

STAFFING THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

The Influence of Nationality in Recruitments to the League of Nations Secretariat,
1922-1930

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ABSTRACT: This article examines how nationality influenced recruitment of the highest-ranking officials to three of the smaller, political sections in the League of Nations Secretariat during the organization's most successful years between 1922 and 1930. From three, separate case-studies, it is shown that although the official policies favored the hiring of nationals from underrepresented member states, other factors such as the individual section's autonomy and policy field further complicated the process of finding the right nationals for vacant positions. This meant that the established protocols for recruitment were oftentimes ignored or circumvented in attempts to guarantee the most suitable candidates.

KEYWORDS: League of Nations Secretariat, Recruitment, Nationality, Governance



Introduction

In April 1917 shortly before the United States' entry into the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson famously proclaimed that "The world must be made safe for democracy".¹ While the main intention behind this statement was to justify entering the war on the side of the Allies, it also reflected desires for a different post-war international order. Already in 1916, Wilson had shared his visions of a new era in global political cooperation which was to be spearheaded by a novel international organization with peacekeeping as its central objective (Mazower 2012: 122). Three years later these visions turned into reality at the Versailles Peace Conference with the formal establishment of the League of Nations.

The League of Nations organization came to be structured around three, institutional units: Two of these units, the Council, and the Assembly, were to be comprised of delegates representing their own nation. Whereas the Council's only permanent delegates represented the great powers post-WW1 (Britain, France, Italy, and Japan), the Assembly was structured as a parliament with representatives from all League member states. The Assembly was meant to be the driving force behind the League's activities with the Council providing the direction for its work (Walters 1952: 43-65). The third unit, named as the "Secretariat" in the official covenant, was, however, fundamentally different in its role, composition and capabilities compared with the Council and the Assembly. It was the only permanent body within the League institution and was responsible for administrative tasks in relation to the Assembly and the Council's work. Known as the world's first international civil service, the League Secretariat consisted of employees from different member states which, importantly, were employed to serve the institution rather than their home country.

Despite its employees serving the institution rather than following national interests, the Secretariat's national composition was still deemed important by the League's member states and the leaders of the Secretariat itself. This article highlights the importance of the Secretariat's composition of nationalities by investigating the process of recruitment to the League Secretariat.

¹ Cited from *President Wilson's Joint Address to Congress, Leading to a Declaration of War against Germany*, April 2nd, 1917; Records of the United States Senate; Record Group 46; National Archives.

For many years following the dissolution of the organization in 1946, the League Secretariat received little, scholarly attention. Up until 1950 there were a couple noteworthy publications by former employees within the League institution.² In the four succeeding decades the League of Nations was deemed above all else as a failed, international security experiment. It was not until the transnational turn in the 1990's that scholars developed curiosity for exploring institutional and practical workings of the League institution and its Secretariat during its fruitful years. Recently, the institutional set-up, administration, and practices of the League institution have come to the forefront of research. Scholars have increasingly shown interest in core, foundational elements of the League.³

The source material analyzed in this article describes the workings of the League Secretariat's Appointments Committee (AC); a sub-body of the Secretariat established in 1922 with the purpose of assisting and advising the Secretary General on recruitments to the Secretariat. By investigating an extensive collection of minutes which document the meetings of the AC between 1922 and 1930, I aim to explore how the aspect of nationality affected, constrained, and guided recruitment of the highest-ranking employees known as First Division Officials to the League Secretariat. It is important to note that the latter was not comprised as one, collective entity but was instead subdivided in several different, functionally specialized subsections. Therefore, the analysis of this article is separated into three parts, each covering recruitment to three, political sections of the Secretariat: The Disarmament Section, the Minorities Section and the Mandates Section. I focus on appointments for these sections during arguably the League's heyday between 1922 and 1930, where

² See for instance Ranshofen-Wertheimer, Egon, *The International Secretariat: A Great Experiment in International Administration*, (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945) and F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (London: OUP, 1952).

³ A couple mentions here are Klaas Dykmann, "How International was the Secretariat of the League of Nations?", *The International Historical Review* 37, no. 4 (2015): 721-744 and Karen Gram-Skjoldager & Haakon A. Ikononou, "The Construction of the League of Nations Secretariat. Formative Practices of Autonomy and Legitimacy in International Organizations", *The International Historical Review* 41, no. 2 (2019): 257-279 and Karen Gram-Skjoldager, Karen, Haakon A. Ikononou, and Torsten Kahlert, "Scandinavians and the League of Nations Secretariat, 1919-1946", *Scandinavian Journal of History* 44, no. 4 (2019): 454-483.

the onset of the Great Depression gradually resulted in a more hostile environment for international policymaking.⁴

Establishing protocols for bureaucratic recruitment (1919-1922)

Before answering the main questions of this article, I consider it necessary to first provide a brief sketch of the evolution in bureaucratic recruitment during the first years of the League's existence. Although recruitment practices were dynamic and continued to develop throughout the organization's lifespan, it was during these early years that the ruleset for recruitment to the Secretariat were put in place. By mid-1922, the AC had been formally established similarly to the protocols on which it was to evaluate candidates for vacant posts in the International Civil Service.

The creation of the League and early recruitment

The Permanent Secretariat was not given much attention by the League's founders during the process of creating its Covenant. A set of notes included in the British Draft Convention contained a proposal with suggestions on how the "Secretary-General" should be able to choose his staff of secretaries (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945: 42-43). Neither this nor other early proposals ended up eventually being included in the organization's foundational document. On the matter of the internal administration of staff, the Covenant simply stated that "The secretaries and staff of the Secretariat shall be appointed by the Secretary-General with the approval of the Council" (Walters 1952: 46-47). The primary authority in staff appointments was therefore initially put solely in the hands of the Secretary-General. Though the Council became equipped with the power of vetoing candidates, this never ended up as a huge constrain on recruitment to the organization. Many officials started working in the Secretariat before their appointment had acquired the Council's final approval (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945: 42-43).

⁴ For a more detailed account of the interwar-period and the consequences of the Great Depression on international politics, see Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

With the absence of any *a priori* bureaucratic procedures for recruitment and given absolute authority to appoint whoever he saw fit, a large responsibility was put on the first Secretary-General, Eric Drummond, to shape the organization for the future. The former British Diplomat envisioned the League Secretariat as a truly *international* Civil Service where the officials would commit themselves to serve the institution rather than their own nation. In his view, the sections within the Secretariat should also not be structured around nationality but around different policy areas. Still, Drummond regarded the composition of nationalities in the Secretariat as important. While the composition of his early staff in mid-1919 included mostly citizens of Northern Europe, he was prepared to oversee appointments to each Section going forward to safeguard the right proportions of nationals (Gram-Skjoldager & Ikonomou 2019: 260-263).

The early recruitment decisions in 1919 and 1920 to the Secretariat made by Drummond have rightfully been characterized by scholars as “unbureaucratic” in nature.⁵ The evolution towards a bureaucratization and formalization of recruitment practices was sparked initially by dissatisfaction in the Assembly over the absence of competitive examinations. As a result, an agreement was reached within the 4th Committee of the First Assembly in November 1920 in which the Secretary-General accepted to set up a body which could assist him in selecting and appointing his staff. This culminated in the creation of the Staff Committee which turned into the Appointments Committee (AC) in January 1922. The AC’s role was to assist the Secretary-General in all matters regarding appointments, promotion, and discharge of staff to and within the League Secretariat. Its members had to possess the rank of director at minimum and were chosen solely by the Secretary-General himself (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945: 318-319). Although Drummond still had the final word in matters of staff administration, the AC guided his decision-making while ensuring both institutional and national backing for candidates.

⁵ For an example of early, non-bureaucratic recruitment to the League Secretariat see Haakon A. Ikonomou, “He used to give me Turkish lessons in Constantinople’: How to Get a Job in the League Secretariat,” in *The League of Nations, Perspectives from the Present*, eds. Haakon A. Ikonomou & Karen Gram-Skjoldager (Aarhus University Press, 2019), 113-123.

The issue of national representation

When national delegates made a proposal for competitive examinations in 1920, their wish for wider and more adequate, national representation had not yet been clearly articulated. Nevertheless, the proposal ended up as the precursor for a later discussion which uncovered more deep-rooted issues of inequality between member states. When the Assembly gathered the following year in 1921, staunch attacks were launched by the Indian delegation targeted at the disproportionate, national representation in the Secretariat. It was exposed how Britain, France, and Switzerland benefitted economically from the institution as the salaries to officials of their nation far exceeded the amount which they contributed to the League's budget. On the contrary, many of the smaller non-European nations had few or even no citizens working in the Secretariat despite contributing financially to the organization. This led these nations to demand equality in representation between Western European and non-Western European nations. This proposal, which essentially entailed equality in rights and influence between Western European and non-Western European member states, could by no means be adopted in the eyes of Secretary-General Eric Drummond. Following his dismissal of the challenge to European political and cultural superiority, he went as far as to guarantee the smaller members a gradual progression towards wider national representation in the Secretariat (Gram-Skjoldager & Ikonomou 2019: 265-268).

The first indication of this promise is found when comparing the two editions of the Staff Regulations from 1921 and 1922 respectively. In the 1921 edition it is stated that the Staff Committee would "endeavor to reconcile the requirements of efficiency, economy and the international character of the Secretariat".⁶ The Civil Service's "international character" is only mentioned as one of three aspects of importance, which does not indicate a particular emphasis on this aspect relative to the other two. The smaller member states' call for equality in representation prompted an amendment to this clause in the following year's edition. Unlike the edition of 1921,

⁶ Staff Regulations 1st Edition, Geneva, 1 June 1921.

the June 1922 edition clearly states that “special regard shall be had to the maintenance and development of the international character of the organization.”⁷

Furthermore, the 1922-edition emphasizes that in the case of candidates possessing equal qualifications “preference shall be given to a candidate whose nationality is not adequately represented in the staff.” Although the smaller member states had not managed to secure full equality in representation from a budgetary perspective, they had been successful in causing notable changes to the protocol for recruitment in favor of lesser-represented nations. Still, the importance of nationality in staff questions was, for practical reasons, mostly limited to First Division staff members, as these employees held the biggest responsibilities for the work in their respective sections (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945: 354-364).

In the upcoming section of this article, recruitment cases of First Division members will be discussed, since it was the recruitment of these higher-ranking officials that prompted more careful considerations by the AC. In the following, it will be investigated how the internationalization principle, as well as other concerns related to nationality, were considered and acted upon by the committee during its first eight years of existence. I will start off with the section of the Secretariat which was given responsibility for what was deemed the League’s most important task by its founder and contemporaries: collective security.

⁷ Staff Regulations 1st Edition, Geneva, 1 June 1922.

The Disarmament Section

Disarmament Section

Number of 1st Division Contracts, 1919-1946

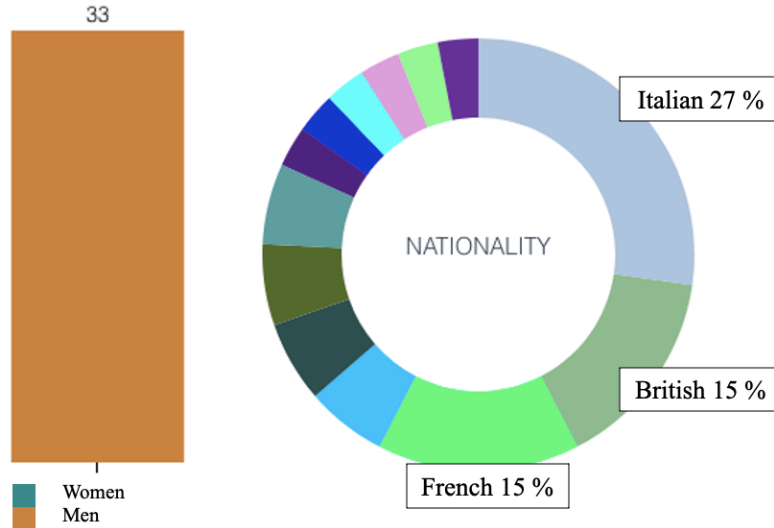


Fig. 1 Disarmament Section. Statistics and Visualizations: Haakon A. Ikononou, Yuan Chen, Obaida Hanteer, Jonas Tilsted “Visualizing the League of Nations Secretariat - a Digital Research Tool” (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2023)

From its very creation, the maintenance of world peace had been designated as the League’s most important task. Intrinsicly linked with this objective was the notion of disarmament. Article eight of the Covenant stated that there could be no long-lasting peace without the “reduction in national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety” (Walters 1952: 48). It was therefore only natural that the League Secretariat should have a section devoted to the policy area of disarmament. Given the huge importance attributed to this issue, one might have expected the Disarmament Section in the Secretariat to become highly influential for the disarmament process. This, however, did not end up happening. For the Great Powers, the issue of disarmament was a sensitive policy field, and they did not wish to cede any autonomy to an International Civil Service. As a result, the Disarmament Section ended up becoming by far the least politically autonomous section of the Secretariat (Ikononou 2021: 321-334).

It made little sense for the powerful League-members like Britain and France to keep a large representation in the Disarmament Section when any disarmament policies would be decided in their national governments rather than the League Secretariat. Therefore, the demand of the Great

Powers for full national autonomy on disarmament policies ended up creating room for citizens of smaller powers to obtain leading positions in the Disarmament Section. All three of the section's directors throughout its lifespan were citizens of smaller powers, including the first Chief (and eventually Director) of Section, Salvador de Madariaga. During a discussion of his appointment at an AC meeting in the fall of 1922, Drummond stated that he considered the hiring of the Spaniard a good thing "from a political point of view", since he had been "continually receiving requests from Spain for the appointment of one of their nationality as director".⁸ As noted by the Secretary General, it was fortunate that "the man best suited for the job had happened to be from Spain", since this made the appointment align with the objective of giving Spain a more adequate representation in the Secretariat.⁹ Granting a leading role in the Disarmament Section to a citizen of a smaller and ex-neutral member state would appear as a significant action towards strengthening the Secretariat's international character.

Thus, while Great Power citizens were outside the considerations when new directors had to be hired for the Disarmament Section, the options could still be plentiful and difficult to decide for Drummond and the AC. This was especially the case in 1930 following the previous Norwegian Director Eric Colban's resignation.¹⁰ One of the applicants for the vacant directorship at the time was the Greek jurist and longtime Secretariat official, Thanassis Aghnides. In his application letter to Drummond, Aghnides explicitly argues for his own suitability to the post from a nationality perspective; Greece is underrepresented in the League's "most important organs" relative to countries of "lesser political importance".¹¹ From his long time serving in the Secretariat, Aghnides appears to have been perfectly aware of what and how national considerations influenced recruitment to a post such as the director of the Disarmament Section. His inside knowledge of the institution was undoubtedly part of what landed him the job in mid-1930.

⁸ It was common for national governments to put forward their own candidates to the League Secretariat. For a discussion about this form of recruitment and to what extent it was practiced from the context of Scandinavian officials working in the Secretariat, see Gram-Skjoldager, Ikonomou & Kahlert, "Scandinavians", 454-483.

⁹ S954-1, Minutes, 8th AC-Meeting, June 27th, 1922.

¹⁰ S956-2, Minutes, 3rd AC-Meeting, March 4th, 1930.

¹¹ LONA-700 – Personnel File, Thanassis Aghnides

It turns out that the First Division staff in the Disarmament Section was not only comprised by citizens of smaller League member states. The unique circumstances surrounding the section and its work even permitted an ex-Russian émigré to play a substantial role in its limited contributions to the disarmament scheme. The native-Ukrainian lawyer, Nokhem Sloutzki, became associated with the League Secretariat for the first time in 1921 when working for a few months in the Economic and Financial Section. Following a brief hiatus, he was hired to the Secretariat once again in 1922, this time as a statistician for the Disarmament Section. Due to being formally of Russian nationality, he was ineligible to obtain a permanent contract until 1934 when the USSR joined the League of Nations. In the years prior he was kept on temporary contracts for one to two years at a time. According to Madariaga, his first boss in the Disarmament Section, these temporary appointments caused Sloutzki “considerable anxiety”.¹² Nevertheless, Sloutzki stayed with the section throughout these years to the satisfaction of the Spanish director. AC member and Under Secretary General, Bernardo Attolico, also appears to have been relieved when he could report to the AC in 1925 that Sloutzki had rejected a job proposal from the International Labour Organization in favor of staying with the League Secretariat.¹³

The reoccurring contract “renewals” handed out to Sloutzki is indicative of an employee whose work was highly valued. Much of the reason for this was the ex-Russian’s contribution to the section’s most important work. Throughout its publication history, Sloutzki was the chief editor of the *Armaments Year-Book*, a statistical data collection of national armaments published on a yearly basis (Lincove 2018: 507). In a section drained of political influence the yearbook became a way for the Disarmament Section to facilitate disarmament talks by providing public available information on armaments, a pledge initially agreed to by the member states and included in Article Eight of the Covenant (Walters 1952: 48). With this in mind it is easy to understand the desire to continually renew Sloutzki’s temporary contract despite the fact that this circumvented the established protocols prohibiting citizens of non-member states to be permanently employed in Secretariat.

¹² S955-1, Minutes, 10th AC-Meeting, November 20th, 1925.

¹³ LONA-S883 – Personnel File, Nokhem Sloutzki.

Sloutzki's long "temporary" affiliation is also indicative of a section with relatively loose nationality-specific constraints on recruitment. As mentioned earlier, the directorship was reserved for citizens of smaller member states. Although this did constrain recruitment to a certain extent, it also provided the opportunity to satisfy national governments and to work towards adequate national representation in the Secretariat as a whole. With most of the political section's work ending up as information dissemination, it allowed room for special cases of employment outside the institutionalized norms, which is illustrated by Nokhem Sloutzki's employment.

The Minorities Section

Minorities Section

Number of 1st Division Contracts, 1919-1946

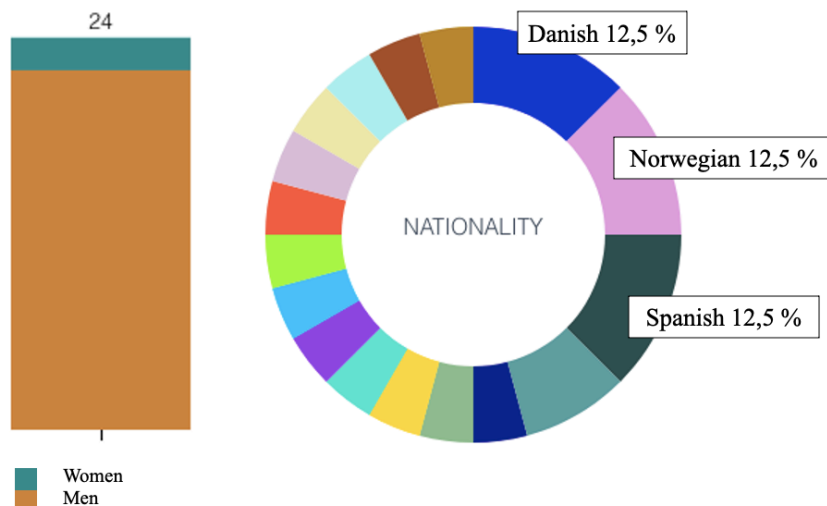


Fig. 2 Minorities Section. *Statistics and Visualizations*: Haakon A. Ikonomou, Yuan Chen, Obaida Hanteer, Jonas Tilsted "Visualizing the League of Nations Secretariat - a Digital Research Tool" (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2023)

Whereas the Disarmament Section had been deliberately exhausted by The Great Powers of most of its political room for initiative, it was a different story for the Minorities Section. The Covenant itself did not initially prescribe minority protection as one of the League's responsibilities. Instead, it was the peace treaties conducted after the First World War by the victors with certain nation states of Eastern Europe which brought the complications of national minority protection within the League's sphere of work. In these treaties, clauses were inserted that guaranteed the protection of national minorities within specific Eastern European States (Azcárate 1945: 92-101). The League was given the role of guarding the rights of these minorities and would effectively act as a broker in

disagreements over the issue (Mazower 1997: 47-63). As the only year-round permanent body of the League organization, the Secretariat – and more specifically the Minorities Section – naturally ended up performing different tasks associated with this responsibility. The administrative work in the section was centered around the petition system; national minorities had the opportunity to send in complaints in case their rights had been violated. These petitions would then be assessed by the Minorities Section with regards to whether the case was to be discussed by the Council or referred to the Permanent Court of Justice in Hague.¹⁴

In comparison to the Disarmament Section, the Minorities Section was granted much more autonomy by the Great Powers. A big reason for this was the unilateral enforcement of the minority protection policy; only specific Eastern European countries were subject to international oversight and the inherent violation of national sovereignty it entailed, while the Great Powers had no formal obligations regarding their own minority groups.¹⁵ The staff in the Minorities Section amounted to 11 contracted officials in 1922 compared to 12 in the Disarmament Section. The Scandinavian influence in the Minorities section was also evident at this early stage. In 1922, three Scandinavian officials (two Norwegians and one Dane) worked in the section, including the Norwegian Director of Section, Erik Andreas Colban (1876-1956).¹⁶ Consistency was a key descriptor for the Minorities Section under Drummond, a fact underlined by the recruitment patterns of the Section's personnel; five out of eleven officials from the Section in 1922 were still a part of its staff more than ten years later in 1933.¹⁷

One of these long-lasting officials in the section was the Spanish lawyer Pablo de Azcárate.¹⁸ Azcárate was hired to the section in the fall of 1922 and his appointment provides an interesting case study for multiple reasons. Firstly, Azcárate ended up working in the section for almost 15 years, and during the last three he possessed the highest position as director. Secondly, his appointment to the

¹⁴ As pointed out by Mazower, the petition system often failed to properly address offenders of minority rights, although there were notable success stories, such as the way in which the Åland Islands dispute between Sweden and Finland was solved in 1921. Mazower, "Minorities", 47–56.

¹⁵ Mazower, "Minorities", 52–56.

¹⁶ For more information about the Scandinavian presence in the League Secretariat, see Gram-Skjoldager, Ikonomou & Kahlert, "Scandinavians", 454-483.

¹⁷ "LoN Administrative and Minorities Section," LONSEA, accessed May 17th, 2022, <http://www.lonsea.de/pub/org/1207>.

¹⁸ "Pablo de Azcárate," LONSEA, accessed May 17th, 2022. <http://www.lonsea.de/pub/person/5041>.

Minorities section was one of the earliest ones concluded in the wake of the republished Staff Regulations in 1922 which, as mentioned earlier, shifted the priorities for recruitment to clearly favor candidates of non-adequately represented nations.¹⁹ In this regard, Azcárate's appointment did not follow the intentions behind the newly adopted regulations, since Spain was already adequately represented in the Secretariat at the time.²⁰

Colban did what he could to reassure the AC of his hard attempts to find other suitable candidates. The Norwegians' interest to hire the Spaniard to the vacant post in the section was not initially shared by the other committee members. The Italian committee member, Bernardo Attolico, wanted to appoint a South American, and Eric Drummond had also been against hiring a Spaniard due to Spain's already adequate representation in the Secretariat. The Secretary General eventually agreed to Colban's proposal for practical reasons; the workload in the section was "daily increasing", and the candidate was "entirely suitable" in every aspect but nationality.²¹ The case shows that while it was the committee's intention to give utmost priority to the newly adopted nationality principle, compromises on this front were inevitable to maintain a well-functioning secretariat.

This was a complicated issue, however. The inherently sensitive nature of "sovereignty governance" in minority protection required the AC to grant the aspect of nationality additional consideration when hiring to the Minorities section. This first becomes evident in 1922 when Attolico proposed that a South African should be chosen to fill up a vacant post in the Minorities section. Although hiring a South African was desirable from an adequate representation standpoint, Colban was concerned that "a man of non-European nationality would not be likely to understand the minorities questions or be conversant with them."²²

This shows Colban's view of how the importance of being familiar with Eastern Europe and their minority groups necessitated a specific national background. In practical terms, this would make it

¹⁹ LONA-R1460 – Staff Regulations 1st Edition, Geneva, 1 June 1922.

²⁰ It was the recently conducted contract with Salvador de Madariaga as Chief of the Disarmament Section which at the time put Spain in the category of adequately represented nations, thus problematizing the appointment of another Spanish member of the Secretariat. (S954-1, Minutes, 10th AC-Meeting, August 3rd, 1922).

²¹ S954-1, Minutes, 11th AC-Meeting, August 24th, 1922.

²² S954-1, Minutes, 10th AC-Meeting, August 3rd, 1922.

difficult to align recruitment to the section with the established principle of working towards adequate national representation in the secretariat. While European candidates were preferable to non-Europeans in the section, this did not actually comprise *all* European nationals which is evident from the fact that no French, German, Central or Eastern European officials were ever hired to work in the section. It was assumed that a citizen from these countries regardless of individual morals or qualifications would be too personally invested in the matter.²³

Another appointment issue arose in late 1927 when a new director of the Minorities Section had to be appointed following Colban's relocation to the Disarmament Section. During this recruitment process the aspect of nationality was similarly important to how it had been in 1922. An Argentinian delegate was quick to request that an Argentinian should be chosen for the vacant post, a proposal which was unanimously declined by the AC. Not only had progress been made recently to satisfy Argentina's claims for adequate representation in the Secretariat; Drummond was also certain about the dissatisfaction of both governments and minorities in the case of a non-European director.²⁴ Drummond's suspicion indicates that nationality-preferences were held not only in the AC but also among national governments and minorities.

Returning to the vacant post of director in 1927, the Committee members unanimously agreed to the preferability of appointing a European, though they did not share similar views when it came to the specific European nationality of the candidate. Committee member Joseph Avenol repeatedly expressed that he himself believed personal qualifications of candidates should be deemed of higher importance than nationality, since the AC's task would otherwise be "considerably complicated". For Colban, who knew the job from personal experience, there could be no doubt about the importance of the new director's nationality. Drummond himself was likely also aware of the complicated political role that the directorship entailed which is indicated by his initial selection of possible candidates. These were all citizens of ex-neutral and non-invested countries (three Swedish,

²³ Karen Gram-Skjoldager & Haakon A. Ikonou, "Making Sense of the League of Nations Secretariat – Historiographical and Conceptual Reflections on Early International Public Administration," *European History Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2019): 420-444.

²⁴ S956-1, Minutes, 15th AC-Meeting, December 16th, 1927.

one Swiss, and one Belgian candidate).²⁵ Just like in 1922, the choice ultimately fell out in favor of a Spaniard when Manuel Aguirre de Cárcer was chosen for the post in 1928.²⁶

From these two cases of recruitment, it becomes clear that the AC's recruitment considerations were heavily influenced by the aspect of nationality when it concerned the Minorities Section. Although the Staff Regulations of 1922 had introduced adequate national representation as an important guiding principle in recruitment other considerations were typically of higher importance when recruiting to the Minorities section. The biggest challenge was to find candidates from nations who possessed enough insights into the delicate matters of minority populations in Eastern Europe. Therefore, candidates from ex-neutral countries of Western Europe, who weren't politically invested in the region nor the scheme, were preferable as opposed to other European and non-European candidates.

The Mandates Section

Unlike the Minorities Section which possessed a significant degree of autonomy, the Mandates Section was not itself charged with any of it. Instead, this section's role was to serve the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) in secretarial matters. The PMC was responsible for oversight with the Mandate System; the administration by certain former allied victor states over 14 different territories as laid out by Article 22 of the League Covenant (Walters 1952: 56-58). Some of these were former colonies of the defeated Central Powers while others were parts of now dissolved empires such as the Ottoman Empire. Essentially the system was an attempt by The Great Powers to align their aspirations for the continuation of empire with 20th century liberal internationalism. This was done by promising the mandated peoples of an indefinite path towards self-rule and by involving the League machinery. The PMC was to examine annual reports on the mandated territories sent in by the mandatory powers. In addition, a petition system would be established similarly to the one existing for minority protection (Mazower 2012: 165-173). The Mandates Section's tasks included communication with governments of mandatory powers and monthly

²⁵ S956-1, Minutes, 1st AC-Meeting, January 19th, 1928.

²⁶ "Manuel Aguirre de Cárcer," LONSEA, accessed January 25th, 2023.

information exchange with the PMC about petitions and the state of the mandated areas overall (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945: 116-117).

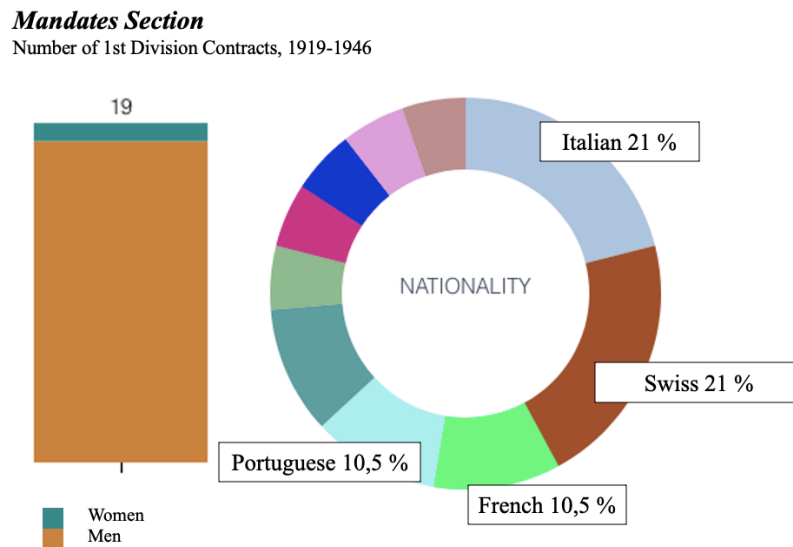


Fig. 3 Mandates Section. Statistics and Visualizations: Haakon A. Ikonomou, Yuan Chen, Obaida Hanteer, Jonas Tilsted “Visualizing the League of Nations Secretariat - a Digital Research Tool” (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2023)

These various tasks assigned to the section were carried out by a small crew that never exceeded 16 officials at any given moment during the League’s lifespan.²⁷ In 1922, the section contained only eight officials representing six different countries, including three Members and a Director of Section. The section appears to have been understaffed in its early years, an interpretation supported by director William Rappard’s request to hire a new First Division official in August 1922.²⁸ This appointment was, however, left unresolved long into 1923, as the Committee struggled to find suitable candidates. A factor explicitly contributing to this long delay was the nationality principle of adequate representation. While the Dutchman Rost van Tonningen had been found to possess all the qualifications required for working in the section, the Netherlands had already at the time reached an adequate degree of representation in the Secretariat. Therefore, the Dutch candidate became ineligible for appointment.²⁹

²⁷ “LoN Mandates Section,” LONSEA, accessed May 17th, 2022, <http://www.lonsea.de/pub/org/1208>.

²⁸ S954-1, Minutes, 11th AC-Meeting, August 24th, 1922.

²⁹ S954-1, Minutes, 21st AC-Meeting, April 12th, 1923.

It was possibly this long unsuccessful search for qualified candidates of the right nationality which eventually led Rappard and the AC to make a slight compromise. At an AC meeting on the 30th of May 1923, Rappard stated his provisional decision of appointing the Dane, Finn Tage Blichfeldt Friis, in favor of a Finnish candidate as the new First Division member of the Mandates Section. Rappard stated that while he agreed to the desirability of appointing the Finn from a “nationality perspective,” he thought the Dane would prove more suitable. To this Drummond replied that if the quality of the two candidates were “more or less equal” he would ask him to choose the Finn on the grounds of his nationality.³⁰ Nevertheless, Rappard stuck to his own decision and appointed the Dane in favor of the Finnish candidate.³¹ Although it is hard to exactly pinpoint the discrepancy in adequate representation between Denmark and Finland at the time, the discussion conveys the impression that the personal qualifications of the two candidates ended up as the deciding factor, since both Denmark and Finland were adequately represented in the Secretariat overall.

Adequate national representation in the Secretariat was not the only guiding principle related to nationality when hiring to the Mandates Section either. An important nationality-related principle for this section was to not hire citizens from Mandatory Powers to ensure impartiality (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945: 116-117). Evidently, this rule did not apply to Second or Third Division officials, as both British and French lower officials worked in the section throughout the interwar period.³² Still, keeping the section “clean” of First Division members from mandatory powers was not always easy for Drummond and the AC. When the section’s Swiss director, William Rappard, resigned from the post in 1924, pressure mounted on Drummond to make compromises on the rule. Upon being promoted to Chief of Section the Italian Secretariat official, Vito Catastini, demanded the transfer of the Belgian official, Charles Smets, from the Financial Section to assist him in his new position.

Although Drummond was aware of the potential language challenges that Catastini could face in his new role, he did not want to create a precedent for the future that citizens of mandatory powers (such as Belgium) could become higher officials within the section. Instead of complying with the

³⁰ S954-1, Minutes, 22nd AC-Meeting, May 30th, 1923.

³¹ “Finn Tage Blichfeldt Friis,” LONSEA, accessed May 17th, 2022, <http://www.lonsea.de/pub/person/5525>.

³² LONSEA, “LoN Mandates Section”.

demand for the transfer of Smets, Drummond was only prepared to consider attaching a French speaking assistant in times of need if the work proved “too much” for Catastini and his section.³³ The nationality rule to “safeguard the full impartiality of the staff” was not to be circumvented.

Recruiting only “eligible” nationals to the section continued to be a matter of complication in the years that followed. When another debate arose in April 1928 about this matter, it was once again stirred by the Italian Chief of Section, Vito Catastini. To fill a vacant post in the Mandates Section, he now proposed to transfer the Swiss official, de Haller, from the Minorities Section. Drummond regarded de Haller as the best option available within the Secretariat but was himself interested in finding a suitable Canadian. From the viewpoint of the Secretary General, a Canadian official would have the capability to “speak more firmly and criticize more freely than could any European” regarding Britain’s mandated territories.

As pointed out by Catastini, however, choosing a Canadian for the vacant post would bring its own issues. Not only would it cause delay to complete the appointment, as it would take time to find a qualified Canadian; choosing a Canadian would also risk stirring negative public opinion, since it could give the “impression of an arrangement between different members of the British Empire.”³⁴ The Italian Chief of Section considered it unnecessary to draw attention to the unspoken fact that the League was essentially a “League of Empires” with Canada as just one of several territories under the British Crown which had been given membership (Pedersen 2017: 113-138). Appointing a Canadian First Division member to the Mandates Section would *de facto* had been as much a violation of the nationality rule in 1928, as the transfer of the Belgian official to section would four years earlier. In the end, Drummond decided not to circumvent this important nationality principle in recruitment to the Mandates Section and agreed to the transfer of de Haller in favor of his own suggestion of a Canadian.

As can be seen from the above, the hierarchical nature of the Mandate System and the League itself added further complexity to the recruitment of higher officials to the Mandates Section. Two, separate principles in relation to the citizenship of candidates had to be considered when evaluating

³³ S955, Minutes, 7th AC-Meeting, August 20th, 1924.

³⁴ S956, Minutes, 4th AC-Meeting, April 24th, 1928.

candidates. The first pertaining to all sections, including the Mandates Section, was to favor candidates from non-adequately represented member states. The second principle was to not appoint citizens of nations which held power over mandated territories. Aside from these two rules, no specific nationalities appear to have been deemed particularly suited over others to work in the Mandates Section. There is no indication of European citizens being preferred ahead of non-European citizens, unlike what was the case for the Minorities Section. As noted, Drummond even saw potential benefits of appointing a Canadian to Member of Section before considering all political implications of this move.

Conclusion

This article has investigated how nationality constrained recruitment of First Division officials to three, separate sections of the League Secretariat. It can be concluded that despite these section's similarities in size and policy fields, the aspect of nationality did not constrain recruitment in a uniform way across all three sections. Instead, other factors such as the degree of political autonomy given the section influenced to what extent the citizenship of candidates constrained recruitment. For all three sections in question, the primary, nationality-related concern in recruitment was to favor candidates of non-adequately represented member states. Yet for both the Minorities and the Mandates Section, the nature of the minority protection scheme and the mandates system respectively added further nationality-related constraints to the recruitment considerations.

In the Minorities Section, a clear preference was had for Europeans in the First Division as opposed to non-Europeans. This is evident both from the composition of First Division nationals working in the section and from the AC-minutes. It was deemed necessary of candidates to possess significant knowledge about minority groups in Eastern Europe. This effectively made non-European citizens unsuited for the job while also drastically reducing the spectrum of suitable Europeans. The narrow range of appropriate nationalities made it difficult to recruit First Division officials to the section from a suitable nation in regard to the internationalization principle.

For the Mandates Section we find many of the same issues as mentioned for the Minorities section. To uphold the legitimacy of the Mandate System it was necessary to keep the section clear of

nationals from mandatory powers. This principle also effectively overruled the general principle of improving adequate national representation when recruiting First Division officials to the Mandates Section. Still, the range of suitable nationalities in the Mandates Section was less narrow than what was the case for the Minorities Section, as both Europeans and non-Europeans were deemed suitable.

For the Disarmament Section, the biggest constrains from a nationality perspective surrounded the directorship of the section. Since the Great Powers did not wish to grant the section much political autonomy, it allowed for nationals of smaller powers to continuously obtain the post of director. In general, the nationality-based constrains on recruitment to the Disarmament Section were much less significant than for the two other sections due to its limited autonomy. The employment of the stateless Ex-Russian, Nokhem Sloutzki, is emblematic of this reality. For Drummond and the AC, the section's marginalized political role provided the benefit of being able to clearly prioritize the improvement of adequate national representation in the overall Secretariat when recruiting to the Disarmament section.



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