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In *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* Mark Mazower challenges narratives about the history of the twentieth century. As Jay Winter emphasizes, Mazower has again offered a revisionist perspective on a European history of “progressive thinking, triumphing over authoritarian adversaries.” (1) Mazower initially presented his latest revisionist study as the Lawrence Stone Lectures at Princeton University in 2007. In this latest work, Mazower takes aim at familiar assessments of the League of Nations and United Nations as representing an evolutionary movement away from unbridled imperialism and power politics towards a liberal internationalism. The prominence that historians of U.S. diplomacy give to Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt also gets turned upside down by Mazower who puts far more emphasis on British influence and Jan Christiaan Smuts, the South African statesman, in shaping a League that would protect European imperialism and white supremacy in international affairs. In a series of four chapters, Mazower develops his thesis by examining the views and contributions of Smuts on the League and the UN, the views of Alfred Zimmern and Jewish writers on minorities and population exchange, and Jawaharlal Nehru’s ultimately successful challenge to the continuing hegemony of the imperial powers in the UN on decolonization and other issues.

The reviewers are impressed with Mazower’s study and its sweeping reassessment on the nature and purposes of international organizations and the relationship of state interests and human rights. “The thread that runs through the four chapters that compose the book is the imperial lineage of the UN,” affirms Nicolas Guilhot. (1) Ramesh Thakur concludes that “Mazower has performed a great service in shining a historian’s spotlight on the past as it really was,” and Thakur emphasizes the importance of “understanding the role of ideas, ideology and power—and of human agency—in giving structure to that order.” (1) Cemil Aydin, who agrees with Mazower on the Eurocentric foundations of the League and the UN, welcomes the opportunity “to reflect on the ideas of international law, internationalism and global justice” and consider whether or not the UN has the “potential to embody international and universal values.” (1-2)

The reviewers don’t completely agree with Mazower as each finds some area of significant disagreement with the author concerning his major thesis or an important related aspect that receives less attention. Thakur, for example, finds weaknesses in Mazower’s evaluation of the origins of the UN and his emphasis on the UN’s retreat from a greater egalitarianism in the League. The major powers shaped the nature of both organizations with veto powers in the League Council for the five permanent members and in the UN Security Council. Thakur sees more continuity in the dominance of the major powers in both organizations,

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1 For Mazower’s other studies, see *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (1999), *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950* (2005), and *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (2008).
such as FDR’s world policemen concept for the UN Security Council versus the General Assembly, and does not consider the UN a retreat from the egalitarianism of the League.

Guilhot endorses much of Mazower’s study, particularly the shift that Mazower demonstrates on international law and self-determination between the League and the UN. The “UN extended the latter at the expense of the former,” Guilhot notes, with an imitation of Nazi displacement of minority populations to try and remove the seeds of the next European conflict and affirm the hegemony of the nation state over collective minority rights. (4) Guilhot does raise the issue of the stance of opponents of internationalist thinkers, realists such as Hans Morgenthau or Carl Schmitt who worried about the disruption of the Eurocentric world order in the post-WWII period, and suggests that the “entire spectrum of international relations thinking was fundamentally premised on the fact of empire and the management of ‘race relations.’” (5-6) Finally, Guilhot suggests that Wilson's role is “downplayed a bit,” with Mazower suggesting that “Wilson did not know exactly what he wanted” when he arrived in Paris and relied on drafts on the League from Smuts and British officials and differed with them mainly on the future of the defeated powers and their colonies. (pp. 44-46) Guilhot, however, speculates that even without a concrete plan Wilson introduced a rhetoric of reform that weakened Eurocentrism in the interwar years.\(^2\)

What Winter considers missing from Mazower’s study, which he labels a reflection of a “cynical view of international history as a crass game of domination hidden in the rhetorical clouds of talk about rights or self-determination,” is the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950s and the evolution of human rights law in the past 60 years. Winter believes that this development “does not fit into Mazower’s dark landscape” when it brought a “regional flowering of human rights law” in a very different reconstructed Europe after 1945. Although the UN recognized the primacy of the state, Winter suggests that “like many other cynics, Mazower has gone too far” in discounting the challenges raised by human rights activists to state sovereignty. (3) Winter is impressed less by the fact that the UN has not been an “enchanted palace” than by its continued existence, its

operation as an international criminal court for Africans, Asians and Europeans, and its rights talk with international power.

Aydin offers three questions of international history for further discussion based on Mazower’s study. The first is on the transition from a world of empires to the contemporary nation-state. Aydin raises the important question: why, “given the imperial DNA of the UN” according to Mazower, did the post-colonial nationalist leaders join and successfully challenge the UN rather than form an alternative as advocated in the interwar years? Second, Aydin questions whether officials at the imperial center and in the anti-colonial movements were aware of the primacy of sovereignty over international law at the UN and whether there were “alternative voices and paths not taken during this process.” Third, Aydin suggests that Mazower’s imperial leaders, the British, Smuts, and Zimmern must have been aware of Asian and African anti-colonial, anti-racial perspectives during the interwar years and that, despite trying to ignore “rival visions of world order represented by anti-colonial thought,” the latter should be included in any account of the origins of the UN rather than when Nehru led the successful revolt against a Eurocentric UN. (4-5)

Participants:

Mark Mazower is professor of history at Columbia University. He has a doctorate in modern history from Oxford and an MA from SAIS Johns Hopkins. His works include: Inside Hitler’s Greece (Yale 1993), Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century (Penguin 2008); Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950 (HarperCollins, 2004) and Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe [Penguin, 2008). His books have been awarded the Wolfson Prize, the Duff Cooper Prize, the Premio Acqui and the LA Times Book Prize for History among others. He is currently working on the rise and fall of internationalism.

Cemil Aydin is an associate professor of history at the History and Art History Department of George Mason University. He is also the Director of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Islamic Studies. He studied at Boğaziçi University, İstanbul University, and the University of Tokyo before receiving his Ph.D. degree at Harvard University in 2002. Cemil Aydin has published extensively on the international history of the Muslim world and Asia, Orientalism, and global intellectual history. His recent publications include a book, Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought (Columbia University Press, 2007), a co-edited volume on “Critiques of the West in Iran, Turkey and Japan” in Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 26:3 (Fall 2006). Dr. Aydin is currently working on a book manuscript on the intellectual history of the idea of the Muslim World (forthcoming, Harvard University Press).

Nicolas Guilhot is senior researcher at the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and visiting scholar at NYU. He has previously taught at the London School of Economics and University of Tokyo. He is currently working on a history of international relations theory entitled Morgenthau’s Flight: International Relations from Decisionism to

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**Jay Winter** is Charles J. Stille Professor of History at Yale University, where he has taught since 2001. Previously he was Reader in history and Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. He has published *Dreams of peace and freedom: Utopian moments in the twentieth century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), and has completed with Antoine Prost, *René Cassin: Un Soldat de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 2011).
Mazower’s *No Enchanted Palace* represents the achievements of the craft of new international history, in which scholars at Columbia University’s Center for International History surely play a leading role. All the four chapters of the book, read together, show that the roots of the United Nations (UN) lie in the debates about the League of Nations and in the continuation of the main political concerns of the League, i.e., the preservation of great power imperial cooperation. Contrary to the dominant conceptions of the UN as an American project, Mazower’s book demonstrates the key role of British imperial internationalism in the design of the postwar UN system. The book takes us to the intellectual vision of some of the founders of the UN to tell us that the preservation of the British Empire and the perpetuation of white/Western rule over colonial possessions in Asia and Africa were a major intellectual impulse behind the creation of the United Nations.

When today’s commentators lament that the UN is not living up to the founding ideals of liberal internationalism, Mazower reminds us how un-liberal and imperial these ideals were from the very beginning. But he does not stop there. Mazower’s chapter on Nehru’s vision of postwar world order demonstrates the struggle over the soul of the UN in the post-colonial era, and the politics of decolonization at the UN General Assembly. Post-colonial leaders were keenly aware of the limitations of the UN system for their purposes, but instead of rejecting the UN system altogether, they both tried to inject an anti-colonial character into its direction or chose to work through the great power alliance at the UN in return for getting recognition of full national sovereignty in their post-colonial borders. Mazower masterfully shows how post-colonial critiques took over the spirit of the UN (despite the Cold War context) and how gradually the UN’s General Assembly turned from critic of the old colonial status quo to defender of a new global order of nation-states. As a result, an organization, originally created as an international umbrella in the interests of empire, eventually played a key role in legitimizing the independent countries forged out of disintegrating European empires.

Mazower’s timely invitation to us to reflect on the historical origins of the UN is not about showing its original sins or incurable diseases which will prevent the UN from becoming a truly internationalist global organization. On the contrary, his is an invitation to reflect on the ideas of international law, internationalism and global justice. How can we truly go beyond the Eurocentric foundations of most of our global values associated with the international order? Can there really be a universal order, in a Kantian sense, free from the contamination of power relations and value prejudices? Can the UN have the potential to embody international and universal values?

The book has important implications for the several ongoing debates in the field of international/global history. I have selected three major historiographic issues raised by the book in order to further the conversation initiated by its author.
Mazower’s book helps the reader to re-think the relations between power politics and ideas in the long-term transition from the world of empires in mid-19th century to the contemporary world of sovereign nation states by the 1970s. In nationalism inspired historiography, this transition seems very natural and inevitable. Anti-colonial nationalism was on the rise in the first half of the 20th century. Meanwhile, two world wars shattered the power and confidence of imperial centers, facilitating their consent to the vision of the new power of the U.S. No Enchanted Palace questions this smooth transition argument and underlines the overlooked importance of British imperial thought during the period of transition from the 1910s to the 1950s. Remembering the British imperial aspect of this transition illustrates that the origins of the UN were partly about the endgame of empire, and for the sake of protecting the empire, not against empires. The UN was not a pure utopian institution, uncontaminated by the interests of empire or the weaknesses of the League of Nations. On the contrary, the global vision of the British Empire and concerns about imperial cooperation in world politics were both key to the founding of the UN.

Mazower also emphasizes an ironic twist in this story: Instead of challenging the imperial agenda of the UN in order to create an alternative international institution, anti-colonial nationalists embraced and transformed the UN, especially through the politics of the General Assembly. This anti-colonial embrace of the UN seems different than the anti-colonial approach to the League of Nations: during the 1920s and 30s, there were calls to create a League of Asian Nations or a League of Muslim Nations in response to the Eurocentric and imperial character of the League. In the post-WWII period, there were less of such visions for an alternative to the UN, demonstrating that the UN clearly managed to include newly independent nation states and ensure their loyalty.

Given the imperial DNA of the UN Charter, it behooves us to ask how and why the UN achieved the participation of all new nations in the world. Why did post-colonial nationalist leaders not challenge this system and looked for a better alternative? Perhaps part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that, since the late 19th century, non-Western nationalists were hoping to create an international organization similar to the UN so that they could defeat the legitimacy claims of the imperial world order. But once this world organization was established by the great powers and British imperial internationalists, with an undemocratic Security Council mechanism, for anti-colonial nationalists, transforming the character of this defective UN was a better option than the impossible task of creating an alternative international organization. As important as this, however, was the bargain that the UN provided for the new nation states. During the long process of decolonization, there seemed to have emerged an implicit compromise between the imperial centers and newly independent nations over the ideal of national sovereignty. In fact, Mazower’s book shows the success of the ideals of sovereign equality of member states and its deference to national sovereignty as an acceptable compromise for both anti-colonial nationalists and the great power centers. Yet, the dark side of this compromise focused on national sovereignty and the UN membership (and its perks).
meant the weakening of the power of international law and its moral authority. International law as a set of norms independent of and above power politics has been sidelined by the new UN system. Legalist and moralist versions of internationalism were defeated by the global triumph of the sovereign state. The cost of this compromise for the human rights of millions of people in the world, as exemplified by the inability of the UN to stop the oppression of millions by the governments within sovereign nation states, became very clear since then.

Were historical actors, both at the imperial centers or in anti-colonial nationalist movements, aware of this grand bargain at the UN in favor of sovereignty and at the expense of international law? Were there alternative voices and paths not taken during this process? Recovering more of these voices, as Mazower does in his portrait of Raphael Lemkin’s vision of the UN, may help our current efforts to reform the UN system.

*International History of the Idea of Rights*

*No Enchanted Palace* shows the twisted and contentious politics of the development of the idea of human rights as a global value in the last century. There is a tendency to narrate the triumph of rights (whether national self-determination, minority or human rights) as a universal value in the last two centuries as an inevitable process in the transition from illiberal empires to the liberal age of nationalism. The narrative that emerges out of *No Enchanted Place* about the global struggles to protect various rights of humans challenges this linear narrative. In fact, one of the most important conclusions of Mazower’s book lies in showing the various global and internationalist approaches to the notion of “universal rights” that were suppressed, overlooked or simply denied during the process leading to the foundation of the UN. One was the notion of minority rights, which became a victim of the sanctity of national sovereignty. Moreover, minority rights were seen as contradictory to the ideal of preventing future wars (as they were seen as excuses for many wars in the past). In fact, Mazower hints at the irony of traumatic population transfers around the period of the UN’s foundation (many of which the UN condoned or tacitly approved). In fact, some of these population transfers in Europe were more drastic than what the German Nazi regime did for the same purpose. Mazower also reminds us of the tensions between the rhetoric of universal rights and their implementation at the UN. For example, he notes how all the universal rights embedded in early UN documents were promissory notes that the UN’s great power founders never intended to cash in on. In the third chapter, the depiction of the debate about collective minority rights symbolized by the opposing positions of two Jewish intellectuals, Raphael Lemkin and Joshep Schechtman, offers one of the best reflections on Zionism in terms of its non-essentialist arguments. In the process from 1945 to 1948, the idea of national self-determination and sovereignty trampled over the rights of minorities and even human rights, while the UN abandoned the League’s commitment to protecting minorities.

For the new generation of international historians, Mazower’s nuanced discussion of the non-linear narrative of the rise (and decline) of the “rights” regime should be very inspiring. We should see global values such as national self-determination, international law and minority rights in relation to their competing values and interpretations. Just to
give several examples, when William Gladstone seemed like a great champion of the rights of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire, his rights discourse was partly about restricting and ending the Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans and about justification for European-Christian rule over “barbarian” Muslims. Similarly, in the aftermath of WWI, the idea of national self-determination embodied in the Wilsonian Moment was partly weakening the calls for the notion of collective self-determination rights for Asians, Africans and Muslims, and was challenging the appeal of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian ideas. Finally, a focus on human rights by imperial powers during the interwar period was partly a strategy to defeat the calls for rights to self-determination. Thus, one should always be aware of the rights that are suppressed in relation to the rights that are given or gained.

I would ask Mark Mazower to further reflect on the implications of his narrative of competing agendas of national, minority and human rights during the process of the UN’s foundation. What are the implications of this model for the notion of international law, idea of universal values and international history?

The Question of Eurocentrism and Agency

On appearance, the intellectual history of the UN seems very Eurocentric. The main agents of this history are from the British Empire or the United States. With a focus on Nehru, Mazower partly balances this Eurocentric narrative about the emergence of universal or global values, including the idea of the United Nations. There were very mixed motives attributed to the UN from the very beginning, and in fact both imperial internationalist and anti-colonial internationalist motives were present, at times competing for the ‘soul’ of the new institution in its first two decades. Yet, British imperial internationalists had more influence over drafting the UN constitution. It is only after the foundation of the UN that non-Western actors seemed to play a key role in re-animating its ‘soul’ and re-defining the goals of the UN. The transition within the UN from a rhetoric and logic tolerant of empire to a forum for anti-colonial struggles is an important indication of the agency of non-Western and subaltern actors. In his section on Nehru, Mazower shows the merger of both a notion of pan-Asian solidarity and a true global internationalism, as Nehru perceived the UN as a non-Eurocentric forum for international cooperation. The struggle between Nehru and Smuts was also a struggle for the future of the UN and internationalism. Even though non-Western actors seemed more universalist, their commitment to international law and justice could also be compromised by the notion of national sovereignty and here Mazower shows that there are no “saints” in international history.

As a historian of non-Western thought, I was surprised to see the way Smuts and Zimmern exhibited very low regard for the counter public opinion represented by the rising anti-colonial nationalism: They seem to have been too confident of the superiority of the Christian and Hellenistic ‘civilization’ of the West, and too arrogant about the vision of world order espoused by non-Western figures. This confidence seemed out of touch with global trends given that, during the interwar period, non-Western intellectuals did formulate alternative narratives of world history, arguing that Asian, Muslim or African
civilizations were equal and in some respects even better than the white, western civilization. Both Smuts and Zimmern must have been familiar with these counter-civilizational claims, even when they insisted on the superiority of the Hellenistic, Christian, White, and Western civilization. For example, Zimmern interacted with Japanese and Chinese intellectuals during his work for the intellectual committee of the League of Nations. Event Smuts seems to have been a keen observer of Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism. Mazower notes that Smuts worried about the Japanese alliance with Black Africa or India’s revolt against the empire.

Given their awareness of global currents of non-Western thought, was British imperial internationalism of the interwar period as a reactionary vision of world order, highly aware of the rising moral power of the anti-colonial counter public opinion? If they were aware of the anti-colonial intellectual currents, how and why did British imperial internationalists choose to ignore the rival visions of world order represented by anti-colonial thought? Is there more that we historians can do to incorporate the subaltern or non-Western voices and visions about the world order into the story of emergence of international organizations and global values?
No Enchanted Palace is a slim volume whose importance is inversely proportional to its size. In a concise, fascinating and truly enjoyable volume, Mark Mazower sheds new light on the tradition of internationalist thought that led to the creation of the United Nations. One should mention straight away that No Enchanted Palace has all the qualities of what I would refer to as a real book – it addresses the specialist and the non-specialist public alike with true intellectual generosity, and reconnects the practice of the historian with the most pressing issues of the day.

Contemporary human rights advocates and scholars (if it is at all possible to tell them apart) are perpetuating a fundamental misunderstanding about the historical meanings and purposes invested in the institution by its various constituents and founders. This is the case whether they are extolling the vision behind the UN or lamenting that it fell short of its lofty goals. No Enchanted Palace suggests that the UN was less a fresh start than “basically a warmed-up League” (15), as many observers of the time did not fail to notice, albeit with fundamental differences to be discussed below. By virtue of its pedigree, the UN was steeped in an internationalist tradition that was ambiguous at best. Mazower’s central claim is that while much attention has been devoted to the Wilsonian vision and its role in shaping 20th century internationalism, both the League and the UN were in fact deeply informed by another, usually overlooked, political tradition: “British imperial thought” (13). Throughout the first half of the century, the British Empire was indeed the material basis that informed visions of international society, of which it provided a concrete approximation. The imperial template was taken for granted by many internationalist thinkers, who saw the League of Nations as an institutional mechanism that would shore up imperial possessions by sublimating, as it were, the principles of the British “Commonwealth”. For them, Empire was “a world community in the making” (90) and thus the true soul of the League; it was after Empire that international organization ought to be modeled.

The thread that runs through the four chapters that compose the book is the imperial lineage of the UN. In the first chapter, Mazower explores the entanglement of internationalism with imperialism through the fascinating figure of Jan Smuts, the South African premier who played a role in the establishment of both the League and the UN. A key contributor to the Preamble of the UN Charter, Smuts was also a fervent advocate of the preservation of white rule and a precursor of apartheid. His vision for the future of Empire rested on the conviction that only the involvement of the United States in the management of world order could secure the British possessions in the new era. Far from being an idiosyncratic case, Smuts belonged to a generation of internationalists who took for granted the Eurocentric nature of international affairs and the righteousness of the white, Anglo-Saxon rule over “backward” countries that did not yet enjoy the fruits of civilization. Their conviction was so deep-seated and obvious that it hardly needed to be articulated. (It is worth recalling that Andrew Carnegie – who founded among other philanthropies the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – endorsed the very same
racialized vision of world order and saw the Wilsonian project as the perfect vehicle for white rule.)

The internationalist vision that implicitly guided Smut’s political practice was certainly made explicit in the work of scholars such as Alfred Zimmern, who wrote extensively about international affairs at the time. While most available work on the subject tends to focus on the legalistic dimensions of liberal internationalism, the portrait of Zimmern in chapter 2 allows Mazower to lay out the moral and ethical aspects of the internationalist mindset. A revisionist history of the discipline of international relations has shown that interwar liberal internationalists were far from being the “idealists” depicted by the hard-nosed “realists” who took over the field in the postwar years. While disciplinary historians were certainly right to suggest that such thinkers as Zimmern, Angell or Mitrany were very pragmatic and political minds, they may have overshot their mark. Mazower is absolutely right to emphasize that there was, nonetheless, an important element of “idealism” in their approach. Imbued with classical culture, Zimmern saw the international role of the British through a Hellenistic lens. Ultimately, a peaceful world order would be achieved only through a benevolent global paideia which referred to intellectual cooperation with other civilized nations but which also dovetailed conveniently with the colonial situation. That education was a key component of international understanding was reflected in the involvement of Zimmer, as well as of many other interwar scholars (e.g. James T. Shotwell in the U.S., Henri Bonnet in France) in the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, which played an important role in coordinating the study of international affairs across different countries during the interwar period. The permanent conference in all possible matters was the instrument of this faith in the rational powers of the human mind and in the possibility of world community. The list of conferences convened by the League throughout these years reads indeed like a Borgesian catalogue of the fields of human knowledge. Scholars and politicians sought to establish universal standards and norms in all kinds of matters, from vitaminic classifications to maritime tonnage, syphilis research or the study of international relations. The same period saw philanthropic foundations invest in the development of the social sciences primarily as a means toward international cooperation and understanding – a tradition later to be resumed by UNESCO. The hopes placed in international law, therefore, were ultimately dependent upon the existence of an enlightened and peace-loving international public opinion, which would ensure that democratic governments respected their international obligations.

\footnote{1}{See e.g. Francis Anthony Boyle, \textit{Foundations of World Order: The Legalist Approach to International Relations. 1898-1922}, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.)}

Idealism was also present, in a very strict sense, in the neo-Hegelian sensibility that informed the internationalist vision of history as a rational process. The relation between Hegelianism and 20th century conceptions of world order is indeed a subject in its own right. Much is left to be said about its various instantiations, from Alfred Zimmern to Alexandre Kojève (who worked for the OSCE) or the Barnes-and-Noble version of Hegel more recently offered by Francis Fukuyama. Mazower shows very convincingly how this background, far from being secondary, provided one of the intellectual foundations of Wilsonian internationalism. If the shaping of an international community was a spiritual process before it was a legalistic one, it took the Hegelian form of a progress from the particular to the universal, in which the feeling of national belonging was seen to be the propaedeutic to a sense of international community. National self-determination was thus a key component of “a global order which worked through and encompassed the natural communitarian sentiment that was nationalism” (73). Nationalism was a force for the greater good. Wilsonian internationalism was thus seamlessly blended with an emphasis on the national form, as well as with ideas of “Commonwealth,” imperial interests and the postulate that some nations were politically immature and thus in need of guidance.

We should be grateful to Mazower for this healthy reminder, which runs through his chapters on Smuts and Zimmer. It is too often forgotten that nationalism was not only compatible with liberal internationalism but was one of its core components. The toughest critics of nationalism in the central decades of the 20th century were not internationalists like Zimmern, Shotwell or Wilson, but on the contrary realist thinkers like Hans Morgenthau, who deplored precisely the spiritual, expansive and universalistic element at work in nationalism (albeit from a very conservative point of view). Their critique of Wilson was often a critique of nationalism, however paradoxical this may sound today. And Mazower is right too when he points (102-103) at the ambiguities of the contemporary manifestations of a liberal internationalism that celebrates informal norms of international community while rolling out armored divisions in the name of freedom and in support of state-building. Set against the British imperial backdrop, American exceptionalism may not be so exceptional in the end.

The sanctity of the nation was thus inscribed in the ideological DNA of the United Nations. Chapters 3 and 4 explore what this meant for the protection of the minorities and for anticolonial struggles. In our humanitarian age, the UN is celebrated for the Declaration of Human Rights or the Convention on Genocide, and regarded as the bulwark of international legality. In joining in this praise, warns Mazower, we forget that these documents, far from yielding the purpose and the direction in which the UN was moving at the time, were isolated instances of legalism which nobody believed in any longer. Through his detailed study of the midcentury shift in the protection of minorities (chapter 3), Mazower recovers what is probably the most important subtext of the creation of the UN, namely the crisis of international law, which was obvious to all observers at the time, but that has somehow been obliterated since. While the League combined a belief in the virtues of international law with a Wilsonian commitment to national self-determination, the UN extended the latter at the expense of the former. This meant that the protection of minorities through legal instruments had to give way to a social engineering approach to population exchange, while the national principle was recognized as the linchpin of international stability.
Whether in its Nazi version or in its more liberal, social-scientific guise, the displacement of minorities was the hallmark of the times. Mazower analyzes the vast studies undertaken by lesser known figures such as the demographers Eugene Kulisher or Joseph Schechtman during the 1940s, who developed a technical approach to population transfers, which were widely expected to play a major role in the postwar order. Interestingly, the more famous émigré scholars are usually known for their defense of international legality, from Lauterpacht to Kelsen, but by the late 1940s, theirs was a lost cause. The social science of population transfer elaborated by Kulisher and Schechtman was proving far more influential than the legalistic approach of another representative of this internationalist and legalistic tradition, Raphael Lemkin. One of patron saints of the contemporary human rights liturgy, Lemkin was in fact an isolated man “swimming against the tide” (127) and his Convention became “little more than a plaything in the Cold War” (132). The shift to a conception of individual human rights represented by the 1948 Declaration was in fact the rhetorical coating for the total collapse of prewar notions of collective minority rights. Universalized national sovereignty was the new pillar of international stability, and the rights of minorities could be sacrificed on its altar. As a result, notes Mazower, the universalization of the nation-state through the UN found its corollary in the “the refugee camps and displaced minorities that accompanied [the] emergence [of new states]” (113). And here too, voices cautioning against the universal application of the national principle came from other quarters, remote from any form of internationalism. It is again Morgenthau who wrote that “in the recent past the consistent application of the idea of the national state in Central and Eastern Europe has reduced national minorities to the status of cattle, to be shipped away or to be slaughtered like cattle.”

The fourth and last chapter of the book follows some of the unintended consequences of the UN support for national self-determination. One of those was the relativization of Europe on the international scene. Another was the transformation of the UN General Assembly into a forum for the articulation of anticolonial claims. Because the League and then the UN were in part modeled after the idea of Commonwealth of nations, they were drawn – the UN especially – into the arbitrage of intra-imperial disputes. Coming full circle, the book brings us back to Smuts as the Union of South Africa came under attack in 1946 for the discriminatory treatment it imposed on its Indian minority. To the dismay of many, the clause of domestic jurisdiction reservation was trumped by a moral rhetoric combined with an emphasis on international stability (178-179), which led to the condemnation of South Africa by the General Assembly and Smuts’ defeat. It also showed that the organization created to preserve the Commonwealth was contributing to the demise of Empire. But while it gave an impetus to decolonization, the UN also contributed to disqualifying in the long run any form of anticolonial struggle that was not based upon the idea of national self-determination and appealed to other, non-national, forms of political autonomy.

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The great strength of *No Enchanted Palace* lies in its grasp of some of the realist premises of the UN beyond the mere role of the Great Powers, and of the demise of international law that provided the context of its creation. The trend at the time was “toward a territorialization of postwar planning” (113), i.e. toward a re-engagement with a notion of politics as a concrete spatial ordering rather than legal abstractions – something a realist such as Carl Schmitt would not have disavowed. Given the contempt in which postwar realist scholars and politicians held the institution, recovering this subtext is a major achievement, for it means peeling away successive layers of moralistic and legalistic understandings of the UN. This argument is in turn closely related to the overall shift in historical focus from the traditional emphasis on Wilson to the importance of the imperial British contribution.

*No Enchanted Palace* is fully convincing in this respect and succeeds in providing an alternative history – or prehistory, rather – of the United Nations. One then needs to reexamine the entire problématique of international thought in the mid-twentieth century in the light of Mazower’s contribution. This task was certainly not incumbent on Mazower, whose short volume only claims to offer “the sketch of an argument” (14), despite managing to pack an impressive amount of research and a sophisticated line of thinking in four highly readable vignettes. Nor can it be taken up within the scope of this short review. But this Symposium may be a good place to start such a conversation.

Mazower makes a splendid case about the imperial foundations of internationalist thought. But then, what about the intellectual opponents of these internationalist thinkers – the so-called “realists,” whose opposition I have intentionally mentioned repeatedly? Going beyond the scope of *No Enchanted Palace*, one could make the argument that realist thinkers were just as much influenced by the colonial situation, albeit in a different way. It seems indeed that the existence of imperial possessions or the mere possibility of colonialism constituted the inarticulate premise of all thinking about international order at the time. Whether we read Carl Schmitt – no friend of the League, to be sure – Hans Morgenthau or later Raymond Aron (to take the example of three major thinkers of international relations none of whom can be mistaken for a liberal internationalist or a colonial administrator), we find the same idea: the basic precondition of European stability was “the wide expanses of three continents” (Morgenthau) that were available for appropriation, thus ensuring the limitation of war between the great European powers. In their writings of the late 1940s, these authors were indeed anxious about the saturation of colonial space, the displacement of the Eurocentric world order triggered by America’s new role in world affairs, and the possibility that such trends might signal the end of the classical balance of power. Somehow, this is not very different from the thinking of a Jan Smuts.

Could it be that this imperial pattern was not specific to internationalist thought, then? This in turn would mean that the entire spectrum of international relations thinking was fundamentally premised on the fact of empire and the management of “race relations,” as
Robert Vitalis shows in a forthcoming study. The crisis of the old European order was thus experienced across a wide range of intellectual traditions, progressive or reactionary, liberal internationalist or realist, but all a product of their time and hence wedded to the imperial idea.

Mazower thus clears the last obstacles to seeing that the way the story of international thought has been told so far as an opposition between peace-loving, law-abiding internationalists and power-focused, state-centered realists – as well as the contemporary versions of this debate – obscures the deeper unity of imperialism as the unarticulated foundation of world order that unites them. He compels us to think beyond the nationalist/internationalist, realist/idealist divides, and to think further about what could be a genuine alternative to a language of international politics crafted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which is still ours today. Is there a way to think about international relations that not only avoids these false dichotomies but gets rid altogether of a entire political, legal and moral grammar compromised by its imperial origins? Clearly, if there is such an alternative, one should look for it outside the current field of IR, in voices that were not allowed to shape the discipline, even though – or probably because – they saw through the collusion of nationalism and imperial internationalism.

What makes Mazower’s story so compelling is also that it is about Empire as form rather than content. As a forma mentis, the imperial mindset could outlive its territorialized projection because it was eventually detached from it and became the principle of international organization. But it is precisely this formal existence that raises the question of Wilson’s role, which is downplayed a bit in No Enchanted Palace, despite protests to the contrary. Mazower is certainly right to suggest that, between Smuts and Zimmern, much of the political project we know as Wilsonianism was actually ‘made in England’ (arguably a better label than ‘made in the USA’ whenever shoes, motorbikes or even international politics are concerned). Wilson, it seems, did not have any concrete plan to flesh out his universalistic ideas and had to fall back on preexisting British templates. “The real problem,” Mazower writes, “was that Wilson did not know exactly what he wanted” (44). His contribution seems to have been limited to providing a tone, a rhetoric, a way of talking about the world and about the direction in which it was going, and not much else. This may well be the case, and not being a historian myself I would certainly defer to Mazower in this

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5 It is not a coincidence that Mazower compares today’s new internationalism to a Herrschaftsfrei version of Hardt and Negri’s Empire (103). It is probably not a coincidence either that Hardt and Negri’s attempt at moving from form to content recently ended up producing a volume called Commonwealth.
regard. But even if all Wilson contributed to international thought was a new political language, wouldn’t it be worth considering in all its effects and consequences? The question is worth raising, for it not only points to a methodological issue à la Skinner about the pragmatics of political languages, but also to a wider historiographical question, namely the role of the United States in the crisis of the Eurocentric order. There is indeed another way to look at Wilson’s role in this story, which is fully compatible with Mazower’s narrative.

Could it be that Wilson’s contribution was crucial not despite the fact that he had no concrete proposal for the League, but precisely because he had none? In this view, Wilson becomes a key figure in the crisis of politics as a concrete relation to concrete spatial goals, precisely because his vision remains pitted at the level of political abstractions no longer related to concrete situations (the British, by contrast, had very clear goals). This, incidentally, is Schmitt’s interpretation of Wilson. For the German jurist, Wilson’s contribution resided precisely in its emptiness, but this emptiness had dramatic consequences. The emergence of an abstract language of politics with a universalistic pretense was seen as the correlate of the irruption of America onto the international stage, and the cause that precipitated the crisis of Eurocentrism. What such an interpretation of Wilson suggests, then, is that the “relativization” of Europe, which Mazower associates with the creation of the UN and the inflation of new states may be traced back to the role of the new state par excellence, America, and to the years of the League, where the United States exerted de facto influence. Mazower does not fail to note that the League still operated tacitly under a Eurocentric understanding of international law – but a slightly different treatment of Wilson may suggest that this understanding was already in its terminal crisis.

This, again, does not take anything away from Mazower’s impressive achievement, which necessitated some sort of provisional bracketing, as it were, of our obsession with Wilson. *No Enchanted Palace* is certainly one of the most intelligent and wide-ranging interpretations of the tectonic shifts that realigned our notions of international politics in the mid-20th century, and its timely publication in an age of renewed internationalist fervor will hopefully give pause to enthusiasts and strike some sobering notes. Nothing, indeed, is politically more dangerous than the historical amnesia possessing today’s missionaries of rights-based civilization.
This is a splendidly conceived and executed book on the UN’s intellectual antecedents, beautifully written, slim in size, sweeping in scale and rich in pickings. If “dreams of a past that had never existed” are “a poor guide to what might lie ahead” (189), then Mazower has performed a great service in shining a historian’s spotlight on the past as it really was. The UN came into being in a period of great flux. In the midst of another transformative period in world order, understanding the role of ideas, ideology and power – and of human agency – in giving structure to that order is important for scholars and diplomats alike.

Inis Claude traced the roots of the League and the UN to the confluence of three streams: the Concert of Europe, the Hague system and public international unions. Napoleon imposed temporary order and unity on Europe through conquest. The other European powers set up an alternative Concert system in reaction, transforming the original impulse of a military alliance for defeating Napoleon into the political goal of preventing a similar domination of Europe by any one power in the future. The Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 broadened international relations in participation and agenda with voice for lesser powers and seats for non-Europeans. With their emphasis on mediation, conciliation and inquiry, they also demonstrated a rationalistic and legalistic approach to international disputes. The revolutions in transport and communications technologies added a functionalist dimension to the growth of international machinery for facilitating and regulating interstate commerce and conduct.

For romantics, the UN can do no wrong and is the solution to all the world’s problems. The UN exists to bring about a world where fear is changed to hope, want gives way to dignity, and apprehensions are turned into aspirations. To cynics, it is the symptom of many of the world’s problems and suffers from exaggerated claims, inept leadership, a bloated bureaucracy, a politicized agenda, a preference for finger-pointing over problem-solving, jurisdictional squabbles, wasteful spending, lack of accountability and a congenital inability to reform structures and behavior.

Mazower draws attention to the mixed motives behind the drafting of the UN Charter. Too many contemporary observers – especially advocates and practitioners – believe that the problems afflicting the UN betray its original vision and purposes when in fact many clauses were often drafted deliberately to produce suboptimal outcomes. For Claude, the UN Charter was “a composite product” of past experience in international institutions and organizations, wartime planning among the allies, great power leadership, hard negotiations at San Francisco, and public pressures for the noble vision of “a just and durable peace” (Swords Into Plowshares, 4th ed. 1964, p. 58).

International Relations is shaped by the interplay of power and ideas. Mazower is right to call out the liberal institutionalists for their historical amnesia in believing that Washington is less interested in ruling the world than in creating a world of rules (12). Today’s laws reflect the will and wishes of the victors of yesterday’s power struggles; today’s
international rules and global norms reflect yesterday's power distribution. In addition to being built around a core of great powers with the capacity, right and duty to assert world leadership, the League was “an instrument for a global civilizing mission” (21) through the progressive incorporation of the non-Western world into international (that is, essentially European) law, and a means of backstopping British imperial world leadership in partnership with the U.S.

The center of the multilateral order cannot hold if the power and influence embedded in international institutions is significantly misaligned with the distribution of power in the real world. The relationships between governor and governed, political organs and groups evolve, change and adapt over time within the framework of the original constitution. A constitution must be understood in the context of its time even as it provides continuity from what preceded through to what follows; and it must be understood as an attempted compromise between the unequal access to power and influence and the shared vision that forms the essential bond to constitute a community.

The demonstration of the clear limits to U.S. power in Iraq and Afghanistan has made developing countries less fearful of “superior” Western power. The catalogue of abusive practices in the war on terror and the financial collapse have made them less respectful of Western values and ideas. As Brazil, China and India emerge as important growth centers in the world economy, the age of the West disrespecting the rest’s role, relevance and voice is ebbing. As power and influence seep out of the U.S.-led trans-Atlantic order and migrate toward Asia and elsewhere, how will the transition to restructured international governance be managed, and by whom?

Mazower provides a valuable service by sourcing the origins of the UN to some seminal personalities and events before and after its establishment. He is particularly impressive in showing how the vision of racial nationalism-cum-imperial internationalism was articulated by Jan Smuts of South Africa at the time of the League’s creation, during the interwar period, and then again in the creation of the UN, only to be demolished by India’s Jawaharlal Nehru in the first decade of the UN’s operation. Of such little steps of irony does the march of history consist. If the stirring rhetoric of Smuts echoes the vast frontier landscape of 19th century South Africa, Nehru’s eloquent call to arms in defense of interracial human equality and dignity foreshadows the shifting normative architecture of world order of the 21st century. Mazower’s great achievement is to show how the UN provides the ideological bridge from one to the other.

Smuts opposed the two world wars because civil war among Europeans threatened their hold and civilizing mission over the natives. Like the British with the League (42), the U.S. has sought a UN that is “effective” against others but has no independent executive powers that can encroach on Washington’s freedom of action. The Mandates system was devised by the League to reconcile the British Dominions’ demand to annex defeated Germany’s colonies with the rhetoric of Wilsonian idealism (44). The tendency to dress strategic and commercial motives in moral self-righteousness and the language of international ideals and universal values will be less surprising to those from former colonies than to Westerners. They would surely stand to cheer Mazower when he says that “the question of
who should decide what is good for the world seems to remain as self-evident to today's international moralists as it did a century ago” (103).

Chapter Two on Alfred Zimmern is less satisfying, although the strand of a general international agency that takes on some of the core functions of a modern state and fosters an embryonic sense of world citizenship is a critical component of the UN's organizational and ideational identity. Zimmern was more influential with respect to UNESCO than the UN.

Chapter Three is fascinating for drawing attention to the unfinished project of “preventing national minorities from becoming a major source of international conflict” (105). The League failed to satisfy the aspirations of many minorities while irritating governments by its attempted intrusions into internal affairs. The UN has lost the confidence of both India (for interference) and Pakistan (for ineffectualness) over Kashmir, not to mention of Israelis and Palestinians. Yet out of this League history came the struggle for the Genocide Convention and the subsequent advances in criminalizing internal state conduct and imposing international criminal accountability. Mazower overdraws the tension between the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (130), rejecting the claim that they are two rivulets of a single stream of growing humane consciousness. What the chapter does show is that the power of human rights norm entrapment was alive and well even in the interwar period. And it also underlines the continuity of the silence of Palestinian voices in the corridors of power that decide the fate of Middle Eastern geopolitics.

There are echoes in the past of some of the foibles of the present: pace Francis Fukuyama’s end of history, “Well before the Second World War, the idea that the world was converging on the values of a single international civilization... was starting to look willfully self-congratulatory” (98). The importance of the Commonwealth as a model for the United Nations, showing how national and international organizations can be mutually reinforcing, is novel and interesting. The hubris of the imperial mindset is wonderfully captured in the statement by U.S. Undersecretary of State Sumner Wells that it would take “a thousand years for Portuguese Timor to gain independence” (152). The new nationalists had a firmer grasp of history's tide. Condemning British efforts to restore Dutch and French colonial control in Asia, Nehru presciently remarked in 1946 that “One decadent empire tries to help another still more ramshackle empire and in this process speeds up the process of its own dissolution” (170).

Under Nehru’s international leadership in the fight against apartheid in South Africa, “the letter of the Charter was trumped by the spirit of human rights and moral anger” (179). Following the logic of norm entrapment, the developing countries who had largely internalized Western norms of statehood and sovereignty felt the sting of “legitimate but illegal” humanitarian intervention as the sun set on the twentieth century.

Interesting and important, the book is nevertheless an incomplete guide to the origins and understanding of the UN, for Mazower is no expert on it. Arguably, this lends his analysis an appealing freshness. But at times he attacks straw targets and in places the analysis and literature coverage is thin. The sole citation to recent UN reform efforts is an unpublished
paper when there exists a fairly extensive literature. He belabors the generally accepted point that the UN was in essence a “warmed up” League (15) and misidentifies the responsibility to protect as “the right to protect” (24). Most scholars would question the description of NATO as a collective security organization (196).

Mazower understates the importance of the UN’s origins as a wartime military alliance among Britain, the Soviet Union and the U.S. The self-cancelling sermons of Smuts and Nehru notwithstanding, the Big Three were never going to subordinate their concrete individual interests to any abstract conception of the international interest.

It’s difficult to see, on Mazower’s own evidence, why “the UN represented a deliberate retreat from the League’s comparative egalitarianism back to the great power conclaves of the past” (149). Mazower writes that the veto power in the UN Security Council was granted to the major powers in order to ensure their membership in the new organization and describes this as a major departure from the League (149–50). The five permanent members of the League Council had veto power as well, as did its four elected members. That is, the number of countries with veto power declined in the UN. There has been another major democratization since the League, with ten elected against five unelected positions in the Security Council.

The League “had been an instrument of empire and it had offered a basically imperial conception of world governance” (194). The UN was more faithful to the principle of self-determination and represented a community of nations respectful of sovereign equality while acknowledging the primacy of great powers. Both organizations “spoke for humanity but acted through national governments” (194). In both, normative solidarity coexisted uneasily alongside institutionalized global hierarchy and the shared acceptance of legal and diplomatic norms of the interstate system. The UN Charter begins with “We the peoples.” In reality, as Alexander Solzhenitssyn said, the people of the world are served up to the designs of governments. As with U.S. constitutional evolution, more important than the textual differences between the League Covenant and the UN Charter have been the interpretation, application and enforcement of the agreed rules “shaped by fluctuations in the climate of values and norms” (196).

On the penultimate page (202), Mazower hints at but neither raises nor answers a fundamental question: can and does the UN deserve to survive if it can do so only by being marginalized? The UN must strike a balance between realism and idealism, between the will of governments and the wish of peoples, and between the aspirations for a better world and performance in the real world. It must tread a fine line so as neither to become irrelevant to the security imperatives of major powers nor to become a mere rubber stamp for their designs. Its decisions must reflect current realities of military and economic power without neglecting the vision of one world.
No one has done more to undermine older narratives about the history of the twentieth century as the onward march of freedom than Mark Mazower. In his incisive account of Europe as a ‘dark continent’, as well as in important studies of twentieth-century German and Greek history, Mazower has dismantled comfortable interpretations of the long sweep of progressive thinking triumphing over authoritarian adversaries first in the Nazi empire and then in the Soviet empire.

Now he has turned his attention to the long-sweep of human rights as the meta-narrative of European history, and found it to be profoundly mistaken. Focusing on the overlap between the history of the League of Nations and the United Nations, his claim is that the League’s efforts to defend minority rights were, while ultimately futile, still much more powerful than the vague rhetorical commitment to human rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in Paris in 1948. What is more, in the late 1940s and after, the anti-colonial movement of the non-aligned bloc, led by India, exposed the neo-colonial assumptions of the founders of the UN, assumptions which Mazower traces back to the first days of the League’s existence in 1919. The key figure in this alternative narrative is Jan Christiaan Smuts, the South African statesman, whose presence and influence in Paris in 1919 and in San Francisco in 1945 was, Mazower argues, indicative of the aims of the founders of both institutions to use international organizations to preserve imperial power in general and white domination of world affairs in particular.

Here is the thrust of arguments elegantly presented in four chapters, arising from lectures at Princeton University, on Smuts, Alfred Zimmern, Jewish writers on minorities and population exchange, and Nehru. The line he traces is clear: Empire drove the development of international organizations until those very organizations were taken over by black and brown statesmen no longer prepared to tolerate the smug hypocrisy of British, French, and, more recently, American diplomats whose cynicism and hunger for world dominance have been masked by the rhetoric of human rights. And even when the UN turned ‘global’, the majority of countries in the General Assembly, like the veto-wielding members of the Security Council, were even more fiercely devoted to the principle of state sovereignty than were than nations which formed the League of Nations at the end of the First World War. In this context, the League’s commitment to defend minority rights appears to be the highpoint of a century in which minorities have been persecuted with impunity all over the world, from the Armenians in Turkey in 1915 to Palestinians in Gaza in 2010. So much for progress; so much for the UN; so much for the long march of the international human rights movements.

Mazower’s book is compelling for many reasons. He rightly punctures the pretensions of comfortable Whiggish interpretations of the history of human rights as a long march from 1789 to 1989, and urges us not to expect much at all from the United Nations, given its origins in the neo-imperial strategies of 1945 and beyond. It is ‘no enchanted palace’ indeed. And when claims are made by other historians (this one included) that human rights have had a life of their own which went beyond the imperial assumptions of many of
those, particularly Anglo-Saxon, figures Mazower demolishes with such skill and pleasure, Mazower’s view is characteristically caustic. ‘Utopias are not to be ignored’, he writes, ‘But when historians confuse the utopianism of their subject with their own it is easy to be led astray’ (6).

Astray from what? The answer is probably astray from a cynical view of international history as a crass game of domination hidden in the rhetorical clouds of talk about rights or self-determination. Here Mazower is in a long tradition, especially well developed in Britain, of history as debunking the self-deceptions of colleagues, who want to colour history in more soothing tones than it really is. Mazower is an historian closer to the aesthetic sensibility of Francis Bacon than to Monet.

And there is much truth in what he says. The problem is that it is at best a partial truth, very much like that advanced by his targets in this book. It may be useful to consider what he leaves out of this book, in order to take the measure of his real achievements in it.

What is missing is the creation in 1950 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the successful evolution of human rights law in the 60 years which have followed. Where did this initiative come from? The project to create the Council of Europe and through it the European Court of Human Rights was a conservative brainchild, with its leading exponents being Duncan Maxwell Fyfe, British prosecutor at Nuremberg, and Winston Churchill himself. No utopian nonsense here, just an attempt to put a stop to the social democratic ascendancy which had confined Churchill for the time being to the opposition. And like many other men out of office, he found a way to get back into the headlines, at the Hague in 1948, championing a new, reconstructed non-Communist Europe built on the bedrock of human rights.

It took 10 years for the European convention on human rights to be ratified, and for the court to get off the ground. But in the 50 years which have followed, it has constructed something which does not fit into Mazower’s dark landscape. European law has been written into the legal systems of all countries signing the convention; even Britain accepted European law as superior to its own jurisprudence in 1999. Here is a small, but significant change in European life, one with real potential for affecting the life of the European Union as a whole. Turkey will have to sign the European convention if it is to achieve its strategic goal of entry into Europe. That will not be easy since the distance between any meaningful configuration of human rights and the operations of the Turkish army and security services is, to say the least, daunting.

How does Mazower’s dismissal of human rights as naïve confusion between beliefs and facts, or as persiflage or hypocrisy take the measure of what happened to Gustavo Pinochet on his ‘health care’ visit to London in 1998? On the initiative of a Spanish magistrate, Baltasar Garzon, Pinochet was arrested in London, after Garzon sent the arrest warrant to London, where it was served on the astonished General. He was even more astonished that the Law Lords deemed that the writ was legal, since Pinochet’s defence of immunity from arrest, as a former head of state did not hold; why? Because it was no part of the brief of a head of state to order torture and assassination, which the parents of six Spaniards.
murdered in Buenos Aires by Chilean agents, claimed Pinochet had done. Imagine that. The human rights regime which Mazower reduces to a figment of historians’ wishful thinking managed to rise up out of the ethers to bag one of the biggest and darkest fish in the whole pool of sharks among retired statesmen/killers. It matters not one jot that Jack Straw, the Labour Home Secretary, found a way to get Pinochet out of the country, too ‘ill’ Straw opined, to stand trial, nor that Pinochet miraculously recovered and died not in jail but in his own bed. Something has happened which Mazower needs to take note of, and it has happened it Europe, one of whose premier historians he happens to be.

Mazower is right to deflate absurd claims as to there having been a human rights revolution in the United Nations, and the story of the evisceration of the Human Rights Commission at the behest of the three big imperial powers dominating the post-1945 UN, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union is one that must be told, and retold. But the regional flowering of human rights law is not a separate story; it is one that arises from a simple fact. The reconstruction of Europe after 1945 was legal and constitutional as much as it was economic. The outcome is a Europe very different from that dominating the continent in the interwar years, as Mazower has shown with such flare. James Sheehan, an eminent German historian, and no starry-eyed idealist, asks the question in the title of his latest book *Where have all the soldiers gone?* His answer is that states have taken on a different coloration in Europe, one less to do with waging war than with providing welfare. That redefinition of the meaning – and violent potential – of the European state system was precisely what René Cassin and other lawyers aimed to produce through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments. And it is at least plausible to argue that, to a limited but palpable degree, they did it. Human rights were initially a pacifist idea, something emerging out of the widespread revulsion among veterans in some parts of interwar Europe, veterans who had had enough of war. These same lawyers, surveying the wreckage of the League of Nations, with its minority rights provisions, did not want to go back there. Instead, and under the bombs of the Luftwaffe during the Blitz, they moved towards configuring human rights as universal, not international, matters. After the war, one of them, Cassin got the UN to agree to a Universal (not international) Declaration of Human Rights, and then, while watching the destruction of the Human Rights Commission, went in another direction – towards Strasbourg and the European Court. That is where his primary achievement – his championing of the right of individual petition – came to fruition. He managed to put the individual into international law, not as a member of a minority which was protected as such, but as a single person who had the right to challenge his own nation state or any other which violated his rights.

This achievement, limited and with no certain future, does show that norms matter; to be sure, not as much as their framers hoped they would, but they matter nonetheless as benchmarks, as standards, which exist and are vividly illuminated even by their violation, in Turkey, as in any other country. My point is simply that like many other cynics, Mazower has gone too far. While documenting with a sure hand the huge shortcoming of the UN and the racial assumptions of many of its founders, he has obscured in these essays the way in which human rights activists questioned the limits to the absolute sovereignty of the state, and raised issues still worth reflecting on, as a mere glance at the history of the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay would attest.
This is far from being an American problem alone. When the question emerged as to whether Britain needed a second vote of the UN in order to wage war legally in Iraq in 2003, Tony Blair’s senior legal advisors took cover. They equivocated and hummed and hawed, because they knew that the question mattered. And the answer they gave was a very hesitant (and now in retrospect a very embarrassing) maybe. It is true that that ‘maybe’ was all Blair needed to march to war, but he did not take his country with him, and in the general election about to be held, his party is likely to pay a high price for his arrogance and blindness [this review was written before the election of 6 May 2010 –ed.]. Of course, the war-making power of states was there, and it was used, but legal norms and procedures mattered then, and they matter now. And this is not nothing.

What is remarkable, in my view, is not that the UN has been ‘no enchanted palace’, but that it still exists, and that it operates today an international criminal court, and has empowered investigations of human rights abuses in parts of the world where Africans and Asians have been put in the dock, alongside good Europeans like Milosevic and Karadzic. There is more than one set of ideological origins of these developments, and it seems absurd to ignore those which go back to the work of the League of Nations and the UN in its early days. What that work accomplished was to put what Mary Ellen Glendon calls rights talk permanently in the conversation about international power. It gets drowned out and distorted, to be sure, but why deny that it exists, and that its history goes back to institutions which failed initially to realize the potential inherent in the idea that human rights matter, but which set precedents for others to address these matters in ways remote from the imperial trappings of the League and the UN in its early days? To be sure, caution is necessary here; my point is not that that states, from China to Zimbabwe, and their leaders no longer violate the rights of their citizens. It is instead that something small, but real, has changed in the ways we talk about rights, and in the way international law approaches conflicts between states and citizens over rights violations. Is this a ‘rights revolution’? The answer must be no, but does it constitute more than a continuation of the outlook of imperialists like Smuts and Zimmern? Surely the answer is yes, but the way such conflicts play out today and tomorrow is bound to remain uncertain.

The problem with this book is not that it is wrong; it is that it is incomplete, and takes the part for the whole. The intellectual origins of both the UN and the human rights movement are broader and more varied that this brief book suggests. It is time to rewrite the history of human rights, not as a ‘100 years march’, nor as the realization of a utopia, but as a political struggle, changing over time and place, filled with the messiness of any other political struggle. To write that history is a task that still remains to be done.
I am very grateful to all four reviewers for their comments which have been so helpful to me in elucidating and clarifying some of the many loose ends, points of confusion and inconsistencies in the book.

Cemil Aydin homes in on three major issues. The first is the transition from the world of empires to the world of nation-states -- a process he suggests that was rockier and less obvious in its outcomes than nationalist historiographies suggest. No Enchanted Palace (NEP) argues that some international organizations originated as an effort to extend the life of empire, not to shorten it, and sets the UN in the context of this effort. Aydin thereby conveys more clearly than I did what I was trying to do. And he raises an interesting question: why did anti-colonial activists continue to believe in the United Nations when they had been so alienated by the League of Nations? The answer is surely that they were heartened by the anti-colonial sentiments and backgrounds of the Superpowers in the Cold War and also that they saw the possibility – certainly at some point in the late 1950s – of making the UN [more precisely the General Assembly] their own, which they had never managed to do [after 1919] with the League. [On the contrary, the League’s acquiescence in 1935 in the Fascist Italian conquest of Ethiopia showed to what extent the League remained tolerant of the imperialist logic of a former generation.] How far the UN’s jettisoning of international law and its embrace of sovereignty also attracted nationalist elites in the colonial world is a critical question for future research.

Aydin suggests secondly that NEP challenges linear narratives of the triumph of human rights. Here I plead guilty to having been influenced by the work of Samuel Moyn in particular, but also of Jan Eckel [not that they can in any way be held accountable for any deficiencies or shortcomings in my account]. This does not mean denying the emergence of contemporary concern with Human Rights but rather doubting that 1945 marked a human rights revolution, and -- as importantly -- suggesting that human rights constitutes but one kind of rights regime. Not all rights rise on the same tide, as it were.

His third point concerns Eurocentrism. Aydin asks to what extent were British imperial internationalists concerned by the rising moral power of anti-colonial counter-civilisational claims. The answer would appear – to generalize – to be, not much, unless they were perhaps stationed in south Asia. Even then, the concern was pragmatic, and it was among those most concerned with anti-colonial opposition that pessimism about the fate of European or western civilization was likely to be strongest. Beyond lies a key methodological issue: how should the historian incorporate non-Western voices and visions about world order into the story of the emergence of international organizations? [Ramesh Thakur rightly raises this too in regard to incorporating Palestinian voices]. I do this a little through the figure of Nehru. Much more can and should be done in this vein – building, as Aydin himself has done, on the writings of Japanese, Turkish and Arab intellectuals, for instance, if we are truly to break with the older style of interpretation that understood the story as the ‘expansion’ of an international society based on European values.
Nicolas Guilhot, from whose brilliant work on the history of international relations theory I have learned an enormous amount, notes that I highlight the British imperial rather than the U.S. Wilsonian tradition behind the founding of the UN. Perhaps I exaggerate the case for seeing empire itself as the template for world order. In any event, like Guilhot I seek to take seriously the idealism of the idealists: the importance of Hegel, of reaching from the particular to the universal – a ‘benevolent global Paideia’ that is so hard for us to empathise with today. In this sense, Guilhot and I are in agreement that a history of international institutions needs also to be a history of philosophies and ideas since so much depended through the early 20th century in faith in the rational powers of the human mind as the ultimate underpinning of the world community.

Guilhot’s questions interest me too: wasn’t empire often the concern behind the Realist critics of imperial internationalists as well? Carl Schmitt, Hans Morgenthau and Raymond Aron – the saturation of colonial space concerned them all. This was, in other words, a crisis of the old European order experienced across a range of disciplines and intellectual traditions. We need to look afresh at the Realist critique of the League – in terms perhaps of interwar revisionism. Once again, the history of international organization is inseparable from the problem of how to think afresh about international relations – eschewing our 19th century inheritance. I liked Guilhot’s suggestion that Woodrow Wilson’s strength was his lack of ideas. What mattered in this reading in Wilson’s case was ‘a tone, a rhetoric, a new way of talking about the world...’ He was, in other words, crucial precisely because he had no concrete ideas for the League of Nations. Guilhot thus invites us to see him as the catalyst for the emergence of an abstract language of politics with universalistic pretensions, a critic of the eruption of U.S. power. The Schmittian inspiration for this approach does not negate its fruitfulness. Indeed it is a helpful starting-point for understanding one of the key points I try to make in NEP: that the modalities of the transition from British imperial to U.S. world hegemony should be studied much more closely by historians of international norms and institutions than has been the case to date.

Thakur makes some telling points. Inspired in reaction to recent neo-idealist readings of the UN, NEP says little about the voluminous reform literature of the past twenty years, and perhaps makes too much of its roots in the League. How far the UN represented a retreat to 19th century Great Power politics, and how far – even in the Security Council – it marked a democratization of international politics is one area where we differ. It may be true that fewer countries possessed a veto power in the UN than in the League; but they were the countries that mattered, and although they were capable of agreement – not only at the end of the Cold War but also amid it, as for instance in the expansion of UN membership in 1955 – they also made sure that the power of the General Assembly was decisively checked in the 1970s and henceforth largely marginalized the UN itself.

Professor Jay Winter suggests that some important elements that are omitted in my telling of the story need to be considered to redress its cynicism about the emergence of a human rights revolution after 1945. The first he touches on is the European Convention on Human Rights. But I do not think that the appearance of the ECHR invalidates my argument; on the contrary, it reinforces the view I develop that the new UN marked the collapse of European
normative influence in the world and encouraged a state of affairs in which European norm-making was henceforth focused on Europe itself. And I leave open the issue, discussed recently by other scholars, of when precisely the ECHR ceased to be pious hope and started to exercise a decisive influence on European legal thinking. Winter says it took a decade. Others would argue even longer. I certainly would not wish to argue that the human rights regime that emerged by the end of the twentieth century was a figment of anyone’s imagination, only that its origins deserve close scrutiny. I am not sure that this should be termed cynicism, rather an insistence on the primacy of the historical method. The utopianism and the remarkable individuals whom Winter has celebrated in a recent stimulating book form part of that history, and we have learned much from his telling of it. No Enchanted Palace looks elsewhere in an effort to shed light on the circumstances that conditioned and shaped such utopianism and made it realizable.