes quoted in Cadogan's paper on 'Discussion with Dominions on World Organisation', 15 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4367.

⁹⁶ Webster diary, 11 May 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 34.

⁹⁷ Hugh Dalton diary, 9 May 1944 and 9 June 1944, Ben Pimlott, ed., *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940–1945* (London, 1986), 743–4, 755–6.

⁹⁸ Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 34. Webster referred to this as a 'crisis day'. See also TNA, FO 371/40692/U4367. Draft memorandum by Jebb, 'British Policy Towards Europe', 12 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40692/U4367.

⁹⁹ Webster diary, 15 May 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 35; Jebb minute, 29 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40694/U5050.

¹⁰⁰ Churchill to Eden, 21 May 1944, M.583/4, TNA, FO 371/40693/U4635.

¹⁰¹ Jebb minute, 31 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40694/U5050.

¹⁰² See Ronald Campbell to Sir David Scott, 12 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40693/U4745.

¹⁰³ Telegram from Washington to Foreign Office, No. 2857, 30 May 1944, TNA, FO 371/40694/U4874.

¹⁰⁴ Cadogan minute, 2 Jun. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40694/U4928.

the World about which, in present circumstances, I am rather lukewarm'.¹⁰⁵ The Prime Minister's absence turned out to be a great fortune for the Foreign Office. In his absence, Cabinet ministers quickly expressed their support for the five memoranda on world organisation, and while not yet official policy, the Foreign Office received authorisation to share the documents with their counterparts in Washington and Moscow.¹⁰⁶ 'This is a real milestone', Webster celebrated in his diary.¹⁰⁷ Though a great achievement for the Economic and Reconstruction Department, in the weeks ahead, their focus turned to the final preparation for the conference with their American and Soviet counterparts, as well as the all-important issue of post-war policy towards Europe.

British Policy Towards Europe

In the weeks when the department's plans for a future world organisation were nearing completion, there was also some progress on the Foreign Office's approach towards Europe. Once again, this was due in large part to the work of the Economic and Reconstruction Department and Webster and Jebb's ability to link these two major questions together. Jebb's paper on 'British Policy Towards Europe', while originally intended to combat the views of the Prime Minister on a 'United States of Europe', ended up being considered as the Foreign Office's future policy towards the continent. In a meeting of a Cabinet sub-committee on 1 June, it was decided that Jebb's paper should be combined with Webster's 'Western Europe' paper, which had advocated the United Kingdom joining a defence system with France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and possibly Norway.¹⁰⁸

The idea for a Western bloc had been gaining traction from other quarters of the United Kingdom's diplomatic establishment. Duff Cooper, then the British Minister in Algiers, had written to his superiors in London calling for a Western European alliance to counter what he considered to be a hostile Soviet regime.¹⁰⁹ Officials in the Foreign Office were in general agreement with Cooper's suggestion, but for others, such as Jebb, the concept had become one of the greatest importance. In what was a surprising if revealing line, he described such an alliance of Western democracies as being potentially more important than the world organisation itself. 'It is primarily in the right development of our "alliance potential" that the future of this country lies and not so much in the "mystical" idea of a world state or even, on certain definitions, in the idea of a World Organisation'.¹¹⁰

But a crucial difference between the majority Foreign Office view and that of Cooper was the former's belief that such an alliance must not be directed against Russia.¹¹¹ Orme Sargent warned that when London and Moscow no longer viewed Germany as the main threat – a position he thought constituted the 'cement' of their post-war relationship – their bilateral relations would dissolve and the Western bloc would then move from balancing against Germany to protecting against Russia. It would become, in his words, 'a most dangerous experiment which might well precipitate the evils against which it was intended to guard'.¹¹² Both Eden and Cadogan agreed, with the latter writing that, 'There is no doubt that our own policy must be directed to cooperation: if it fails, it must not be through our fault'.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Cadogan diary, 7 Jul. 1944, in Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Alexander Cadogan*, 645–6.

¹⁰⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, WM (44) 88, 7 Jul. 1944, TNA, CAB 65/43. American plans were sent to the British on 18 July, and the British plans were sent to the Americans on 21 July. See Telegrams from Foreign Office to Washington, No. 6539 and to Moscow, No. 2178, 21 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40700/U6461.

¹⁰⁷ Webster diary, 7 Jul. 1944, Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Record of meeting at the Foreign Office, 1 Jun. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40695/U5051.

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum by Duff Cooper, 30 May 1944, 4, TNA, FO 371/40696/U5407; John Charmley, *Duff Cooper: The Authorized Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 184.

¹¹⁰ Jebb minute, 18 Jun. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40696/U5407.

¹¹¹ In a contribution which was supported by Eden, Oliver Harvey wrote that the Western alliance should be explicitly directed against Germany, with Soviet Russia supporting the Western allies in the endeavour. Oliver Harvey minute, 25 Jun. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40696/U5407.

¹¹² Sargent minute, 30 Jun. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40696/U5407.

¹¹³ Cadogan minute, 4 Jul. 1944 and Eden minute, 6 July 1944, quoted in Ross, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin*, 146. See also Ross, 'Foreign Office Attitudes to the Soviet Union 1941–45', 522.

The Foreign Office view towards the Soviet Union once again ran in stark contrast to that of the Chiefs of Staff.¹¹⁴ It was a gap in assessments, rooted in diverging assumptions about the post-war intentions and capabilities of the Kremlin, which widened throughout the summer of 1944. In early June, the Post Hostilities Planning Staff (PHPS), which was made up mostly of military representatives and reported to the Chiefs of Staff, recommended that a closer defensive alignment with France and the Western democracies be directed against Russia.¹¹⁵ A month later, the Chiefs of Staff took a further step, suggesting that officials might explore ways that parts of Germany, assuming it could be dismembered after the war, might be brought into a grouping led by the United Kingdom.¹¹⁶

The Foreign Office considered this a potentially catastrophic recommendation. Not only did the service chiefs continue to resist the creation of a world organisation, but it also appeared that they were suffering from an ‘anti-Bolshevik complex’.¹¹⁷ Similar to Sargent’s warnings of a self-fulfilling prophecy, several Foreign Office officials warned that if the United Kingdom was to follow the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff, then Moscow would undoubtedly take measures to protect itself. The result would be a hostile Russia, the destruction of three power cooperation (and with it, the end of the world organisation) and a European continent divided into blocs.

At the beginning of July, Eden approved the recommendations put forward by his officials. Though he still lagged behind their nuanced positions on these issues, the Foreign Secretary’s views were steadily forming. In his mind, the Anglo-Soviet Treaty which had been signed in 1942 was to be a key pillar of British policy, along with a grouping of Western democracies aligned in principle against Germany.¹¹⁸ The formation of a Western security group had now become a central priority for the Foreign Office. A memorandum submitted to the Cabinet stated bluntly, ‘From the political point of view. . . our policy should be directed towards establishing some kind of defence system in Western Europe whether we are successful in creating a World Organisation or not. If we are unsuccessful the need for it will be immeasurably greater’.¹¹⁹

The burning question now, however, was whether the United Kingdom should reach out to their French, Belgian, and Dutch counterparts before or after the Washington talks on world organisation. It was here that Cadogan offered a more tactical approach – namely, prioritising the talks with the Americans and Soviets and making subtle, quiet contact with the governments that might make up a Western security bloc.¹²⁰ The Permanent Under-Secretary held in his mind the precedent of the Treaty of Locarno which created a new security order in Western Europe but was tied directly to – and remained, in theory, under the authority of – the League of Nations. Laying out this approach, he wrote that, ‘If I could order the world as I liked, I might even begin with the Western European System, and build on that. But we have to take things as we find them, and the fact is that we

¹¹⁴ These differences have been discussed at length in John Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism*, 19–36; Baylis, ‘British Wartime Thinking about a Post-War European Security Group’, 273–7; Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 107–43; Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War*, 114–23. See also Elisabeth Barker, *Churchill and Eden at War*, 286–92.

¹¹⁵ ‘Effects of Soviet policy on British strategic interests’, 6 Jun. 1944, extracts in Ross, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin*, 166–8. The Post-Hostilities Planning Staff (PHPS) was established in May 1944. It followed the Post-Hostilities Planning (PHP) Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff which had been established in August 1943, after the restructuring of the Military Sub-Committee. The PHP Sub-Committee was chaired by Jebb and designed to serve as a ‘channel’ between the Service Departments and the Foreign Office. See Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 44–54; 98–104.

¹¹⁶ The Chiefs of Staff were considering the paper on ‘Security in Western Europe and the North Atlantic’, P.H.P. (44) 17(0) (final). Chiefs of Staff meeting, 26 Jul. 1944, C.O.S. (44) 248, Minute 14, quoted in Annex 3 of Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 349–53.

¹¹⁷ In this, the PHPS were considered by the Foreign Office to be the ‘wild acolytes’ of the Chiefs of Staff. Warner minute, 24 Jul. 1944; Ward minute, 15 Aug. 1944; and Jebb minute 28 Jul. 1944, quoted in Ross, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin*, 159, 162 and 160, respectively. See also Lewis, *Changing Direction*, 37–40, 63–74.

¹¹⁸ Eden minute, 2 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40696/U5407.

¹¹⁹ Eden’s reply to Cooper, 25 Jul. 1944, WP (44) 409, copy in TNA, FO 371/40701/U6543.

¹²⁰ During a meeting in the Foreign Office on 7 July, Eden indicated that he favoured making contact on this issue soon. Record of a meeting held in Eden’s room, 7 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40701/U6543.

must try . . . to work out a World Organisation with the Americans'.¹²¹ This meant that the post-war international organisation was to remain the priority, but it was to be buttressed by a Western security bloc, developed and guided by the United Kingdom.

To initiate this regional defensive alliance, it was suggested that Eden might make gradual approaches to his Western European counterparts, but in a manner that was secret and 'in a general nature'. The Foreign Secretary understood the need to tread carefully vis-a-vis the Americans and the Russians on this point, yet he had also become convinced in these weeks that such discussions on a potential security pact were a necessity. The Foreign Secretary admitted that he held an 'obstinate' view on this point. 'It is really bad', he wrote, 'for [the] US government and Soviet to think that we cannot ever have so harmless a talk with our nearest neighbors without telling them in advance'.¹²²

Conclusion

After the 'Future World Organisation' papers had been approved by the War Cabinet on 7 July, attention turned to outlining the directives for the British delegation travelling to meet with their American and Soviet counterparts. Drafted by Jebb and Webster these points contained some essential details which had not been addressed in the original series of memoranda. The size of the World Council, the paper instructed, was to be no fewer than nine or larger than twelve; and the British delegation was to suggest that France be included as a permanent member. Decisions taken in the World Council would be decided by a unanimous vote in the settlement of non-justiciable disputes, but a two-thirds majority (including all of the great powers) for all decisions involving the use of force. Elsewhere recommendations were laid out for how the Military Staff Committee would communicate and operate under the World Council.¹²³

On 4 August, the Cabinet approved the directives as outlined by Jebb and instructed Cadogan, who was to be the head of the delegation, that if the Americans were to bring up colonial questions – then considered to be the issue of greatest divergence between London and Washington – he was to refer to London for further instructions. Churchill, for his part, advised that the upcoming talks be 'for preliminary exploration', as opposed to ones which might seek a more comprehensive agreement. Overall, the Prime Minister appeared pleased with the developments, though Cadogan felt he was 'cynically jocular' and not taking it seriously. The Prime Minister went so far as to state that he regretted the fact that the War Cabinet had not had more time to discuss these matters.¹²⁴ It was a comment to which Cadogan and Eden – not to mention the members of the Economic and Reconstruction Department – could only shake their heads. By the time the directives had been approved, roughly half an hour after the meeting had started, Churchill remarked that, 'There now: in 25 min[ute]s, we've settled the future of the World. Who can say that we aren't efficient?'¹²⁵

The Dumbarton Oaks conversations between the British, American and Soviet delegations that began on 21 August marked the first formal negotiations between the great powers on the structure and function of a future international organisation.¹²⁶ Over the course of three weeks of discussion,

¹²¹ Cadogan minute, 6 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40701/U6588. In a meeting the following day, Cadogan argued that they should hold back on approaching the Western European governments. He was recorded as saying, 'We ought not to do anything to prejudice our chances of getting the United States committed to some kind of World Organisation, since if they were committed the whole peace structure would be greatly reinforced'. Record of a meeting held in Eden's room, 7 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40701/U6543.

¹²² Eden minute, 10 Jul. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40701/U6543.

¹²³ 'Future World Organisation: Points for Decision', 17 Jul. 1944, APW (44) 45, TNA, FO 371/40699/U6443.

¹²⁴ War Cabinet conclusions, W.M. (44) 101, 4 Aug. 1944, TNA, CAB 65/43. For final list of directives, see Telegram from Dominions Office to Dominion Governments, No. 1111, 8 Aug. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40704/U6806.

¹²⁵ Cadogan diary, 4 Aug. 1944, Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Alexander Cadogan*, 653–4.

¹²⁶ While a Chinese delegation also attended the Dumbarton Oaks negotiations, they were not invited until the second half of the conference, which began on 29 Sep. This was well after the most consequential discussions between the American, British and Russian delegations had taken place. The exclusion of the Chinese delegation was due to the refusal by Soviet leaders, especially Stalin, to have Chinese officials involved in the talks.

the governments agreed to establish an organisation made up of a General Assembly, Security Council, an International Court of Justice and a Secretariat. Among the responsibilities of the assembly were budgetary and membership questions, the election of non-permanent members of the Security Council, the regulation of armaments and the coordination of the work carried out by the Economic and Social Council. Sitting above the assembly was the council, comprised of eleven members, including five permanent members (the three great powers, along with China and France) and six non-permanent members. It was given expansive authority to deal with any matter it deemed to be a threat to international peace and security. In terms of the organisation's enforcement mechanism, the Security Council was to rely upon a Military Staff Committee which had been one of Jebb's earlier recommendations. This body would be comprised of the chiefs of staff of the permanent members and placed in charge of coordinating any national forces that might be put at the disposal of the council.¹²⁷

This blueprint for a post-war international organisation became known as the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, an outline which became the focus of global debate for the ensuing seven months. Finally, at the San Francisco Conference which began in late April 1945, over forty national delegations met to deliberate and decide upon the final form of these proposals. By and large, the United Nations Charter adopted the vast majority of the Dumbarton Oaks agreement, particularly around the structure of the organisation and the functioning of its principal organs.

The period between when the Economic and Reconstruction Department had finalised their World Order Papers and the signing of the United Nations Charter had stretched nearly a year. Throughout this most consequential phase of the process, British officials had played an indispensable role.¹²⁸ This was especially true at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. There, British plans, along with those of the Americans, had served as the substantive bedrock of the proposals which were eventually agreed. Moreover, the head of the British delegation, Alexander Cadogan, along with Jebb and Webster, had done more than anyone to help to define the position of the great powers relative to the rest of the United Nations. On the question of whether great powers should retain the right of veto in disputes to which they were involved, Cadogan remained firm in his opposition against, at first, the Russians *and* the Americans. Though the latter eventually came around to the British view, the initial stand taken up by the Permanent Under-Secretary had great implications for the nature of the organisation – a factor which has been less emphasised in the previous studies which have discussed the British role.¹²⁹ Where the Soviet Union may have seen it as more of a 'great power dictatorship', in which the permanent members of the World Council would always retain veto power, the British – and eventually the Americans – saw it as a slightly more democratic institution, in which the permanent members should, to a certain extent, be answerable to a majority of smaller states. And perhaps more consequential was a recommendation made by Jebb during a meeting at Dumbarton Oaks, one which was intended to resolve the growing divide between the British and Soviet positions on the voting issue. It was this recommendation which, once it was eventually adopted at the Yalta Conference, ultimately saved the organisation.¹³⁰

The British and Soviet roles in the creation of the United Nations have often been seen as secondary to that of the United States, a view which tends to overlook what were robust planning operations underway in London and Moscow. This article has focused solely on the British efforts in the first half

¹²⁷ 'Proposals for the Establishment of a General International Organisation', 28 Sept. 1944, TNA, FO 371/40716/U7585.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the British contribution at the conference, see Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 39–57; Greenwood, *Titan at the Foreign Office*, 179–85; and Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 67–228.

¹²⁹ Citing Reynolds and Hughes, Greenwood adds that Webster 'claimed credit for enticing the Americans into the British camp'. Greenwood, *Titan at the Foreign Office*, 181. See also Reynolds and Hughes, *Historian as Diplomat*, 42–3.

¹³⁰ Known as the 'Roosevelt compromise', this recommendation, which was suggested by Roosevelt to Stalin at Yalta, had originally been suggested by Jebb at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. British officials made the conscious decision to allow Roosevelt to take credit for the compromise, as a way of drumming up further American support for the organisation. See Andrew Ehrhardt, 'The British Foreign Office and the Creation of the United Nations Organization, 1941–1945', PhD thesis, King's College London, 2020.

of 1944, when an existing planning apparatus entered a new, more concerted phase of work. The period is essential to historians of the organisation as well as to those studying the diplomatic history of the Second World War, as the activities undertaken by the Foreign Office in this period were crucial both to the makeup of the organisation and to wider British post-war strategy. Their work is a classic study of diplomatic planning, in that officials, many of them subordinate to those with ultimate authority, faced bureaucratic hurdles, including a Foreign Secretary with a loose grip on the details, a Prime Minister keen to advance his own vision, and other departments with fundamentally different assessments about a principal wartime ally.

More interesting, however, is the way in which key officials – principally Gladwyn Jebb and Charles Webster – wrestled with certain assumptions regarding the nature of international politics, the purpose of a world organisation and the continental versus global dimensions of British foreign policy. Where Jebb saw certain methods of international politics as timeless and a world organisation as serving the needs of the British national interest, Webster perceived international relations to be evolving in a progressively interdependent direction. This led him to a view that it was the responsibility of the United Kingdom to help bring about a more robust form of internationalism, one that might pave the way for a future world government. Despite these great ambitions, Webster was also pragmatic and attuned to the need for the United Kingdom to protect its own interest in the short- and medium-term, and to deliver an organisation which could evolve in the future.

Their views ultimately converged with regard to the way in which British policy towards the continent might be fused with the country's larger global strategy. And it is this last dimension which reveals a fundamental aspect of Foreign Office planning in the period – namely, that one cannot understand the nature of the United Kingdom's approach to what would become the United Nations without taking into account its evolving policy towards the European continent. A principal justification for the post-war world organisation, especially for Jebb, had been the need to bring the United States into the security order on the European continent. But as plans for such a world institution developed, confidence in its ability to meet British objectives in Europe wavered. The future capabilities of Germany and the future intentions of the Soviet Union – and in the background, a feeling that the United Kingdom and its Empire was far secondary to the power of the United States and Russia – had led to a surge of stage fright, and a rush back to the drawing board. Thus, at the crucial moment, when British planners were setting out final designs for a grand internationalist scheme, they reverted to what were considered more traditional ordering techniques, in order to ensure the country's safety and status. A Western security grouping was to serve as a check on Germany and potentially Russia, as well as to bolster British power relative to the United States and Soviet Union. Importantly, through Jebb and Webster's hand, these ordering mechanisms were framed as reinforcing, as opposed to undermining, the future world organisation.

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