

The Cecil Plan, January 14, 1919

(The changes from the earlier draft are noted.)

DRAFT SKETCH OF A LEAGUE OF NATIONS

I

ORGANIZATION

THE General Treaty setting up the League of Nations will explicitly provide for regular conferences between the responsible representatives of the Contracting Powers.

These conferences would review the general condition of international relations, and would naturally pay special attention to any difficulty which might seem to threaten the peace of the world. They would also receive, and as occasion demanded discuss, reports as to the work of any international administrative or investigating bodies working under the League.

These conferences would constitute the pivot of the League. They would be meetings of statesmen responsible to their own sovereign Parliaments, and any decisions taken would therefore, as in the case of the various Allied Conferences during the War, have to be unanimous.

The following form of organization is suggested:—

1. THE CONFERENCE.

Annual Meeting of Representatives¹ of British Empire, United States, France, Italy, Japan, and any other States recognized by them as Great Powers.

Quadrennial Meeting of representatives of all States included in the League.

There should also be provision for the summoning of *special conferences* on the demand of any one of the Great Powers, or, if there were danger of an outbreak of war, of any member of the League. (The composition of the League will be determined at the Peace Conference. Definitely untrustworthy and hostile States² should be excluded. Otherwise, it is desirable not to be too rigid in scrutinising qualifications.³)

2. For the conduct of its work the Inter-State Conference will require a *Permanent Secretariat*. The General Secretary or

¹ Earlier draft read "Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries."

² Earlier draft added "e.g. Russia, should the Bolshevist Government remain in power."

³ Earlier draft added: "since the smaller powers will in any case not exercise any considerable influence."

Chancellor should be appointed by the Great Powers, if possible choosing a national of some other country.

3. INTERNATIONAL BODIES.¹

The Secretariat would be the responsible channel of communication between the Inter-State Conference and, so far as possible, all International bodies. It would also form the connecting link between the States members of the League and the Inter-State Conference. The International Bodies would fall into three classes:

- (a.) *Judicial, i. e.*, the existing Hague organization, with any additions or modifications made by the League, or by the Peace Treaties.
- (b.) *International Administrative Bodies*, such as a Transit Commission for regulating international waterways and perhaps railways. To these would be added bodies already formed under existing treaties (which are very numerous and deal with every important interest, *e. g.*, Postal Union, International Labour Office, &c.)
- (c.) *International Commissions of Enquiry, e. g.*, Commission on Industrial Conditions (Labour Legislation), Armaments Commission, &c.

4. In addition to the above arrangements arising out of the General Treaty, there might² be a *periodical congress* of delegates of the Parliaments of the States belonging to the League, as a development out of the existing inter-Parliamentary Union. A regular staple of discussion for this body would be afforded by the reports of the Inter-State Conference and of the different International bodies. The Congress would thus cover the ground that is at present occupied by the periodical Hague Conference and also, perhaps,³ the ground claimed by the Socialist International.

¹ Clause 3 of earlier draft read thus:

The Secretariat would be the responsible channel of communication between the Inter-State Conference and all International bodies functioning under treaties guaranteed by the League. These would fall into three classes:

- (a.) *Judicial i. e.*, the existing Hague organization with any additions or modifications made by the League.
- (b.) *International Administrative Bodies*: such as the suggested Transit Commission. To these would be added bodies already formed under existing treaties (which are very numerous and deal with very important interests *e. g.* Postal Union, International Labour Office, etc.)
- (c.) *International Commissions of Enquiry*: *e. g.* Commission on Industrial Conditions (Labour Legislation), African Commission, Armaments Commission.

² Earlier draft read "would probably" for "might".

³ "perhaps" not in earlier draft.

For the efficient conduct of all these activities, it is essential that there should be a permanent central meeting-place, where the officials and officers of the League, and perhaps its buildings,¹ would enjoy the privileges of extra-territoriality.²

II

PREVENTION OF WAR

The covenants for the prevention of war which would be embodied in the general treaty would be as follows:

1. The members of the League would bind themselves not to go to war until they had submitted the questions at issue to an international conference or an arbitral court, and until the conference or court had issued a report, or made an award,³ or had failed within a period to be fixed to issue such report or award.
2. The members of the League would bind themselves not to go to war with any member of the League complying with the award of a court or with the report of a conference. For the purpose of this clause, the report of the conference must be unanimous, excluding the litigants.
3. The members of the League would undertake to regard themselves as, *ipso facto*, at war with any one of them acting contrary to the above covenants, and to take, jointly and severally, appropriate military, economic and other measures against the recalcitrant State.
4. The members of the League would bind themselves to take similar action, in the sense of the above clause, against any State not being a member of the League which is involved in a dispute with a member of the League and which does not agree to adopt the procedure obligatory on members of the League.⁴

The above covenants mark an advance upon the practice of international relations previous to the war in two respects: —

1. In ensuring a necessary period of delay before war can break out (except between two States which are neither of them members of the League);
2. In securing public discussion, and probably a public report, upon matters in dispute.

¹ "and perhaps its buildings" not in earlier draft.

² Earlier draft added "Geneva is suggested as the most suitable place."

³ Earlier draft read "or handed down an award," omitting the following phrase.

⁴ Earlier draft added "(This is a stronger provision than that proposed in the Phillimore Report)."

It should be observed that even in cases where the conference report is not unanimous, and therefore in no sense binding, a majority report would probably¹ be issued, and that this would be likely to carry great weight with the public opinion of the world.²

Paris,

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¹ Earlier draft read "may" for "would probably."

² Earlier draft read "States in the League" for "world."