RESEARCH ARTICLE

E. H. Carr and Alfred Zimmern: utopia, reality, and the twenty years' crisis

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Abstract

This article offers a new approach to the opposition of utopianism and realism in interwar International Relations. It first analyses how E. H. Carr drew on Karl Mannheim to develop that opposition in his 1939 classic, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, and how Alfred Zimmern, one of Carr's predecessors in the Woodrow Wilson Chair in International Politics at Aberystwyth, responded to Carr and his Mannheimian model in a review in the *Spectator* as well as in private correspondence with Norman Angell and others. It then offers a close reading of Carr's allusions to Zimmern in his discussions of power, morality, and international law, and of the passages from Zimmern's works that Carr was quoting. Analysis of how Carr and Zimmern read each other's works and of some of Zimmern's other writings suggests that they were closer in thought than Carr was willing to allow and that it was Carr's apparent relativism to which Zimmern took objection. This article shows that contemporary readers, including Christian Realists such as J. H. Oldham and William Paton, were alive to these similarities and relates Carr's misreading of Zimmern to their different attitudes to appeasement and their different disciplinary notions of International Relations.

Keywords: E. H. Carr; Alfred Zimmern; utopianism; realism in International Relations; Christian Realism

Introduction: readings of Carr and Zimmern

'My impression is that his vogue will not last long. There is not enough substance to him.'[1] So wrote Sir Alfred Zimmern, Professor of International Relations at Oxford, to Sir Norman Angell, another leading internationalist, early in 1940, 3 months after the publication of E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis.* Zimmern was responding to Angell's review of the book in the League of Nations Union (LNU) journal *Headway*, which Angell had sent along with a letter warning that 'he goes for you' and

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[1]Zimmern to Angell, 20 January 1940, Angell Papers, Ball State University, Box 28, commenting on Carr 1939a. For the splash made by Carr's book, see Wilson 2000 (Zimmern's letter is quoted on 167); Cox 2016, xlii–vi.

promising to continue his criticisms in a book.[2] In his reply, Zimmern wrote that he had himself published a review in the *Spectator* making many of the same points, though less effectively.[3] He also approved Angell's plan for a book, despite his suggestion that Carr's vogue would be short-lived. His letter as a whole showed no premonition that the realist critique of Carr's book would shape his own reputation as a utopian idealist.

The Twenty Years' Crisis has continued to be one of the most discussed works in the International Relations (IR) canon. Historians of IR have analysed its role after the end of the Second World War in constructions of disciplinary history, especially in relation to the supposed 'great debate' between Idealism and Realism.[4] Scholars have rightly looked beyond the textbook classification of Carr as a realist and exposed how that image was the self-interested creation of theorists in the United States in the early years of the Cold War.[5] They have looked, too, beyond the labelling as idealists (or utopians, in Carr's terms) of the thinkers and statesmen he criticised, among them Zimmern and Angell.[6] These readings have led to a sophisticated appreciation of the rhetorical strategies deployed in *The Twenty Years Crisis* and to the discussion of how it fits Carr's postwar theorising in works such as his bestseller *What is History?*[7]

This article has two main goals: to shed light on Carr's method in writing *The Twenty Years' Crisis* and on the book's intellectual context, above all its relation to Zimmern's thought. Both goals are served by a thick analysis of the book itself and of its immediate reception, including one area neglected in previous treatments, the similarities contemporary readers found in the realisms of Carr and Zimmern. The form of this analysis will be an innovative close reading of how Carr cites – and misrepresents – one of his chief targets. By this formulation, I mean not a general survey of Carr's presentation of Zimmern but a systematic analysis of all of Carr's quotations from Zimmern against the argumentative contexts from which they are extracted.[8] This reading will gain further depth from juxtaposition of Carr's reading of Zimmern with Zimmern's response to *The Twenty Years' Crisis* and from the comparison of Carr's analysis with Zimmern's writings in the interwar years. The

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[2]Angell to Zimmern, Bodleian Libraries, Zimmern Papers 45.96, referring to Angell 1940a, 4–5; 1940b. Rich 1995, 97, n. 33 and Wilson 2000, 194, n. 2 date this (typed) letter to October 1939, presumably because 'Oct 1939' is pencilled on it; Ceadel 2009, 361, with n. 21, suggests '?Nov. 1939'. But Angell's review was published in January 1940; an almost identical letter from Angell with a copy of the review survives in the Toynbee Papers (Bodleian Libraries, Box 77). The wrong date on Angell's letter was written by the historian Carroll Quigley before Zimmern's papers were donated (Georgetown University archives, Carroll Quigley papers, Box 8 has his typed copy with handwritten date).

[3]Zimmern 1939a. This review is the only instance of Zimmern engaging with Carr in print.

[4]Schmidt 2012 includes some seminal contributions and offers an insightful introduction: especially relevant are Wilson 1998a, Osiander 1998, and Ashworth 2002.

[5]See Guilhot 2011.

[6]E.g., Long and Wilson 1995, including Rich on Zimmern; Weiss 2013. On Zimmern, see Baji's important 2021 monograph, as well as Markwell 1986; Osiander 1998; Cotton 2019; Rood 2024, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Owens 2025, Index s.v. 'Zimmern, Alfred.'

[7]For the rhetoric, see Jones 1998, 46–66 and the text at notes 149–50, below; for the unity, Howe 1994.

[8]Contrast Brewin 1995 and Ashworth 1999, 43–75, who take issue with Carr's accounts of Toynbee and Angell but do not scrutinise his citations in detail, or Molloy 2008, 100, n. 16, who cites Carr's claim that Dewey and Zimmern 'confessed their bewilderment' without questioning that claim (see the text at note 92 below). Wilson 1998b, 177–207 does offer a penetrating analysis of Woolf's review of Carr 1939a, but his approach necessarily differs from mine, as Carr does not cite Woolf.

analysis will be bolstered by the use of archival and published material that has not been discussed in earlier scholarship, drawn from an ongoing biographical and bibliographical project on Zimmern. This detailed exploration will show that, though Carr was more revolutionary than Zimmern, there are notable similarities in their interpretations of history and in their approaches to current problems. It will show, too, that Carr was extraordinarily careless in his engagement with the authors he criticised. My conclusion will raise the question of why this was so.

This article seeks to makes a contribution to international theory too. Detailed exposure of Carr's sloppiness takes further the criticisms that scholars such as Peter Wilson have made of the lack of clarity and rigour in interwar theoretical arguments about IR, particularly in their use of terms such as Realism and Utopianism (or Idealism).[9] Besides this, this article sheds new light on the stronger discourse of Realism that, according to Ian Hall, emerged in the late 1930s.[10] Peter Marcus Kristensen and Ole Wæver have recently identified a version of the Realism–Idealism debate in the International Studies Conferences at that time, as heightening tensions led scholars from Germany and Italy to defend their nation's policies in the name of Realism.[11] My analysis of Carr's use of the language of Realism lends substance to their political analysis, even if those earlier arguments were more a dispute about power than a debate over theory. Amidst the global uncertainties of the 2020s, revisiting these discussions may also invite reflection on modern international theory, especially about the basis for some supposedly scientific theories of IR.

Zimmern is an ideal testcase for exploring Carr's reading of interwar internationalism. One reason for this lies in their backgrounds. Born 13 years apart (Zimmern in 1879, Carr in 1892), both men were products of intensive classical educations at leading public schools and universities: Winchester and Oxford in Zimmern's case, Merchant Taylors' and Cambridge in Carr's.[12] That apparent similarity belies significant differences, notably between the ambitions of the Classics courses at the two universities: *Literae Humaniores* ('Greats') at Oxford involved a broad study of ancient literature, history, and philosophy that aimed both to penetrate the spirit of ancient culture and understand its differences from the modern world, while the Classical Tripos at Cambridge had a narrower philological focus, though it did allow some specialisation in philosophy or ancient history in Part II (Carr excelled at the latter).[13] Both men also had Foreign Office experience, Carr having entered the service immediately after finishing at Cambridge in 1916 and stayed for 20 years, while Zimmern joined the Political Intelligence Department in early 1918 (via stints as Oxford Ancient History don and civil servant in the Board of Education and Ministry of Reconstruction) and left after little more than a year. Both men, moreover, moved from the Foreign Office to the Wilson Professorship of International Politics at Aberystwyth, and both were involved in Chatham House in the

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[9]See, e.g., Wilson 1998b, 11–21 on the looseness of the idealism/realism opposition.

[10]Hall 2012, 29–47; also Hall 2006, 178, where, however, earlier uses of 'realism' are underplayed; thus, Melian Stawell, rather than just using 'Machiavellianism,' does oppose 'realist' and 'Italian realism' to 'idealist' and 'More's Utopia' (1929, 31, 82). See note 37 for further details.

[11]Kristensen and Wæver 2024.

[12]For Carr, see Haslam's excellent 1999 biography. Zimmern is treated briefly in Markwell 1986, 2004; Rood 2025b includes much new biographical information on the prewar period.

[13]For background, see Stray 2019, 31–52.

late 1930s.[14] Given these similarities, a comparative study may provide revealing clues to their distinctive intellectual trajectories.

Zimmern's status as the most important figure in interwar IR in Britain makes him still more suitable for comparison with Carr. After leaving the Wilson Chair and some years in Paris as Deputy Director of the League of Nations' Institute of International Intellectual Cooperation, he moved to Oxford in 1930 as the first holder of the Montague Burton Professorship in International Relations. First from Paris, then from Oxford, he helped organise the series of International Studies Conferences that fostered the disciplinary formation of IR.[15] He also published what was widely hailed as the most authoritative analysis of the League of Nations during the interwar period; Carr himself wrote an enthusiastic review praising its 'brilliant and original analysis.'[16]

Zimmern has also played a prominent role in the reception of *The Twenty Years' Crisis.* Reviewers at the time picked him out as one of Carr's main targets.[17] This verdict has been echoed in recent claims that Zimmern was 'the only person criticised more than Norman Angell' or that Carr 'ridiculed him in numerous footnotes.'[18] For a long time, Carr's criticisms were viewed by many as justified. In the 1980s, for instance, William Fox spoke of 'the Zimmerns and the Toynbees and the lay publics with naïve faith in simplistic prescriptions for an end to war.' A 1999 textbook could still present Zimmern as typical of 'the kind of "idealism" that was subject to so much criticism from "realists" such as Carr and Morgenthau in the 1930s and 1940s,' and even add that while such criticism was 'unwarranted' in the case of Angell, 'the same cannot be said of Zimmern.'[19]

The task of assessing the fairness of such accounts has been made easier by Tomohito Baji's monograph on Zimmern's international thought.[20] In dealing with the interwar period, Baji rightly notes that Zimmern turned away in the 1930s from the global internationalist hopes embodied in the League of Nations and emphasised the potential of regional cooperation among like-minded states. He also emphasises Zimmern's new involvement in ecumenical Christianity and the increasing pessimism of his thought, which he aligns with the turn to Augustinian doctrines of original sin in other international thinkers at this time. This article will take Baji's analysis further by exploring in depth how Zimmern and Carr read each other's works and how their works were compared by other international thinkers, including Christian Realists.[21]

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[14]E.g., in the Nationalism working group (Cox 2021). Zimmern knew Carr enough to tell Angell that he 'is not a bad fellow' (letter cited in note 1) and Robert Seton-Watson that he was 'a considerate person to work under' (SSEES Library, UCL, SEW/17/31, 8 May 1939).

[15]See, e.g., Long 2006.

[16]Carr 1936a; Zimmern 1936a.

[17]E.g., Zimmern and Toynbee are mentioned by Crossman 1939 (published pseudonymously as 'Richard Coventry': see Wilson 2000, 194, n. 18) and Wight 1946, 3 (along with Lord Cecil and Woodrow Wilson).

[18]Ceadel 2009, 361; Morgan 2014, 186.

[19]Fox 1985, 12; Griffiths 1999, 100.

[20]Baji 2021, esp. 125–78 on the interwar period.

[21]Baji treats Carr briefly in the passages cited in his index s.v. Carr, E. H. Another Zimmern scholar, Jeanne Morefield, claims that Carr found Zimmern's work 'largely incomprehensible and hypocritical,' but acknowledges that Zimmern was better at identifying the sources of international conflict than Carr allowed (2005, 2–3, 188).

Carr's Mannheimian vision: utopia and reality

The assumption that Zimmern was one of Carr's chief targets seems to be supported by a number of passages where Carr disparages his writings and implies that he was a utopian.[22] These passages relate to the following topics: Zimmern's explanation for the breakdown of international stability; his opposition of 'welfare' and 'power' states; and his conception of international morality. Analysis of Carr's allusions to Zimmern will show that he was not uniformly negative. Read against Zimmern's writings, it will indicate, too, that Carr consistently misconstrued his thought. First, however, Carr's reading of Zimmern must be set in the context of his overall argument.

Carr closes the first chapter of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* by identifying 'Utopia and Reality' (his original choice of title) as 'the two facets of political science': 'Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place.'[23] He proceeds in Chapter 2 to align this dichotomy with other oppositions (free will and determinism, theory and practice, intellectual and bureaucratic, left-wing and right-wing, ethics and politics). This analysis prepares for his claim in Part Two, 'The International Crisis,' that interwar thinkers were utopian in neglecting the importance of power in interstate relationships, in their faith in public opinion and in rational solutions, and in their belief that *laissez-faire* economics created a harmony of interests among nations – an extension of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' to the international sphere. Carr's 'Realist Critique' in Chapter 4 brings an awareness of the realities of power politics to bear on liberal schemes for a new world order. Nonetheless, after outlining this critique, he ends the section by reaffirming the importance of utopianism: 'Every political situation contains mutually incompatible elements of utopia and reality, of morality and power.'[24] Parts Three and Four then analyse key ingredients of international politics: first 'Politics, Power and Morality' (Part Three), then 'Law and Change' (Part Four). This analysis promotes the formulation of practical policies based on an understanding of international politics that attends both to the forces of power and morality and to the historicity of the moment in which policies are formulated – most pressingly, to the collapse of the nineteenth-century world order and the new economic and political forces unleashed by the war. A short 'Conclusion' outlines some of the steps Carr sees as necessary, in particular the extension 'from the national to the international sphere' of 'frank acceptance of the subordination of economic advantage to social ends.'[25]

The opposition of utopia and reality was picked up in reviews and other discussions of Carr's book. Leonard Woolf and Susan Stebbing subjected it to detailed scrutiny, claiming that Carr's definition of reality was restrictive and that his use of 'utopian' could be applied to any form of political planning, including Hitler's.[26] Gilbert Murray more bluntly told the LNU Secretary Maxwell Garnett that 'the more I think over Carr's book, the worse it seems to me': 'Utopian and Realist are question-begging epithets, not suitable to a serious book.'[27] One feature of these discussions

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[22]The implication is clearest at Carr 1939a, 51: the 'school' of 'disappointed utopians,' with Angell, Zimmern, and Toynbee discussed; 199: 'Many utopian thinkers … Others …' – where 'others' includes Zimmern.

[23]Carr 1939a, 15. For the title, Haslam 1999, 68.

[24]Carr 1939a, 119.

[25]Carr 1939a, 306.

[26]Stebbing 1940, 1–25; Woolf 1940 (both discussed by Wilson 1998a, 4–5). Cf. Schwarzenberger 1941, 102–4.

[27]Bodleian Libraries, Gilbert Murray Papers 236.56 (23 January 1940).

was that 'utopian' and 'realist' were often placed in quotation marks.[28] It is not that the opposition was unknown in IR: 'Utopia and Reality,' for instance, were used by Frederick Schuman in the title of a chapter on the League of Nations in *International Politics*, which has been described as 'arguably the first academic realist international relations text.'[29] But while 'utopian' had a long vintage, 'realist' emerged as a label for hardheaded international thinkers during the turmoil in 1935–36 over the League's failure to confront Italy and Germany. Zimmern reflected in 1939 that it was at this time that those 'disinclined to range themselves with the believers [in the League] were driven into a camp of their own – the Adullam of the so-called "realists" – and a cleavage was set up in our public opinion upon lines hitherto unfamiliar,' for previously it had been an axiom of political life that 'all who took part in it should be realists,' and 'neither realism nor idealism should be the monopoly of any particular group.'[30] The concept had not yet been systematised into the 'Six Principles of Political Realism' that Hans Morgenthau enunciated in the second edition of *Politics among Nations* (arguably the most influential twentieth-century IR treatise).[31] Indeed, 'realist' was still used in quotation marks in a 1941 monograph whose title gives away its orientation, Georg Schwarzenberger's *Power Politics*.[32] Even with 'utopian,' however, there seemed to be something unusual about Carr's applying the term to progressive liberalism rather than to transparent fictions such as H. G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia*.[33]

The unfamiliarity of Carr's usage was due to the sociologist Karl Mannheim.[34] Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* is cited in Carr's preface as one of two books which, 'though not specifically concerned with international relations, seem to me to have illuminated some of the fundamental problems of politics.'[35] For Mannheim, 'ideological' and 'utopian' are dialectical terms applicable to states of mind that transcend reality:

> Every age allows to arise (in differently located social groups) those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age. These intellectual elements then become the explosive material for bursting the limits of the existing order. The existing order gives birth to utopias which in turn break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence.[36]

While utopianism is conditioned by the existing order, its 'explosive' potential explains why Carr strips away Mannheim's category of 'ideology,' creating a dichotomy of 'utopia' and 'reality' that could all too easily be aligned with other oppositions

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[28]Albeit not consistently. See, e.g., 'utopian' in Zimmern 1939a; 'realist/-ism' in Seton-Watson 1939; Keeton 1940; Angell 1940a; both in Burns 1940.
[29]Schuman 1937, 177–92 (chapter 'The Dream of World Order: Utopia and Reality,' replacing 'Leagues of Nations in Theory and Practice' in the 1933 edition); Donnelly 2000, 26, n. 16.
[30]Zimmern 1939b, 63.
[31]Morgenthau 1954, 4–14. For Morgenthau on Zimmern, see note 147 below.
[32]Schwarzenberger 1941, 105, 355, 357.
[33]Wells 1905.
[34]Fundamental on Carr's use of Mannheim is Jones 1998, 121–43.
[35]Carr 1939a, x. For the other, see note 116 below.
[36]Mannheim 1936, 178.

such as 'idealism' and 'realism.'[37] Hence, perhaps, what Seán Molloy has claimed is 'the fundamental problem with all of Carr's early critics' – 'their inability to detect the dialectical framework employed by Carr.'[38]

What did Zimmern's review make of Carr's book? He starts by defining Carr's subject as 'the disturbance in the realm of thought' caused by the new-found concern for foreign affairs after the war. A 'combination of inexperience and intense concern' resulted, Zimmern notes, 'in a prolonged mood of wishful thinking, or what Professor Carr calls "utopianism."' He then explains that Carr's object is 'to bring "realist criticism" to bear on this "utopian edifice"' – and so 'in spite of its arrangement in the form of a treatise, the volume is really what Matthew Arnold would have called "an essay in criticism."'[39] Zimmern here draws on the opening sentence of Chapter 6 ('The exposure by realist criticism of the hollowness of the utopian edifice is the most urgent task of the moment in international thought') while gesturing to the title of various volumes of essays by Arnold as well as to the subtitle of *Culture and Anarchy – An Essay in Social and Political Criticism*.[40] His allusion implies a reading of Carr's work along the lines of Stefan Collini's gloss on Arnold's: 'It is an "essay," intended to be readable and stimulating: it is neither a treatise nor a text book. And it is a work of "social and political criticism," closely engaging with the beliefs and assumptions manifested in the public life of its time: it is neither a policy proposal nor a work of systematic theory.'[41] Zimmern, that is, suggests that Carr was doing for current IR what Arnold did for the domestic affairs of Victorian Britain. He points, moreover, to a tension in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* between the specific title, which suggests a contribution to present-day political problems, and the universalising, textbook-style subtitle – *An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*.[42]

Thus far, we have the picture of Carr as the realist basher of utopianism that became enshrined in IR historiography. In line with conventional accounts, Zimmern's review has indeed been seen as negative by those scholars who have taken notice of it.[43] As we shall see, that verdict does not tell the full story.

Zimmern's review, in fact, praises the 'zest and gusto' of an onslaught that is 'constantly enlivened by shrewd and well-documented thrusts at the representatives of the different varieties of "utopian" doctrine.' Though he complains that 'the flash of Professor Carr's sabre is so dazzling that it is not very easy to distinguish' those representatives, he does specify that Woodrow Wilson is the object of 'the most

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[37]Many related terms for the basic opposition of idealism and realism can be found in earlier thinkers (e.g., the use of 'organiser' and 'idealist' in Mackinder 1919, echoed by Zimmern 1922b, 41); cf., in general, Ashworth 2002. In wider discourse, the antithesis of 'idealism' and 'realism' was already 'hackneyed' for John Addington Symonds (1890, 172), who nonetheless developed it in a way that foreshadows Carr's dialecticism: 'Realism dares not separate itself from the Ideal, because the Ideal is a permanent factor, and the most important factor, in the reality of life…. Evolution shows that life is in continual progress; and progress from one point to another implies (in a highly complex animal like man) the sense of a better to which the being tends; in other words, involves Idealism' (171).

[38]Molloy 2006, 68.

[39]Zimmern 1939a.

[40]Arnold 1865, 1869; Carr 1939a, 113.

[41]Collini 1993, ix–x.

[42]Previous IR introductions (Schuman 1933; Russell 1936) were arranged by historical period, starting in antiquity.

[43]Smith 1986, 68; Wilson 2000, 165; Dunne 2000, 219; Molloy 2006, 64; Cox 2016, xlv.

concentrated attack,' before, more precisely than Carr, dividing that attack into four charges – with the comment that 'three-quarters of it is justified':

> Firstly, he was a bad psychologist. He regarded man as primarily an intellectual being. This ensnared him in a double fallacy – the belief that men form their opinions on politics rationally, and the belief that when they have formed them they will action them. Hence his confidence in the power of public opinion to restrain the wickedness of politicians. Secondly, he was a bad sociologist. He thought the world was much more united than in fact it was in 1918, or is today. Hence his confidence in the existence of 'the international community' and in the power of 'world public opinion.' Thirdly, he was a bad political scientist. He thought that the interest of States, and particularly of the Great Powers, formed a natural harmony. Hence his confidence in the League of Nations as an agency of international co-operation. Fourthly, he was a bad philosopher. He thought that international relations could be subjected to moral judgements, whereas, for the present at least, there is no standard to which such judgements can be referred.[44]

The force of this critique, Zimmern concludes, is 'weakened by the inadequacy of the remaining quarter.'

Zimmern's review, by focussing on the dead Wilson, bypasses Carr's living targets such as Toynbee, Angell, and Zimmern himself. Others, as we have seen, named Zimmern as a target and accepted Carr's suggestion that he was a Utopian. Particularly biting for being directed against two fellow Winchester Scholars were the words of Richard Crossman: 'In his first job of dealing with the Utopians, Professor Carr is brilliantly successful. With admirable dexterity, he picks up Professors Zimmern and Toynbee as though they were delicate butterflies …'[45] Zimmern, by contrast, removes himself from the line of attack by writing of Carr being 'on firm ground when he criticises the Utopians … for not knowing what they are talking about – for their blindness to "human nature in politics."' While the earlier mention of 'spiritual values' nods to his recent book *Spiritual Values and World Affairs*, Zimmern here presupposes that he is not himself a Utopian. In praising Carr's critique of the Utopians' neglect of 'human nature in politics,' moreover, he alludes to a famous book by one of his own intellectual mentors, the social psychologist Graham Wallas, which Carr himself cited in his Aberystwyth inaugural.[46]

Contrary to the orthodoxy that the two thinkers stood 'at opposite ends of the theoretical and political spectrum,' Zimmern's review supports Carr's attack on the 'Utopians.'[47] His reservations apply to Carr's closing section:

> It is when the ex-Foreign Office official has concluded his survey and the teacher of international relations comes on the scene that his guidance begins to fail us … He takes our breath away by advising us to try to beat the Utopians at their own discredited game. 'Having demolished the current Utopia with the weapons of realism,' he tells us (p. 118), 'we still need to build a new Utopia of our own

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[44]Zimmern 1939a.

[45]Crossman 1939 (quoted in Wilson 1998a, 2).

[46]Wallas 1908; Carr 1936b, 854; Zimmern 1939b.

[47]Cox 2016, cix. Cf. Angell's comment that 'with very much of what Professor Carr writes I am in most cordial agreement' (1939b, 46).

which will one day fall to the same weapons.' The thorough-going relativism – not to say scepticism – here revealed undermines the force of his expert criticism.[48]

Carr's attack on Wilson was unjust, it seems, in making him a bad philosopher. His relativism blinded him to the merits of Wilson's belief in moral judgements.

Zimmern is here commenting on Carr's dialectical framework – his move from criticism of utopianism to the limits of realism and the need to construct a new utopia. This structure is caught in the review's title, 'A Realist in Search of a Utopia.'[49] While this title undermines Molloy's claim that Carr's early critics were unable to detect his dialectical framework, it is true that Zimmern hardly gives an adequate account of Carr's dialecticism, for he ignores the fact that from the first Carr has insisted on the necessity for both utopianism and realism: it is the need to clear away the utopian confusion of the moment that creates the impression that Carr is a 'realist.'[50]

Zimmern's correspondence shows that he paid more attention to Carr's socio-logical model than his review (published in a popular weekly) might suggest. Speaking more unguardedly, he told Angell that 'some devil at [Carr's] elbow persuaded him to write something that resembled a small treatise and to deck it out with a sociological theory, drawn apparently from Mannheim, though I do not know whether the latter would acknowledge his child': 'The result is a confusion beneath a surface of *fausse clarté*.'[51] Zimmern, it seems, objected to the 'false clarity' of Carr's topical arrangement, with sections devoted to utopianism and realism and to morality and power. The resulting 'confusion' presumably refers to what he termed in his review the contrast between the 'thorough-going relativism' of the conclusion and the well-founded critique of Wilson. In addition, Zimmern was perhaps thinking of the tension between Carr's Mannheimian stress on knowledge as socially conditioned and his moral judgements.[52]

Zimmern offered fuller comments on Mannheim in a letter to the American critic Lewis Mumford at the end of the Second World War. Addressing the perceived 'failure of liberalism,' Zimmern protested that the approach in universities was not to help students 'to deepen their own lives and discover the eternal values,' but to provide them 'with some ready-made "frame of reference," provided that it is superior to Hitler's.' He went on: 'Karl Mannheim, with his doctrine of "the sociology of knowledge," is a good deal responsible for this line of thought in this country. I find him a verbose and confusing writer – in spite of his good intentions.' His conclusion was that it was time to 'stop wasting time over arguments between competing ideologies and get down once more to old fundamentals.'[53] This essentialism recalls Zimmern's suggestion in his review that Carr ought to have defined his task as

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[48]Zimmern 1939a.

[49]Echoed in Morgenthau 1948, 129 (also citing Carr 1939a, 118): 'Mr. Carr, the realist, sets out in search of a new utopia.'

[50]Cf. Bull 1969, 625.

[51]Zimmern to Angell (note 1); quoted in Wilson 2000, 167. I am not aware of any response by Mannheim to *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.

[52]As in phrases like 'It is less immoral …' at Carr 1939a, 167.

[53]Lewis Mumford Papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, University of Pennsylvania, File 5535 (6 August 1945). The phrase 'frame of reference' is typical of Mannheim: e.g., 1936, Index, s.v.

applying to the twentieth-century world 'the traditional standards of Western civilisation, as embodied in the old watchwords of justice and liberty.' If this attitude seems idealist, then it is worth setting that impression against another comment Zimmern made in his letter: 'the writer nearest to our age is Thucydides: he lived through the same experience and kept sane. In my own special line of country, I have learnt more from him than from Plato.' This comment was written when the Greek historian was being enthroned as a foundational realist. For Zimmern, then, the point was to apply the standards of justice and liberty to the demands of the moment. Arguably, Carr's polemic concealed the fact that much the same was true of Carr himself: Carr could write that liberty was 'historical and relative,' but Zimmern had an equally historical sense of how liberty could best be realised in current social, political, and economic conditions.[54]

We have seen, then, that Carr aligns Zimmern with the utopians who had false expectations of the possibilities of international organisation in the aftermath of the First World War. Equally, however, we have seen that Zimmern rejects the charge of utopianism while raising against Carr the charge of relativism. Let us now see whether Carr's assessment of Zimmern is supported by the evidence he cites.

The critique of Zimmern in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*
The foundations of utopianism and the problem of diagnosis

Carr, as we have seen, starts his analysis of 'The International Crisis' in Part II with 'The Utopian Background' (Chapter 3), before moving on to one cardinal utopian failing, the doctrine of 'The Harmony of Interests.' It is in the final section of Chapter 3, 'The Problem of Diagnosis,' that his attack on Zimmern starts. He claims that the utopians' attempts to explain why 'mankind in its international relations has signally failed to achieve the rational good' have either focused on the treachery of individual statesmen or else argued that mankind 'must either have been too stupid to understand that good, or too wicked to pursue it.' He then singles out Zimmern as leaning to 'the hypothesis of stupidity' and Toynbee as blaming 'human wickedness,' before berating 'the simplicity of these explanations' and insisting that it is 'not true' that we are living in 'an exceptionally stupid one' (*pace* Zimmern) or 'an exceptionally wicked age' (*pace* Toynbee).[55] By presenting Zimmern as 'repeating almost word for word the argument of Buckle and Sir Norman Angell,' moreover, Carr links him with the optimistic rationalists he attacks earlier in the chapter, where he poured scorn on Buckle's argument in his *History of Civilisation* that dislike of war grew with humankind's intellectual development and on Angell's pre-war diagnosis of *The Great Illusion* (the harmful effects of war in an age of economic interdependence).[56]

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[54]Carr 1937a. The charge of relativism has been much discussed: Wilson 2000, 171–2, 187–8 addresses Zimmern's complaint; see also Scheuerman 2011, 25–7 (on Morgenthau's similar charge); Babík 2013 (as tempered by reason); Kostagiannis 2018 (on the dialectics of morality and power); Molloy 2021 (on Carr's commitment to individual emancipation); Pashakhanlou 2018 (Carr's ethics of fairness – but note his qualifications at 317). It seems best to speak of a tension in Carr; he himself later attributed inconsistencies in his writings at this time to the stresses of the moment (1961, 36), in a work that is itself widely read as combining relativism with a commitment to progress (Haslam 1999, 192–217).

[55]Carr 1939a, 51–3.

[56]Ibid., 35–6.

The passage that Carr cites to support this reading is taken from the lecture series mentioned earlier that Zimmern delivered in Chicago in 1936. It is highlighted by being set as a block quotation:

> The obstacle in our path … is not in the moral sphere, but in the intellectual…. It is not because men are ill-disposed that they cannot be educated into a world social consciousness. It is because they – let us be honest and say 'we' – are beings of conservative temper and limited intelligence.

Citing the same lecture, Carr continues: 'The attempt to build a world order has failed not through "pride or ambition or greed" but through "muddled thinking."'[57]

Carr here combines two passages that address different points. The first passage (second in the lecture) is about the failure of attempts to build a world-consciousness strong enough to make a world superstate feasible. The passage about 'muddled thinking,' which occurs 10 pages earlier, is, by contrast, about the forces that have brought humankind to 'our present pass of mutual fear and suspicion.' Carr further obscures Zimmern's argument by not citing his explanation of 'muddled thinking' – namely a failure to 'make the effort to relate our good will to the facts of the world in which we live, to harmonise our sentiments with our intelligence, and thus to marry the ideal with the real.'[58] What Zimmern is targeting is the utopianism against which Carr rails.

Equally misleading is Carr's presentation of Zimmern's idea that the failure to build world-consciousness is due to conservatism and limited intelligence. Zimmern did not claim that the main obstacle was in the intellectual sphere. He added at once: '– or, as has already been hinted, in the psychological.' His argument is that this psychological obstacle is linked to humans' 'conservative temper' – a phrase which Carr does not gloss. With recourse (as often) to Henri Bergson and Graham Wallas, Zimmern argues that 'man … still remains bound by the limitations of his inherited nature': 'the inherited nature of man makes (and always will make) it more congenial to him to live in a "closed society," associating with those whose minds and spirits are attuned to his own.'[59] This 'limited intelligence' is quite different, then, from the 'muddled thinking' with which Carr aligns it. Zimmern is arguing from the psychological realities that utopians ignore.

The problem with Carr's analysis is not just his carelessness in citing Zimmern. It is also, as we shall see, that stupidity is scarcely a fitting summary of Zimmern's thought about the League's failure. A more astute reading was offered in a review by the international lawyer Hersch Lauterpacht, who called Zimmern's talk of 'muddled thinking' a 'somewhat tautologous argument,' but noted that he 'soon abandons' it 'in order to expound his main theme.'[60] To the extent that Zimmern does invoke stupidity, moreover, the same charge can be thrown against Carr and other 'realists' (though Carr's accusations tended to be more specific).[61] Carr's 1942 monograph

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[57]Ibid., 51–2, citing Zimmern 1936b, 8, 18. Cf. Smith 1986, 55–6 (citing the same passages).

[58]Zimmern 1936b, 8.

[59]Ibid., 19. For Carr's citation of Wallas, see note 46 above; Carr 1942, 85 speaks in similar vein of the force of 'human conservativism.'

[60]Lauterpacht 1938, 711.

[61]As one of the referees suggests – but it is worth adding the qualification that what made Zimmern angry was the stupidity of powerful individuals.

Conditions of Peace denounces the 'stupidity and vindictiveness' exhibited in the Versailles treaty.[62] Early in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, moreover, he notes that the League was initially hampered by its neglect by 'the most influential European politicians,' which enabled 'abstract rationalism' to gain the upper hand: in effect, a diagnosis of the wishful thinking both of those who stayed away from Geneva and of those who did not.[63] And later he suggests that one of the 'obstacles to the establishment of a new international order' is 'failure to recognise the fundamental character of the conflict' – another intellectual failing.[64] Stupidity was prominently invoked, too, by one of Carr's intellectual inspirations, the American Reinhold Niebuhr.[65] If we allow that Carr and Niebuhr supplement claims of stupidity with more complex analysis, the same charity should be shown to Zimmern.

The harmony of interests

Carr's discussion of 'The Problem of Diagnosis' forms a bridge to his critique in the next chapter of 'The Harmony of Interests' – the doctrine that it is reasonable for the individual (person or state) to submit to rules made in the interest of the (national or international) community, on the grounds that the highest interests of the individual and the community coincide. According to Carr, 'any apparent clash of interests' must on this line of reasoning 'be explained as the result of wrong calculation.' Returning to the thinkers he criticised in the previous chapter, he sarcastically concludes: 'If people or nations behave badly, it must be, as Buckle and Sir Norman Angell and Professor Zimmern think, because they are unintellectual and short-sighted and muddle-headed.'[66] Rather than citing any texts where Zimmern supports the harmony of interests, however, Carr resorts to insinuation by claiming that that doctrine is 'a necessary corollary of the postulate that moral laws can be established by right reasoning,' since 'admission of any ultimate divergence of interests would be fatal to this postulate.'[67]

Carr's main criticism of the 'harmony of interests' doctrine was that it neglected inequalities among states, above all economic ones based on varying access to raw materials. That is to say, the fiction that all states have an equal interest in preserving peace masks the selfishness of powerful states that have a greater interest in maintaining the existing order. Carr proceeds to elaborate this 'realist critique' in the following chapter, where he contrasts 'satisfied' and 'dissatisfied' powers, or, adopting the language of nineteenth-century intra-state disputes, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.'[68]

The terms in which Carr attacked the satisfied powers were familiar. Carr suggests that it is hard to find 'any clear exposition of the real problem' owing to the dominant 'harmony of interests' doctrine, but he does quote extracts from speeches by a Yugoslav Foreign Minister and the President of the Columbian Republic protesting

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[62]Carr 1942, 239.

[63]Carr 1939a, 40.

[64]Ibid., 303.

[65]Niebuhr 1932, 21, 23; cf. Carr 1939a, x.

[66]Carr 1939a, 56.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid., 106, cf. 270–1.

against the assumption that *laissez-faire* economics favour the weak.[69] Parallels for Carr's critique of the League can, however, easily be found in writings known to Zimmern. A book he reviewed, Douglas Jerrold's *They That Take the Sword* (1936), protested (another reviewer wrote) that the League was 'merely an instrument of Anglo-French power-policy to maintain the *status quo*, instead of a means to growth and peaceful change,' while Zimmern summarised a 1935 book by two American journalists, *The Price of Peace*, as follows:

> The world consists of Haves and Have-Nots. The Haves are in favour of Peace and the Have-Nots are in favour of Justice. Their demand for Justice is engendering fear among the Haves and insecurity everywhere. The only way to get rid of this insecurity is for the Haves to pay the 'price of peace,' which involves large sacrifices on their part.[70]

There was nothing original, then, in Carr's arguments for adjustment by the satisfied powers in the interests of the dissatisfied. Indeed, the very familiarity of the terms 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the 1930s undermines Carr's claim that utopians naively defended the *status quo* by appealing to the harmony of interests.[71]

Carr's critics replied that defenders of the League were alive to power politics and that Carr (in Angell's formulation) was giving 'aid and comfort in about equal measure to the followers of Marx and the followers of Hitler.'[72] As evidence of the first claim, at least, they could have pointed to a letter in *The Times* in 1936 signed by Angell and Zimmern along with other notable figures from across the political spectrum (including Clifford Allen, Harold Macmillan, Arthur Salter, Robert Cecil, and Gilbert Murray). The letter declared that 'because Great Britain is not only a world-wide Empire but is also concerned with the defence of a whole group of virtually independent States – the Dominions – she, *more than any other Power whatsoever*, is interested in the establishment of the rule of law throughout the world, and of a system through which the burden of supporting it would be shared by others' (my italics).[73] It acknowledged, that is, that the unequal distribution of power brings different levels of benefit and so of responsibility. Even if all the signatories thought that peace was in the world's interest, they did not detect the automatic working of a principle of harmony. In the Chicago lecture series that Carr cites, moreover, Zimmern assumed this principle was universally discredited.[74]

That Carr was wrong to charge Zimmern with belief in a harmony of interests is confirmed by Zimmern's earlier writings.[75] In a 1922 article for the Workers' Educational Association journal *Highway*, he addressed the demands on 'progressive' British opinion in the present world-situation:

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[69]Ibid., 73–6.

[70]Zimmern Papers 181.249 (W. Horsfall Carter, 'The League: Its Failures and its Future,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 March 1936); Zimmern 1935a; 1936c.

[71]For a genealogy of 'peaceful change,' see Kristensen 2021.

[72]Angell 1940a, 5 (quoted in Wilson 1998a, 2).

[73]'A Peace Plan,' *The Times*, 1 August 1936: 8.

[74]Zimmern 1936b, 40–1.

[75]Morefield 2005, 5–8, 80, rightly criticises Carr on this score, but only in relation to the domestic sphere.

Nobody grudges Britain the right to pursue her own selfish interests. But what does infuriate the public opinion of other countries is, firstly, our calm assumption that what is to our own interest must also be to the interest of all other nations, and, secondly, our attempt to impose our polices, conceived in our own interest, upon the rest of the world, especially when the attempt is accompanied by fine idealistic phrases.[76]

Elsewhere, too, Zimmern denounced the assumption of a harmony of interests as British hypocrisy.[77]

A twist on this theme is found in a newspaper article Zimmern wrote soon after the 1924 General Election, in which he stood unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate. In this article, Zimmern criticised Conservative Party objections to the Geneva Protocol, British ratification of which was now threatened by the Labour defeat. The slyness of his argument lay in his suggesting that Conservatives might be expected to support the Protocol on the grounds that it 'stereotypes the status quo.' Zimmern asked in return: 'What if it did? Are we not, both as Britons and as white men, among the Haves of this world?' Not that Zimmern thought that Britain should pursue selfish interests without the hypocrisy. What the 'brilliant team of Socialists' who helped draft the Protocol had in mind was to create 'the necessary conditions for the League of Nations to turn its attention to international economic problems,' and so 'to open the way for exploring peaceful methods for improving' the existing order.[78] This sort of progressive argument is occluded by Carr's claim that liberal internationalism rested on the false belief in a harmony of interests and defined morality in accordance with self-interest. If anything, it has something in common with the collectivist utopian aspirations Carr himself expressed during the Second World War, even if the mechanism Carr envisaged for realising them was different.[79]

Power in international politics

In the preface to the second edition of *The Twenty Years Crisis*, Carr explained that the book 'was written with the deliberate aim of counteracting the glaring and dangerous defect of nearly all thinking, both academic and popular, about international politics in English speaking countries from 1919 to 1939 – the almost total neglect of the factor of power.'[80] That message was clear in the first edition and resented by Carr's targets: Delisle Burns, for instance, responded that 'the whole purpose of the despised "utopians" has been not to disregard power but to make it an instrument of morality.'[81] My discussion of the harmony of interests already suggests that Carr's critics were right to object. This conclusion is reinforced by the third passage where Carr's book takes issue with Zimmern. This passage comes in a section on 'Economic Power' where Carr argues that 'economics must properly be regarded as an aspect of politics,' and that 'economic power is pressed into the service

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[76]Zimmern 1922a.

[77]See, e.g., Zimmern 1919a, 124–7; 1919b, 252; 1922b, 183–4. Cf. Carr 1939a, 101 on the continental view of Britain.

[78]'Europe First,' *Daily Herald*, 24 November 1924.

[79]For Carr's collectivist thought during and after World War II, see Wilson 1996; Jones 1998, 97–120.

[80]Carr 1945, vii.

[81]Burns 1940, 345.

of national policy' either through 'measures whose purpose is defined by that convenient word autarky' (i.e., self-sufficiency) or through 'economic measures directly designed to strengthen the national influence over other countries.'[82] The importance of power is accentuated by the fact that this section is part of a long chapter on 'Power in International Politics' in the third part of the book, itself entitled 'Politics, Power and Morality.'

It is in discussing the fallacy of the 'separation of politics and economics' that Carr turns to Zimmern:

> the neatest exposure of this fallacy comes from the pen of Professor Zimmern; and the exposure is none the less effective for being unconscious. Having divided existing states on popular lines into those which pursue 'welfare' and those which pursue 'power,' Professor Zimmern revealingly adds that 'the welfare states, taken together, enjoy a preponderance of power and resources over the power states,' thereby leading us infallibly to the correct conclusion that 'welfare states' are states which, already enjoying a preponderance of power, are not primarily concerned to increase it, and can therefore afford butter, and 'power states' those which, being inferior in power, are primarily concerned to increase it, and devote the major part of their resources to this end. In this popular terminology, 'welfare states' are those which possess preponderant power, and 'power states' those which do not.[83]

As with previous citations, Carr misrepresents his source – here a public lecture *Quo Vadimus?* that Zimmern delivered in Oxford in February 1934. Zimmern's distinction between 'welfare' and 'power' states does not obscure the role of power: the distinction is between power as an instrument and power as an object in itself. As Zimmern put it in his 1936 Chicago lectures, 'welfare politics remain power politics but power politics raised to a higher level, the level of moral responsibility.'[84] Nor did he equate power-states with states that do not enjoy preponderant power. He speaks of a preponderance of power enjoyed by the welfare states 'taken together' – including, that is, states such as Czechoslovakia and Switzerland which could themselves be considered 'Have-Nots.'[85] Zimmern's claim in the Oxford lecture, moreover, that 'fortunately … power-states are *no longer* the dominant states of the world' (my emphasis) undermines Carr's argument that Zimmern's 'power states' seek power as an object in itself because of their own relative weakness. As he made still clearer in 1936, Zimmern was pointing to a historical progression towards greater cooperation in the policies pursued by powerful states.[86] In both lectures, Zimmern's distinction between 'welfare' and 'power' is designed to promote cooperation rather than evidence of his failure to understand the interlinking of economics and politics.[87]

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[82]Carr 1939a, 154.

[83]Ibid., 152–3, citing Zimmern 1934a, 41.

[84]Zimmern 1934a, 32; 1936b, 58.

[85]Ibid., 38; cf. Zimmern 1938a, 738 on 'the "Have-Nots"' as 'not simply Germany, Italy and Japan, but the fifty and more other and still weaker states.'

[86]Zimmern 1936b, 43–4. Baji 2021, 146–7 rightly links the 'welfare state' with Zimmern's notion of 'commonwealth' (Zimmern 1918, 136 makes the link explicit).

[87]Carr 1937b could equally be critiqued for 'The Return of Power Politics,' the subtitle of Part III (cf. 190), which implies that politics is not always about power. Carr himself used the language of 'welfare' (e.g., Carr

What of Carr's allegation that Zimmern's exposure of the fallacy of the 'separation of politics and economics' was 'unconscious'? The problem with this dismissive claim is not just that it is tied to Carr's misreading of Zimmern's welfare–power opposition. It is also that it is hard to square with the reflections throughout Zimmern's corpus on the necessary connections between politics and economics. This interlinking is central, for instance, to the plot of Zimmern's 1911 work *The Greek Commonwealth*, in which the long section on 'Economics' artfully deconstructs the image of the city-state built up in the section on 'Politics.'[88] It appears throughout the 1920s in his warning that the 'Haves' (at that time the white peoples) face a race-war if they do not promote greater equality with the non-white peoples.[89] And the *Quo Vadimus?* lecture itself contains a historicising analysis of how the industrial revolution and the consequent increase of wealth through free enterprise created a misleading ideological separation of economics and politics. In retrospect, British sea-power could be seen as the binding force – or as Zimmern puts it, it was not the 'so-called laws of political economy' which 'were the real policemen but the system of political control which enabled them to function with the minimum of interruption and instability.'[90] Zimmern's stress on the contrast of nineteenth- and twentieth-century political and economic conditions is exactly matched by Carr's analysis.

Where Zimmern differed from *The Twenty Years' Crisis* was in his assessment of the policies required to meet the political and economic challenges of the late 1930s. Both Zimmern and Carr favoured an equality of opportunities among peoples, as among citizens. But while Carr supported Chamberlain's appeasement of Nazi Germany, Zimmern adopted a different view of the psychology of power: the Have-Nots, he protested, were using the resources they did have for military ends, and they would not be satisfied with concessions. A conflict of moral systems could not be solved by a mechanical economic rearrangement.[91]

Morality in international politics

Carr does turn to 'Morality in International Politics' in the final chapter in Part III. The discussion forms part of his progressive exposure of the limitations of a narrowly defined realism, leading towards the utopian turn of his conclusion. Among other topics, Carr treats the gap between the private morality of the individual and the public morality of the state. This theme was prominent in interwar IR, especially in Niebuhr's writings. As he picks up on this debate, Carr takes aim not just at Zimmern but also at the leading American philosopher John Dewey. Most people, Carr writes, 'while believing that states ought to act morally, do not expect of them the same kind of moral behaviour which they expect of themselves and one another.' But 'utopian thinkers have been so puzzled by this phenomenon that they have refused to recognise it,' or else 'have sincerely confessed their bewilderment': '"Men's morals are paralysed when it comes to international conduct,"

1942, 72–80) with the same stress on responsibility and co-operation found in Zimmern, albeit with a stronger focus on central planning. Garland 2022 discusses the term's development.

[88] See Rood 2025a.

[89] See, e.g., Zimmern 1926, 66–92.

[90] Zimmern 1934a, 13, 26; 1934b, 13.

[91] See, e.g., Zimmern 1939c, 5. Cf. criticisms of Carr's psychology in Woolf 1940 and Rowse 1941. For contextualisation and discussion of Carr's position on appeasement, see Jones 1998, 36–9; Wilson 2000, 184–6, 2013, 54–6; Molloy 2013, 65–70.

observes Professor Dewey and Professor Zimmern detects "a rooted prejudice against law and order in the international domain.'"[92] Presumably it is the language of 'paralysed' and 'rooted prejudice' that leads Carr to speak of 'bewilderment.'

A more charitable reading of Dewey and Zimmern would be that they were making the same point as Carr, but for different purposes. Rather than feeling bewildered, Dewey proceeded to probe the psychological, social, and economic causes for the disparity of private and state morality. He made, too, a positive proposal (outlawing war) for the further development of international morality. Even though wars between states could no more be stopped by law than stealing, he felt that legal prohibition would gradually affect attitudes towards war.

Zimmern was no more bewildered than Dewey. He was attempting to overturn opposition to the idea that the British Commonwealth and the United States could cooperate to remove global insecurity. Opposition to a collective system of security among the English-speaking peoples, Zimmern suggested, came from a persistent association between peace and anarchy. While continental states with a tradition of liberty such as Sweden and Czechoslovakia would welcome a worldwide police force led by the United States and Britain, some in Britain saw any such cooperation as despotic. Far from throwing up his hands in bafflement, Zimmern was arguing against idealists who refused to recognise the importance of power in maintaining world order.

Thus far, we have seen Carr criticising Zimmern while misrepresenting his arguments for his own ends. As he moves towards his own proposals, however, Carr's references to Zimmern become less polemical. Towards the end of this same chapter, he cites Zimmern's pamphlet *The Prospects of Civilization*:

> When Professor Zimmern urges 'the ordinary man' to *enlarge* his vision so as to bear in mind that the *public affairs* of the twentieth century are *world affairs*, the most concrete meaning which can be given to this injunction is that the recognition of the principle of self-sacrifice, which is commonly supposed to stop short at the national frontier, should be extended beyond it.[93]

Carr's interpretation seems to go beyond what is envisaged in Zimmern's pamphlet. Its overarching argument is that it is counterproductive to preach internationalism while ignoring the difficulties in its path. The best approach is to apply the least possible change – in this case, to enlarge citizens' outlook so that they are world-minded some of the time. Zimmern is merely stressing the desirability of more people having an informed interest in the interdependent relations among states. Wilfully disregarding this modest argument, Carr extracts from Zimmern's text a message of self-sacrifice that chimes with his own vision of 'peaceful change' as sacrifices by the 'Haves' to satisfy the concerns of the 'Have-nots.' It is not that Zimmern was against self-sacrifice *per se*: indeed, he argued early in 1939 (presumably as a provocation) that any past wrongs to Germany in the Versailles Treaty should be made up not by conceding African colonies but by sacrifices at home.[94] Carr, however, by offering what he calls 'the most concrete meaning' of Zimmern's injunction to the ordinary

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[92]Carr 1939a, 199, citing Dewey 1923, 85; Zimmern 1935b, 137.

[93]Carr 1939a, 214, citing Zimmern 1939c, 26.

[94]Zimmern 1936d, 149; 1939b, 175 ('I would rather see Eton and Winchester nazified than allow the Nyakyusa to be pressed under the German steam-roller').

man to enlarge his vision, does seem to intimate that that injunction is vague and ill-suited at a time when specific adjustments are necessary.

The foundations of international law

Carr's next citation of Zimmern occurs in the chapter 'The Foundations of Law' that opens Part IV ('Law and Change') of *The Twenty Years' Crisis.* In this section, Carr addresses the question of legal procedures for peaceful change broached in the chapter on morality. His analysis drew praise from supposed adversaries such as Angell, who thought the chapter on the relation of law to peaceful change 'a brilliant and most useful piece of work,' and Zimmern, who commended Carr's treatment of international law to 'all who are tempted to indulge in amateur projects of world-order.'[95] In keeping with the trend noted above, the allusions to Zimmern he makes in this section are more positive – as well as fairer – than his earlier citations.

Carr starts this chapter by discussing 'naturalist' and 'realist' (or 'positivist') views of law. According to those views, law either derives from nature or is imposed by the state. Carr opts for a middle ground according to which law is a function of society. This definition allows for international law even in the absence of a centralised world power, but it is a conception more moderate than that proposed by international lawyers in the Grotian tradition. In the course of establishing this position, Carr approves Zimmern's definition of the relation of law to society: 'Law is regarded as binding because, if it were not, political society could not exist and there could be no law. Law is not an abstraction. It "can only exist within a social frame-work… . Where there is law, there must be a society within which it is operative."'[96] In applying this definition beyond the state, moreover, Carr agrees with Zimmern that there is no international society strong enough to support widespread legal mechanisms, but there is a form of international society, and with it a form of international law based largely on 'custom' (Carr) or 'etiquette' (Zimmern).[97]

Carr's final citation of Zimmern occurs in Part IV at the end of Chapter 12. Entitled 'The Judicial Settlement of International Disputes,' this chapter outlines the limitations of international law in current conditions: 'An international tribunal, once it has left the comparatively solid ground of international law and legal rights, can find no foothold in any agreed conception of equity or common sense or the good of the community. It remains, in Professor Zimmern's words, "an array of wigs and gowns vociferating in emptiness."'[98] Carr here quotes a vivid phrase from Zimmern's discussion of international law in his book on the League of Nations. One of the leading British IR academics, S. H. Bailey, found that discussion too sceptical. Rather than taking the opposite line, Carr ends his engagement with Zimmern in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* by endorsing Zimmern's anti-utopian position.[99]

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[95] Angell 1940b, 46 (quoted in Wilson 1998a, 2); Zimmern 1939a.

[96] Carr 1939a, 227, citing Zimmern 1938b, 12.

[97] Carr 1939a, 219–20, with language ('undeveloped,' 'primitive') that matches Zimmern's analogies between the development of domestic and international law (Rood 2025b, 167); Zimmern 1934c, 34–7.

[98] Carr 1939a, 263, citing Zimmern 1936a, 135.

[99] Bailey 1936, 422.

The League of Nations Covenant

Carr's disingenuousness towards Zimmern throughout *The Twenty Years' Crisis* emerges still more if we include implicit allusions in our survey. In the early chapter 'The Utopian Background,' Carr admits that 'the founders of the League,' 'some of whom were men of political experience and political understanding,' had 'recognised the dangers of abstract perfection,' citing in support of this claim the official British Commentary on the Covenant.[100] Later in the book, he again stresses that the League founders had no illusion about the elimination of power from politics: the earliest British and American drafts of the Covenant 'contemplated that membership of the Council of the League would be limited to Great Powers.'[101] At no point, however, does Carr note that it was Zimmern who drafted the British proposal for the Covenant. And while open exposure of that fact would have breached Foreign Office protocol, Zimmern's interwar writings are full of complaints that the Council's usefulness was weakened by its expansion beyond the small group of Great Powers.[102]

Zimmern and Carr compared

My analysis in this article has suggested that there is good reason to question Carr's placing Zimmern among the utopians, not least because he misrepresented Zimmern's arguments and failed to acknowledge, except briefly with international law, the many points of contact in their ideas. This section sets this sparring in its intellectual context by asking how Carr and Zimmern were viewed by their contemporaries and by probing further points of similarity in their interpretations of history and politics.

   The reputation Zimmern built during the interwar years bears no relation to Carr's depiction. The *New Statesman* saw his angry monograph *Europe in Convalescence* (1922) as the work of a 'disappointed idealist' who 'has no more fondness for "sentimental Liberals" than for hard-faced Conservatives.'[103] Carr, too, would speak in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* of 'disappointed utopians,' but he locates this disappointment in the 1930s.[104] For Zimmern, by contrast, disillusionment set in with the Paris peace conference, and already in the early 1920s he was claiming that the war has 'cured us of Utopianism' and warning that 'the transition of thought and practice' involved in the collective system is 'difficult and full of danger.'[105] Even if later Zimmern sometimes felt a qualified optimism, his 1928 monograph *Learning and Leadership*, written while he was a League employee to promote intellectual cooperation, was described as 'un-Utopian,'[106] and the following year a review of a collection of his essays called him an 'idealist,' but 'far from being Utopian in outlook': 'he has a

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[100]Carr 1939a, 28–9.

[101]Ibid., 133.

[102]See, e.g., Zimmern 1922b, 139–40; 1924, 167, n. 1; 1929, 202; 1936a, 191–2, 212–13, 292.

[103]Anon. 1922, 245. Some scholars (Rich 1995, 83; Holthaus 2018, 168) have claimed that this book anticipates Carr.

[104]Carr 1939a, 51,

[105]Zimmern 1923, 387; 1924, 449. Evidence of Zimmern's 1919 mood can be found in the British Library, Add. MS 45745.207 (letter to Marie Petre, 24 November) and other correspondence. Zimmern's pre-war internationalism was itself far from utopian (Rood 2025b, 167–9).

[106]Brogan 1928, 672.

very acute knowledge of the forces, political, social, and economic, which lie behind the outer face of the modern world.'[107]

This reputation was solidified by Zimmern's 1936 monograph *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law.* A radio broadcast on the book in Canada claimed that Zimmern 'is a believer in the League of Nations, not because he is an idealist but because he is a realist.'[108] Another reviewer started by citing a quotation Zimmern included from Thucydides ('War is a forcible teacher'), before opining that Zimmern is 'a realist, but with that he is so far an optimist as to believe in the fundamental common sense of the nations.'[109] If anything, these reviews offered too rosy an assessment of Zimmern's view of the prospects of the League. More insightful was a review by Leonard Woolf which made much the same points against Zimmern that he and other critics later used against *The Twenty Years' Crisis.* Just as Zimmern lamented Carr's demoralising effect, Woolf, while allowing that Zimmern's book was 'extraordinarily clever and brilliant,' could 'only hope that he was, in writing it, completely unaware of the effect that it must have upon the reader.' Zimmern's 'main object,' Woolf continued, 'seems to be to prove that the League has been a failure, that it was bound to be so, and that anyone who "believes in" or "supports" it is one of a "discordant congregation" of impossible "idealists."' The arguments Woolf attributes to Zimmern foreshadow Carr's attack on utopianism, while Woolf's critique echoes his later charge that Carr inferred that the League's failure was inevitable merely from its failure. So too a 'confusion' Woolf found in Zimmern, namely 'the assumption that there is something more real in violence and power and force … than there is in law, justice, order,' matches his protest against Carr's skewed and self-fulfilling definition of reality which saw force as more real than public opinion. Far from seeing Zimmern as a utopian, Woolf levelled against both Zimmern and Carr the charge of being too realist.[110]

Zimmern's reputation is also revealed by explicit comparisons with Carr. The two men are grouped in a letter from Gilbert Murray to Robert Cecil in 1938 in which he wrote that he was 'a good deal troubled by the schism which is losing the LNU the support of so many of its old friends, such as Bevan, Fischer Williams, Esme Howard, as well as Carr, Manning and Zimmern.'[111] Carr's own memories of the League confirm that he shared in the optimistic mood of the 1920s[112]; it was amidst the growing crisis of the 1930s that he became disillusioned. In due course, David Davies, founder with his sisters of the Wilson Chair at Aberystwyth which both Zimmern and Carr held, could write that 'all the professors from Zimmern onwards opposed these ideas with the result that we have been landed in another bloody war which is going to ruin most of us.'[113] That is, he tarred Zimmern and Carr with the same brush.

The realisms of Carr and Zimmern were linked, too, by the British theologians J. H. Oldham and William Paton, both of whom were adherents of Christian Realism,

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[107]Homan 1929.

[108]Radio Station CFRB, Toronto, 21 April 1936 (Zimmern Papers 181.288).

[109]*The Inquirer*, 8 February 1936 (Zimmern Papers 181.181), quoting Zimmern 1936a, 137 quoting Thucydides 3.82.2. Also *The Citizen*, May 1936 (Zimmern Papers 181.344).

[110]Woolf 1936. Cf. Pemberton 2020, 341.

[111]Gilbert Murray Papers 232.202 (25 May 1938), cited by Hall 2012, 202, n. 13. Zimmern resigned in October 1936 (Zimmern Papers 85.1).

[112]Carr 1952; cf. Carr 1937b, 81 on the second half of the decade as 'the golden years of post-war Europe.'

[113]Davies to Major Burdon-Evans, 5 March 1943, cited by Porter 2000, 61.

a movement associated with Reinhold Niebuhr. On 29 November 1939, Oldham printed in his small journal *The Christian News-Letter* a paper entitled 'Preliminaries to the Consideration of Peace Aims.' Prior to publication, he sent the piece to Zimmern, who criticised a paragraph about a negotiated peace as 'sentimental.'[114] The piece ended with recommendations of 'some relevant books,' starting with 'a little book that has just been published by one of our collaborators, Sir Alfred Zimmern,' *Spiritual Values and World Affairs*, which he called 'the best treatment of the relation of Christianity to international affairs that I have seen.' He immediately proceeded to 'a larger volume, which strongly reinforces at many points the line taken in the supplement' – *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. Paton similarly drew those two books together by reviewing them along with two other books that explored the intersection of Christianity and politics, T. S. Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* and L. J. Shafer's *The Christian Alternative to World Chaos*. Paton initially identified the concern of Zimmern's book as being 'to help those especially who are to be Christian ministers to understand some of the things necessary to them if they are to think and speak with intelligence about international affairs,' while Carr's 'much larger and more solid' book was devoted to '"debunking" of utopianism.' Though noting these different goals, Paton insisted that Zimmern 'is sound on the need to face realistically the fact of power in the life of states,' and noted too that 'he does not spare the British talk of a "League policy" which was really a policy harmonious with British interests' – another way of framing Carr's critique of the harmony of interests. Some of Paton's strongest remarks, however, were brought against Carr's presentation of Zimmern: 'It is piquant,' he wrote, 'to read [Zimmern's] remarks about utopianism in view of the fact that in Professor Carr's book he is cast for the role of Utopian Number One (or if not Number One, then certainly Number Two or Three).' And he ends by suggesting that Carr gives too much weight to realism and not enough to its dangers: 'The continual jibing at Professors Toynbee and Zimmern is so unfair and, indeed, taken in relation to the bulk of their work, so preposterous, that it may be taken as more indicative of Professor Carr's mind than the verbal acknowledgment he makes of the dangers of a consistent realism.'[115]

The comparison with Zimmern made by Oldham and Paton is the more striking given that the two thinkers to whom Carr acknowledged a debt in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* were Niebuhr, the inspiration for their Christian Realism, and Mannheim, a member of Oldham's 'Moot' (discussion group).[116] What Oldham understood by Christian Realism he outlined in the first issue of his *Christian News-Letter*, dated 1 November 1939:

> The authentic Christian outlook is characterised by an extreme realism. It is this that distinguishes it from an optimistic humanitarian idealism, with which it is often confused. The Christian mind knows the radical nature of evil. This knowledge should save it from the illusions to which a rosy view of human nature is prone.

Similar themes were broached in Paton's writings. In his 1941 monograph *The Church and the New Order* (which Zimmern read in draft), Paton quoted some of

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[114]Oldham to Zimmern, Zimmern Papers 45.89–90 (18 October 1939), cf. 45.107.
[115]Paton 1940, 271–2.
[116]For context, see Clements 2015; Thompson 2015; Wood 2019.

Oldham's comments on the exercise of political power in *The Christian News-Letter*, and compared them in a footnote with Carr's 'realist critique' in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.[117] Though Zimmern never used the term of himself, he was undoubtedly close in the late 1930s to the approach of these self-avowed Christian Realists.[118]

That Zimmern could be seen as a better realist than Carr is shown, too, by a review in an American journal that read *Spiritual Values and World Affairs* alongside *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. The reviewer was Hans Kohn, a Jewish exile in the United States and, like Zimmern, a prominent thinker on Nationalism. Kohn saw in Carr's work the Foreign Office thinking behind Chamberlain's doomed policy – a type of realism that 'easily becomes unrealistic by its underestimation of the moral element.' If that judgement echoes Woolf's complaint, Kohn diverged from Woolf in finding in Zimmern a true realism which offered the best hope of avoiding war:

> There are few contemporary pieces of as expert and truly realistic writing as the lecture on peace which Professor Zimmern delivered before theology students in February 1939, which implied an attitude that has been amply justified by subsequent events. Had it dominated the mind of the English and other democratic peoples, instead of the prevailing moral and mental confusion, it could in all probability have averted those events.[119]

My discussion above of Carr's citations of Zimmern already gives good reason to understand why informed contemporaries were prepared to consider Zimmern as much a realist as Carr, and perhaps even a more prudent one in the policies he favoured in the 1930s. It remains to support this claim with an overview of their larger visions.

First, Zimmern resembles Carr in his insistence that policymaking requires both utopianism and realism (even if he did not use that antithesis). Already in a school essay he wrote that the function of 'fanaticism' is 'to carry the ideal into the real,' since 'if the foundation is not real, then the superstructure will fall.'[120] In the late 1920s, he argued in a lecture in Geneva that the idea for a Universal Library is 'obviously a Utopian ideal, but we are trying to realise it in a more practicable way.'[121] Some years later, in the Chicago lectures cited above, he praised Lord Bryce, Lord Acton, Woodrow Wilson, Elihu Root, and Jan Masaryk as 'realists in observation, idealists in aims and motive.'[122] Of most personal interest is a passage in Zimmern's League of Nations monograph that lauds the initial British proposals for the Covenant as 'an attempt to meet both the demands of the moment, the practical and the idealistic.'[123] As we have seen, their drafter was Zimmern himself.[124]

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[117]Paton 1941, 12, 66–7.

[118]Zimmern himself, it should be noted, was of Christian parentage (his paternal grandfather having converted from Judaism in the 1820s) and himself a practising Christian during this period.

[119]Kohn 1940, 153. Pemberton 2020, 330 notes Kohn's comments on Carr but not his treatment of Zimmern (she fails to note that the journal misidentified Zimmern 1939b as 1939d).

[120]Zimmern Papers 123/2.10. The Marxist overtones may be due to his schoolmate Robert Ensor.

[121]Zimmern 1927, 147.

[122]Zimmern 1936b, 88.

[123]Zimmern 1936a, 190.

[124]The memorandum was first published in Zimmern 1936a, 196–208; his authorship was suspected (Carter 1936, 524).

Second, Zimmern and Carr are similar in their historical frames of mind. Their approach to current international problems typically involved a survey of changes in international contacts since the eighteenth century, often with a clear division into distinct periods.[125] Both recognised that previous solutions would no longer be effective in new political and economic constellations: many parallels in Zimmern could be cited for Carr's formulation that 'a twentieth-century malady cannot be cured by nineteenth-century specifics.'[126] They were alike, too, in their developmental historicism. Both stressed the political immaturity of Germany by contrast with countries with settled national traditions such as Britain and France,[127] and both anticipated the political and economic development of 'backward' peoples who had been subjected by European powers, while being critical of capitalist exploitation of colonies and of racial inequality.[128]

Other links in the thought of Zimmern and Carr can be traced. Both were sceptical of the nation-state.[129] Both supported this scepticism with admiring references to the Cambridge historian Acton, and both further praised Acton for his commitment to liberty; Zimmern's admiration of Acton is the more striking given Carr's verdict that Acton was unpopular in the first third of the twentieth century and that 'the collapse of the Liberal utopia brought him back into his own.'[130] Both men moved, too, towards functionalist and regional approaches to international cooperation.[131] Both highlighted the role of public opinion in the formation of an international social conscience.[132] Both stressed the responsibilities and obligations (including self-sacrifice for the common good) that came with power for the state and with rights for the individual.[133]

While more specific comparisons can be drawn,[134] any assessment of Zimmern and Carr must point to differences too. Carr remained a strong advocate of progress, but an Augustinian pessimism appears in Zimmern's writings in the 1930s.[135]

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[125]As seen, for example, in the title and argument of Zimmern 1926 or in the structure of Carr 1951 (a chapter on 'The Historical Approach' followed by three 'From … to …' chapters). For Carr's historical-mindedness, see Germain 2000.

[126]Carr 1942, 31; cf. 38, 162; see also, e.g., Carr 1939a, 287, 303. For Zimmern, see the passages cited by Rood 2025b, 157, including Zimmern 1936b, 28 ('what was natural … in the eighteenth century is wholly impracticable in the twentieth').

[127]E.g., Zimmern 1936e, 514; Carr 1937b, 44.

[128]For 'backwardness,' see, e.g., Zimmern 1918, 54; Carr 1937b, 237 ('backward Orient': contrast Zimmern 1939b, 149); cf. note 97 above. The word is qualified by quotation marks or 'so-called' more often in Zimmern than in Carr. For Zimmern on capitalism, see, e.g., Baji 2021, 130–2 and Rood 2025a, 132–3; on race Rood 2025c, 389–90. For Carr, see Karkour 2022.

[129]See John, Wright, and Garnett 1972, 96; Cox 2019.

[130]Carr 1955. See, e.g., Bodleian Libraries, facs. c. 118.89 (Zimmern to Lippmann, 23 June [1915]): '[my political principle] is Acton's "Liberty is not the highest political end: it is the only political end." Peace is second to that'; Zimmern 1918, 47–8, 72–3, 151–2; 1934a, 22; Carr 1939a, 9; 1942, 40; 1945, vi (epigraph), 62; 1951, 115–16; 1961, 109, 147–8.

[131]E.g., Zimmern 1936b; Carr 1945 (with Karkour 2023, 322–3 for qualifications on Carr).

[132]Wilson 1998a, 14.

[133]Linklater 2000, 236.

[134]See, e.g., Zimmern 1919b, 252 and Carr 1945, 66–7 on the emergence of religious and national toleration in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, respectively; Zimmern 1929, 171 and a 1940 column by Carr (Haslam 1999, 63) on 10-year treaties; and Zimmern 1922b, 109–13, Carr 1942, 73–4, 244, 248–9 (citing Zimmern 1936a, 157, 159) on the failure to adapt for European reconstruction the centralised economic mechanisms used to blockade Germany.

[135]Baji 2021, 148–50.

Related to this difference is the contrast adumbrated above between Zimmern's gradualism and Carr's belief (which emerged more clearly in his writings in the 1940s) in the need for revolutionary overhaul of the political and economic order in an age of mass democracy. While Carr sometimes seems to belittle human suffering in the name of progress, Zimmern in a 1933 article inveighed against 'revolutionaries' as 'doctrinaires who are prepared to make light of the sufferings of millions of men, women and children because they have persuaded themselves that, among the diminished survivors after the Deluge, there will be a more equal distribution of such wealth as remains.'[136] Zimmern was nonetheless far from a *laissez-faire* liberal: in that same 1933 article he was equally critical of non-revolutionaries, arguing instead that it was the League's job to promote economic co-operation internationally,[137] and his work on industrial reconstruction during World War I was guided by a belief similar to Carr's in World War II that war might be a catalyst for a reshaping of labour conditions.[138] Contrary to Carr's implication, moreover, Zimmern did not hypocritically use moral language to justify preserving the *status quo*. It was because he could see that 'the *status quo* is unjust' that he thought that 'the old watchwords of justice and liberty' sufficed as a spring for progressive political action, even as that action required pragmatic knowledge of the forces old and new at work in the world.[139]

Conclusion: the devil at Carr's elbow

While the inadequacy of the opposition between the realist Carr and the utopian Zimmern is well-established in scholarship, the reading of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* in this article has shown that Carr's comments on Zimmern are far fewer and less uniformly hostile than usually imagined. This article has shown, too, that the criticisms Carr did include are based on a slipshod reading of Zimmern's writings. Carr failed to disclose accurately the contexts of the quotations he selects. Had he done so, he would have had to admit that the image of Zimmern's utopianism he constructs is a self-interested fantasy. His rhetoric might have been better directed against the unworldly targets of Zimmern's *Spiritual Values and World Affairs* or against ambitious schemes for world government.

The similarities we have observed through our commentary on *The Twenty Years' Crisis* make one question inescapable: Why did Carr misrepresent Zimmern as much as he did? The canonicity of Carr's book has ensured that he has received much more attention than the thinkers he criticises. At the time of writing, however, Carr must have known that his aggression towards major figures such as Zimmern and Toynbee was not likely to win him friends; later, indeed, it may well have contributed to his failure to be appointed to the Montague Burton Chair at Oxford previously held by Zimmern.[140]

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[136]Zimmern 1933, 11. The younger Zimmern was more amenable to the language of revolution (Rood 2025c, 366, 381–2).

[137]Ibid. Baji 2021 brings out Zimmern's belief in centralized state action; see further Rood 2025c, 362–72 on his early socialist leanings.

[138]Rood 2025c, 371–2.

[139]Zimmern 1939b, 43; 1939a.

[140]Carr, C. A. Macartney, and Max Beloff applied for the Chair in 1948; Agnes Headlam-Morley, originally a member of the appointment panel, was elected. Another panel member, Robert Ensor, told Zimmern, 'I would not myself have had Carr at any price' (Zimmern Papers 55.10, 15 June 1948).

Carelessness is a more charitable answer than malice or the anxiety of influence. Carr was busy in the late 1930s not just with *The Twenty Years' Crisis* but also with a short book on British foreign policy and the report of the Chatham House committee on Nationalism that he chaired;[141] amidst these larger projects, he found time, too, for dozens of reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* and for other journalistic pieces. Further explanations may lie in Carr's high intellectual self-esteem and his awareness of his own Foreign Office expertise, especially if he set his twenty years' service against Zimmern's brief tenure.

Some wilfulness on Carr's part is nonetheless suggested by the contrast with the praise he previously bestowed on Zimmern's book on the League of Nations.[142] Indeed, the contrast between that 1936 review and the 1939 book suggests a political reason for Carr's treatment.[143] The thinkers whom he brands Utopian – Angell, Murray, Toynbee, Zimmern – had pondered the possibility of 'peaceful change' earlier in the 1930s, but were all firmly against appeasement by the late 1930s. Carr, that is, called on Mannheimian theory to position the anti-appeasers as Utopian, even as the 'realism' he identified with appeasement was being shown up as a fantasy.[144]

Beyond this political subtext, it is tempting to see Carr's tone as instantiating a conflict of academic style. In his later years, Carr suggested that he learned from the Cambridge Latinist A. E. Housman 'something of his flair for cutting through a load of nonsense and getting straight to the point.'[145] If Housman can be claimed as a model for the polemical style of *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, then the structure of that book may also be seen as an attempt at replicating a distinctively Cambridge style of 'scholarship with no nonsense about it' of which Housman spoke in his inaugural lecture, a few months before Carr's arrival as an undergraduate.[146] Carr's aspirations for a 'science of international relations' (the title of Part I of his book) contrasted with the approach of Zimmern, who preferred to see IR as an art, albeit one that required knowledge of many other disciplines.[147] Zimmern offered a more radical take on the tough idealism of his own mentor, Gilbert Murray, whose concern with imaginatively reconstructing the 'spirit' of ancient Greece Housman's inaugural implicitly attacked.[148] A hint of this clash of approaches can be heard in the letter from Zimmern to Angell with which we began. Zimmern, we saw, regretted that a 'devil' at Carr's elbow made him cast his analysis in the form of a treatise decked out with sociology. This decision gave *The Twenty Years' Crisis* its systematic appearance, but its rigorous look was, we have seen, largely based on a misrepresentation of the utopians against whom the realist critique was directed. Zimmern's diagnosis of Carr's 'false clarity' might in turn be applied to the postwar realism that, fed on a myth of interwar utopianism crudely extracted from Carr, flexed its intellectual muscles on ahistorical models of power politics.

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[141]Carr 1939b; Royal Institute of International Affairs 1939.

[142]See note 16 above.

[143]Cf. Wilson 1998b, 191 on 'utopian' as 'a protean term used by Carr to cast in a bad light a range of ideas that he happened to find disagreeable'; Ashworth 2006, 304–5.

[144]Zimmern told Angell (note 1) that Carr's confusion was increased by his perception that appeasement was succeeding, which necessitated 'skilful use of the blue pencil at the last moment'; his review graciously refrained from this hit.

[145]Carr 2000, xiv.

[146]Housman 1969, 25. For the polemical styles, cf. Haslam 2000, 30.

[147]See the Zimmern extract critiqued in Morgenthau and Thompson 1950, 19–24.

[148]Cf. Davies 2006.

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