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## **Women Talking: The Internationalism of the 1915 Congress of Women**

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**Master of Science Thesis**

**WOMEN TALKING**

The Internationalism of the 1915 Congress of Women

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## **Abstract**

During the First World War in 1915, more than a thousand women from 15 nations gathered at The Hague, NL to discuss matters of war and peace in an institutionalized setting for the first time in history. This master thesis analyses how its participants defined internationalism and explores how it was influenced by the already existing realist, liberal, and socialist understandings of the international. Furthermore, this thesis argues that the Congress' internationalism presents the roots of current feminist International Relations concepts and feminist foreign policy strategies. An inductive Qualitative Content Analysis of 69 documents produced by its participants was conducted to answer the research question. The Congress participants vehemently opposed militarism and domination, and thus their internationalism is incompatible with realist internationalism. Solidarity and cooperation among nations and justice were identified as common points with socialist internationalism. Liberal ideas like free trade and international law and institutions were integrated by the Congress. Finally, the participants' demand for women's suffrage, their broad definition of peace and their understanding of internationalism as a collective, democratic effort show how current feminist understandings of the international are rooted in the 1915 Congress' internationalism.

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## 1. Introduction

*'We do not think we can settle the war.(...)We do think it is valuable to state a new point of view. We do think it is fitting that women should meet and take counsel to see what may be done.'*

- Jane Addams(1982:309)

Jane Addams, an American feminist, was the chairwoman of the International Congress of Women, which took place in The Hague, Netherlands, during the First World War (WWI) in 1915. Over a thousand participants from 15 different nations, including warring and neutral entities, formulated peace resolutions to let the ongoing war be the last one. These resolutions were highly progressive for the early 20th century, and many concepts, like an European Federation, an International Court of Arbitration, or the abolishment of the right of conquest, have been realized or integrated into international agreements over the following century. Another example of this progressiveness is the address of sexual violence in war contexts, which is still topical today, as reports from Ukraine, Congo, Iraq, and many other countries show (United Nations Secretary-General 2022).

Instead of succumbing to the general rise of nationalist attitudes during times of war (Costin 1982:301), these women prioritized their international ambitions. To grasp what these ambitions aimed at, the following research question is addressed: *How did the participants of the 1915 International Congress of Women define internationalism?* I understand internationalism as 'the principle or practice of nations acting and working together' (Anon 2023).

The Congress took place at a tumultuous point in European history, and I will argue that the participants' lives and perspectives on the international were shaped by this context and the contemporary understandings of internationalism. Simultaneously, even though the Congress had no immediate impact on international politics, I will demonstrate that its ideas have been carried forward by generations of feminists and can still be found in current feminist understandings of the international. My master thesis thus explores the roots of current international feminist demands and analyses how other understandings of the international influenced those roots.

I answer the research question of how the participants defined internationalism inductively. Therefore, I will proceed as follows. In Chapter 2, the core characteristics of internationalism in realist, liberal and socialist theories are presented. However, rather than

in a standard literature review, they will be used to demonstrate where the Congress' internationalism came from. As liberal and socialist theories and movements were popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and WWI can be described as a prime example of realist state behaviour, the participants were influenced by those ideas. I will demonstrate this by contrasting and comparing them to the Congress' internationalism in the discussion chapter. Thereafter, instead of a theoretical framework, Chapter 3 presents the core aspects of feminist International Relations (IR) and feminist foreign policy strategies (FFPS). These are introduced because I will demonstrate that they are rooted in the Congress' internationalism. I will also argue that this thesis contributes to the feminist International Relations (IR) discipline. Chapter 4 presents the research methodology consisting of a qualitative content analysis(QCA) of documents produced during the Congress and other texts written by its participants around the time of the Congress. The coding framework is entirely derived from the material. As QCA is about creating meaning through interpretation (Willig 2014:2), it allowed me to establish how the women at The Hague defined internationalism. In Chapter 5, I will analyse the research findings and outline the Congress' internationalism. Chapter 6 then will compare the Congress' internationalism to realist, liberal and socialist theories, as well as to feminist understandings of the international and FFPS, to show how these concepts either influenced the Congress' internationalism or are a development thereof. Chapter 7 consists of a short conclusion.

## **2. Internationalisms**

Multiple IR scholars have established a definition of internationalism, which can be assigned to different theories. In this chapter, the realist, liberal, and socialist definitions of internationalism are presented. All three of the concepts were present in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Liberal and socialist theories have been influencing various political actors for a long time, and although less formally established, realist international thought was already present among intellectuals too (Specter 2022:2–3). Moreover, WWI is a prime example of realist state behaviour. In short, these concepts of internationalism influenced the Congress participants' lives and understanding of the international and are thus useful for understanding where their definition comes from. To further establish the particularities of the internationalism constructed during the 1915 Congress, I will compare the latter to these traditional theories in the discussion chapter.

All three theories offer a male perspective on the international as they were mainly formulated by men. Liberal and realist theories highlight states as the main actors in international politics, while the socialist perspective focuses on the working class. Although based on different values, international cooperation is central in the socialist and liberal definitions but is deemed an illusion in realism.

### *2.1. Realism and Liberalism*

As Elman and Jensen state: 'Most realists take a pessimistic and prudential view of international relations' (2014:2). In realist theories, the international is a system in which states try to maximize their power and resources. The success of this struggle depends on their capabilities (Elman and Jensen 2014; Little 2007; Myšicka 2021; Waltz 1979). Those capabilities mainly depend on financial and militarist resources. The striving for power has distinct reasons in different realist approaches. However, the result is always the same: 'endless succession of wars and conquest' (Elman and Jensen 2014:2). There is no genuine international cooperation, as all nations want the same thing: the best possible outcome for themselves. This triggers mistrust among nations because everyone expects to be betrayed by others (Mearsheimer 2014:180). In realist theories, power is a zero-sum game taking place in an international arena, where the success of one nation is based on the failure of others. The international is 'unchanging and conflictual' (Elman and Jensen 2014:3) and is thus a potentially dangerous context for nation-states. It is entirely controlled by the most powerful nation-states (Waltz 2014:106). Although realism was not formally established as an academic theory until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, realist international thought exists since at least the 1880s in what Matthew Specter calls an Atlantic realist 'sensitivity or discourse' among German and American intellectuals (2022:2–3).

In short, the realist international can be viewed as a power vacuum that states try to fill by militarist means. Therefore, internationalism, defined as the practice of nations acting together, is not part of realist thinking. As will be pointed out in Chapter 6, a realist approach to international politics impacted the participants' definition of internationalism, as they frequently criticised the realist-conform politics of WWI. Put off by the prevailing militarism and desire for domination, they pleaded for international cooperation and solidarity.

Liberal concepts of internationalism share the following core characteristics: individual rights, shared norms and democratic principles, the rule of law, free trade, and multilateral institutions (Burley 1992; Doyle 1986; Franceschet 2001; Ikenberry 2020; Jahn 2018).

Those are, for the large part, reachable through the concept of international cooperation. However, cooperation is only fully possible between states that share the earlier-mentioned liberal characteristics. Non-liberal states are deemed morally inferior, which can justify a military intervention from liberal states in non-liberal ones (Burley 1992; Doyle 1986; Smith 2017). Thus, the international in liberal theories is not a free-for-all but is divided into liberal and non-liberal groups of states. Another difference to realist takes on the international is that liberal internationalism is productive, desirable, and to some degree, independent of nation-states. It enables specific interactions between states and is manifested through international institutions and international law.

Essentially, liberalists think nations profit from international cooperation. In Chapter 6, we will see that this also holds true for the internationalism established by the Congress participants. Differences between the two exist regarding the purpose of free trade and their stance on militarism. In contrast to liberal internationalism, the Congress' internationalism was strictly anti-militarist and incorporated the demand for free trade only to eliminate trade-related causes of conflicts. Ultimately, the Congress took liberal ideas into account and integrated them in a way that would serve their primary goal of just peace.

In conclusion, both realist and liberal definitions are state-centric, and militarism has its place in both concepts. Those approaches offer a unidimensional perspective on internationalism, as mainly male and white Western actors articulated them. The Congress opposed WWI's realist brute-force politics and formulated its internationalism accordingly. Simultaneously, it integrated liberal concepts into its internationalism to prevent militarist conflicts.

## *2.2.Socialism*

Socialist internationalism differs significantly from the two previously discussed perspectives on the international, as it does not centre on states as primary actors (Dogliani 2016; Imlay 2016; Nation 1989; O'Brien 2021). Instead, it emphasizes an internationalism originating from working-class people from various nations, united in the struggle against the bourgeois ruling class. This form of internationalism, characterized by transnational solidarity, is different because it recognizes power hierarchies within nation-states, specifically the power dynamics between different classes. Moreover, socialist internationalism arose from a class with little political power, based on criticism of the capitalist system that exploited them. Socialist internationalism is linked to an anti-militarist attitude and an ambiguous relationship with nation-states. Nation-states are the



primary battleground for working-class struggles for justice and a concept the movement seeks to overcome to establish a global working class (Dogliani 2016:38,43; Imlay 2016:219, 224, 231, 215; Nation 1989:6, 8–9, 11; O’Brien 2021:64–71). In conclusion, international cooperation is a key instrument in the struggle for global peace and justice in socialist theories. However, the responsibility of internationalism here lies with the working-classes within countries and not with nation-states.

Socialist internationalism sheds light on circumstances that remain opaque in the theories discussed earlier. It gives agency to those with limited political power. However, men dominated the theorizing of socialist internationalism, which resulted in the exclusion of women’s realities. Rosa Luxemburg was one of the notable exceptions. Her understanding of internationalism was anti-militarist and anti-imperialist, as she was not blind to the fact that the capitalist system exploited the people outside of Europe far more than the working-class. She advocated for democracy, and her empathy influenced her internationalism. All human suffering was equally important in her eyes, and must be fought simultaneously (O’Brien 2021: 65-66,68-69). In that anti-imperialist regard, Luxemburg’s internationalism is similar to contemporary intersectional feminism, which tries to take power hierarchies along dimensions such as race, class, and sexuality into account. However, Luxemburg’s internationalism, like the other concepts discussed so far, was gender-neutral too.

As I will show in Chapter 6, there are significant overlaps between socialist internationalism and the 1915 Congress’ internationalism. The most important similarities are the centrality of solidarity among nations and the well-being of the peoples. Multiple Congress participants were also active in the socialist movement, which shows that there were more than just thematic overlaps between the two concepts. In this thesis, the internationalism comes from women who, similar to the socialist workers’ movement, connected across borders, had little political power, and fought for the collective goal of international politics without wars.

The three definitions introduced in this chapter all contributed to the Congress’ understanding of internationalism. In the discussion chapter, I will compare the socialist, liberal, and realist internationalisms to the Congress’ internationalism to highlight the influences of the former on the latter.

### 3. Feminist Internationalism

This chapter overviews feminist IR theories and feminist foreign policy strategies (FFPS) based on the former. Like others before me, I will argue that the women at The Hague marked the beginning of feminist involvement in IR (Tickner and True 2018), and that current feminist ideas are derived from the Congress' ideas of the international. I will support this argument by comparing the Congress' internationalism to the here presented concepts in the discussion of this master thesis.

Feminist IR theories help to question mainstream IR assumptions, which were long taken for granted (Leprince and Steer 2021:10) and considered gender-neutral (Youngs 2004:76). As a constructivist theory, feminist IR argues that everything is socially constructed (Tickner 2005:3), including international politics and the role women play in it. Furthermore, the main actors analysed in feminist IR are not states but individuals. A bottom-up approach to international relations makes gendered and other hierarchical structures within and across states visible and broadens IR concepts like security and peace (Enloe 2014:16; Tickner and True 2018:111, 229).

In light of these aspects of feminist IR, I will argue that this thesis contributes to the discipline. Feminist studies frequently ask '*where are the women?*' (Enloe 2014:1) and this research will show that women were involved in constructing politics in the 1910s. By shedding light on the 1915 Congress, women are made visible in a historical context dominated by powerful men. As feminist IR analysis starts at the level of individuals, it is irrelevant that the Congress had no immediate impact on the state level; what counts is that these women did construct a concept of internationalism. The women's political agency will be acknowledged by answering the research question of how the participants of the Hague Congress defined internationalism. This fits nicely into the feminist approach to IR. Additionally, most of the scholarly literature on the Congress is feminist. However, these works do not focus on internationalism, as I define it. They focus on internationalism as a collective identity (Rupp 1994) or 'emotional force' (Kinnunen 2022:125), study the meaning of nationalism in the first-wave feminist movements, including the Congress' internationalism (Bolt 2004; Costin 1982), or discuss the Congress in general (Paull 2018). Some also concentrate on the activism of particular Congress participants (Braker 1995; Pratt 2004). Finally, Tickner and True (2018) studied the feminist pragmatism of the Congress and compared it to the United Nations' (UN) current *Women, Peace, Security Agenda*.

The number of governments that adopt a feminist foreign policy strategy has been increasing over the last decade (Lunz 2023:220). The foreign affairs ministries of 12 countries have introduced such a strategy since 2014 or announced the plan to do so (Lunz 2023:200; UN WOMEN 2022). However, this development is not steady: Sweden's ground-breaking FFPS got ditched after a new government was elected in 2022, and some strategies are merely a lip service (Lunz 2023:220–45). Nevertheless, feminist themes are gaining traction in international politics. Several other countries and supranational institutions have established supplementary strategies or workgroups on feminist themes in international politics (UN WOMEN 2022). While the FFPS of each country or institution is unique, there are some essential characteristics: Feminist foreign policy is based on human rights, with an intersectional emphasis on the rights of minorities and the reproductive rights and sexual freedom of women. It is anti-militarist in that general disarmament should be one of its long-term goals. Civil society (organisations) should be involved in the transparent formulation process, and cooperation between nations is its main goal. The promotion of the representation of women on all decision-making levels and the obligation to apply a gendered perspective on every decision taken by the foreign affairs ministry are also core principles. A gendered perspective is adopted when decision-makers ensure that every gender group profits equally from a new measure (Lunz 2023:221–23). Most of the feminist foreign policies built on other international agreements like the *Women Peace Security* Agenda of the United Nations (Lunz 2023), whose concepts originate in the ideas expressed at the Congress (Tickner and True 2018).

In the discussion chapter, the Congress' internationalism will be compared to the objectives of today's feminist foreign policies. The similarities, like the demand for general disarmament and the equal political representation and participation of women in international politics, will be used to argue that the Congress has impacted generations of feminists and that its ideas are now influencing international politics from within governments.

#### **4. Methodology**

This chapter first discusses why the case of the 1915 Congress was chosen and then presents the methodology consisting of a QCA of archival material. A table containing the inductively established categories concludes this chapter.

#### *4.1. Case selection*

The 1915 International Congress of Women was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, its historical context is unique. The Congress took place during the 'Great War', which influenced it in numerous ways. It was the first International Women's Congress that was not focused on suffrage or one particular class or political party. The 1915 Congress, with a thematic focus on war and peace, was only organized because the usual Suffrage Congress was cancelled because of WWI. Hence, this was the first time over a thousand women discussed international politics in an organized international setting. Furthermore, most participants were not even allowed to vote yet; they were politically powerless actors.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this Women's Congress was the first not backed by national or international organizations or parties. It was organized and attended by private citizens, who were convinced that matters of peace and war needed to be discussed by women. The kind of internationalism established in this thesis is thus a bottom-up construct, which is uncommon in International Relations and fills the gap between socialist and more recent feminist internationalisms.

#### *4.2. Methodology and data collecting*

To determine how the 1915 Congress of Women participants defined internationalism, I conducted a qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA is a process that acknowledges the contributions I make by interpreting the texts in question (Krippendorff 2019:6). Essentially, interpretation in QCA is a meaning-making process (Willig 2014:2; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2015:xix,xxi). QCA enables the reduction of analysed data because it helps keep the focus on aspects of the material which relate to the research question. This is done using a coding frame and its finite number of categories and codes. This coding frame helped to identify the main aspects the participants associated with internationalism. In addition to reducing the data, QCA is systematic, as it prescribes a series of steps to generate and describe meaning. This makes the analysis process comprehensible and consistent (Schreier 2014:2–3).

I followed Mayring's inductive approach to building the coding frame(2010:83–85). It was thus entirely derived from the material. More specifically, the categories and codes were established through successive summarizing during a first reading of a selected part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the participants were all well-educated and rather wealthy women. Not everyone could afford to pay the member fee, travel to The Hague, and/or understand multiple languages. Thus, while the participants were politically excluded from the public sphere, they still were privileged.

material (Schreier 2014:11). *Table 1* gives an overview of the inductively established categories. It includes category names, definitions, the number of times the category was coded, and a positive example. The entire coding frame can be found in Annex 1.

I collected the relevant data to answer the research question of how the participants of the Congress defined internationalism from publications about or resulting from the 1915 Congress of Women and from texts written by participants around the time of the Congress. The Congress had three official languages, English, French, and German; as I am fluent in all three, I did not encounter difficulties. Although this meant that I had to exclude more personal texts by some of the participants (e.g., correspondence between two Dutch participants), I was able to compensate for this shortcoming by including publications of the International Women's Suffrage Journal *Jus Suffragii*. The latter was published in English and contained articles from women of every nation represented at the Congress. I decided to also include publications written by women who planned to attend the Congress, but could not.<sup>2</sup> I consulted various online archives (e.g., Atria Archive; LSE digital library). The material was composed of the official Congress report, which includes every speech made at the Congress and various other contributions, a book about the Congress written by three participants, a conference proposal, a manifesto, five letters, four speeches, 51 magazine or newspaper articles, two interviews, two memoirs, and one biography<sup>3</sup>. With the exceptions of the memoirs, biography, and one other publication from 1892<sup>4</sup>, the material was published between September 1914 and February 1916. A list of all the documents analysed can be found in Annex 2.

I chose the official report for the first reading as it is extensive (350+ pages) and includes contributions from a wide range of women. This process consisted of paraphrasing relevant passages to narrow their focus and identify the most important themes. The latter formed the categories and codes. For every new relevant passage encountered, I chose between subsuming it into an existing category or building a new one (Mayring 2010:85). The relevant passages were the ones relating to the concept of internationalism.

After that, a second coding round was conducted to confirm the consistency and validity of the frame (Schreier 2014:18). The results were satisfactory; hence the coding frame was

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<sup>2</sup> The contributions of absent women were also acknowledged in the Congress report: '*The adopted Resolutions (...)are truly the result of the(...)joint effort not only of those who were present but of many who were prevented from coming.*' (IWCPP 1915:XLVI). A complete list of the Congress' members and sympathizers was included in the Congress' report

<sup>3</sup> I focused on the Chapters around WWI or pacifist activism for the memoirs and biography.

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Thoumaian's (1892) text was included because publications from Armenian women were rare.

applied to the rest of the material. I used the software ATLAS.ti to code the material. Where possible, I indicated the full name of the participants that I quoted. To honour their achievements, I additionally gave the full maiden names of the women who decided to go by the names of their husbands. The *International Women's Committee for Permanent Peace*(IWCPP)<sup>5</sup> is the organization that was founded during the Congress. The IWCPP is thus the author of collective Congress outputs like the resolutions. The qualitative content analysis allows me to establish meaning that goes beyond what is directly manifested in the texts and does so systematically.

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<sup>5</sup> Today known as Women's International League for Peace and Freedom(WILPF).

Category	Category definition	Number of allocations	Example
<b>Women and Internationalism</b>	This category covers the codes relating to the need for women's franchise and representation on all political levels and the reasons thereof.	153	<i>(...)women met in the perfect unanimity of motherhood(...), intend but to point out a ,more excellent way'. (Emily Hobhouse in IWCPP 1915:XII)</i>
<b>Principles of interaction between nations</b>	This category encompasses the values that formed the basis for the Congress' internationalism.	154	<i>(...)principles(...) of settling conflicts of interests(...)by an appeal to law and reason(...)(Sophonisba P. Breckenridge in IWCPP 1915:89)</i>
<b>Militarism</b>	This category includes the codes about why the Congress was anti-militarist and how it wanted to regulate the trade and fabrication of armaments.	140	<i>We(...) protest against the madness (...)of war, involving as it does a reckless sacrifice of human life(...)(IWCPP 1915:35)</i>
<b>Economic aspects</b>	This category encompasses the codes relating to the economic aspects of the Congress' internationalism.	34	<i>This Congress further recommends that in all countries there shall be liberty of commerce. (IWCPP 1915:149)</i>
<b>(Settlement of) international disputes</b>	This category is focused on the international institutions to prevent militarist disputes, and the mechanisms, to settle militarist disputes, envisioned by the Congress.	127	<i>That the Governments of all nations should come to an agreement to refer future international disputes to arbitration or conciliation(...). (IWCPP 1915:36)</i>
<b>National level</b>	This category covers the necessary national elements for international politics without wars.	246	<i>That no territory should be transferred without the consent of the men and women in it(...).(IWCPP 1915:36)</i>
<b>points of disagreement</b>	This category includes the points of disagreement between the participants.	41	<i>I ask you to extent this point to the Colonies, because we must be very clear on this point. (Mme Bergsma in IWCPP 1915:106)</i>

Table 1 Categories

## 5. Analysis

This chapter is structured according to the inductively developed categories and presents the different aspects of the Congress' internationalism.<sup>6</sup>

### 5.1. *Women and internationalism*

Women's rights played a central role during the Congress since all but some of the Scandinavian participants had no political rights. As the participants vehemently opposed militarism<sup>7</sup>, they felt they should have a say in politics to officially oppose future wars. They repeatedly insisted on women's franchise and demanded '*their share in the work, their share in the responsibility*' (Christine Bakker-van Bosse in IWCPP 1915:113) to maintain peace in the future. They argued that '*woman suffrage in all countries is one of the most powerful means to prevent war in the future*' (Aletta Jacobs in IWCPP 1915:7). This is why one condition for Congress membership was to support women's franchise. However, they did not just want to express their political opinion through voting; they wanted women to have their place in every parliament, government, all other national and international political institutions, and every peace-building process. In short, the basis for their internationalism was equal political rights and representation for women and men. After analysing the texts produced by the participants, it became clear that they felt the need to bring forth arguments for women's inclusion in the international. On the one hand, they argued that their womanhood provided beneficial qualities and insights for peaceful international politics. '*(...) Women, who have brought men into the world and nurtured them until they reach the age for fighting, must experience a peculiar revulsion when they see them destroyed.*' (Jane Addams in Addams et al. 1916:128). Additionally, they took over the workload of the men who served in the war. They argued that these experiences, let '*women judge war differently from men*' (Aletta Jacobs in IWCPP 1915:6), which influenced their view on international politics. In their opinion, '*There does not exist, (...) a typically masculine or typically feminine point of view with regard to the necessity of interests-agreement, of open commerce, or of democratic control, but the woman's point does come in when it comes to practical realisation of these principles and this is wholly done by men.*' (Christine Bakker-van Bosse in IWCPP 1915:113).

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<sup>6</sup> The rules of warfare were excluded from the Congress' scope and thus are not part of the Congress' internationalism.

<sup>7</sup> The Congress rules required the members to agree that international disputes should be settled by pacific means.



On the other hand, the participants identified a link between men and militarism. They noticed that every decision made in favour of war had been made by men, and the latter had been unwilling to step away from settling international disputes by war. The reason for this was that, according to the participants, no man wanted to be considered weak. They did not necessarily imply that every man thrusted for war or embraced militarism. However, they constated that somewhere along the line of male domination of politics, some men made decisions that implemented militarism in every aspect of international politics; and the men in power in 1915 no longer knew how to escape that militarist system. '*There is something in the international politics of to-day, which are managed by men only, which causes war.*' (Louise Keilhau in IWCPP 1915:78). This further supported their demand for women's enfranchisement.

## 5.2. Principles of interactions

This category deals with the basis on which the Congress' internationalism is built. Respect for differences, solidarity, cooperation, justice, and transparency are the values that should bind together different nations, and these principles should run through every aspect of international politics.

Firstly, each nation should acknowledge that differences will always exist between them and others because '*there can only be peace(...), when there is respect between the nations and peoples of different cultures*' (Emily G. Balch in IWCPP 1915:105). These differences can range from cultural differences to '*differing points of view*' (Emily Hobhouse in IWCPP 1915:XI) on the details of international politics. They should be viewed as an opportunity to learn about or from other nations, and governments should avoid framing differences as dangerous or as reasons for '*national prejudices*' (Anna Wicksell 1915:268).

Secondly, solidarity among nations is central to the Congress' internationalism. The goal of this solidarity, like in socialist theories, is the assurance of '*justice not only for their own country, but for all countries of the world*' (Lida G. Heymann in Addams et al. 1916:145). Thus, if one nation attacks another, the ambushed nation should receive assistance from other nations to regain its initial liberty. However, this solidarity defined during the Congress covered every hardship, not only those suffered due to militarist actions. An example would be '*underfed*' (Jane Addams in Addams et al. 1916:132) peoples: other nations with sufficient resources should help out. The Congress participants believed that every nation gains from the '*welfare of the weakest ones among*' them (Grace Abbott in IWCPP 1915:83). They spoke of a '*fraternity of nations*' (Anon 1915:302) and

*'international friendship'* (Alice Hamilton in Addams et al. 1916). This solidarity would thus be built on trusting that help would be reciprocated if needed. In consequence, the domination of a single state would become less probable. Nevertheless, it was not about the survival of a state but about the survival of the people within it.

The third and most coded principle is cooperation. In contrast to realists, the participants believed international politics could be successful and peaceful only through a joint effort. *'So long as men nurse the illusion that the self-interest of their nation requires it to dominate every other nation, there can be no peace.'* (Swanwick 1915:217). Consequently, nations could reach more in cooperation with others than they could on their own. They should cooperate in every area of international politics, but peace should always be the top priority. The Congress wanted the *'concert of nations' to supersede 'balance of power'* (Jane Addams in Marshall 1915). In the here-established internationalism, cooperation and solidarity are framed as a necessary responsibility of states towards the human race.

Justice is the fourth principle. This includes, on the one hand, the implementation and enforcement of international law and agreements and, on the other hand, the necessity for international regulations to be fair. The interactions between nations should thus be regulated by law to minimize the risk of opportunistic behaviour of states. The women demanded *'the institution of law instead of the institution of power'* (Rosika Schwimmer in IWCPP 1915:86/own translation). International regulations should also institutionalize the principles of cooperation and solidarity.

Finally, international politics should be transparent. The populations of each nation should have insight into every relation or transaction between two or more nations or states. At the time of the Congress, foreign relations were beyond the control of people outside the government, and secret treaties between nations were the norm. The Congress participants were aware that a significant part of the population in the belligerent nations did not know why exactly their states were at war with each other and how the war started. This ignorance of important facts contributed to the hatred between different nations' populations and their war support. As the women at The Hague argued that most people opposed attacking others for minor reasons, they expected transparent international relations to have a war-discouraging effect. They pleaded that all *'secret treaties shall be void'* (Anita Augspurg in IWCPP 1915:101/own translation).

### 5.3. Militarism

As mentioned, the participants' main goal was permanent peace, and the international politics they envisioned were anti-militarist. Four main arguments against militarism were identified.

The first and most obvious reason is the human sacrifice each war and battle entails. This included the loss of life of military men and '*non-combatants*' (Emily Hobhouse 1915), famine, sicknesses, injuries, and the increased workload and living costs of those left behind. The participants argued that there was not one good enough reason to justify the '*bloodshed(...), the cruel sufferings, the wasted lives*' (Aletta Jacobs in IWCPP 1915:6). Furthermore, the Congress described war as a '*betrayal of the deepest instincts*' of humans (IWCPP 1915:35), and argued that '*war is the negation of progress and civilization*' (IWCPP 1915:37). The participants stated that as humanity had '*superseded personal feud by impersonal law*' (Swanwick 1915:217), they saw no reason why this should not work for international politics.

Finally, as women, they strongly protested the sexual violence women and girls suffer during every war. They explicitly pointed out that when 'the enemies' took over their hometowns, there would be a drastic increase in rape cases. Lina G. Heymann stated during the Congress '*We no longer want to be told that war protects us women. No, we are being raped by the war!*' (IWCPP 1915:80/own translation). In addition to the sexual assaults, these acts of violence often resulted in unwanted pregnancies. As abortions were illegal, these women had no choice but to give birth to the children of their assailants, which negatively affected them financially, socially and mentally.

Because of these reasons, the Congress participants advocated for a general disarmament of all nations and, thus, international politics without arms. However, they were aware that this demand was utopic because of the deeply militarized system of international politics. That is why they proposed a '*gradual disarmament*' (Swanwick 1915:217). As a starting point, they wanted to eliminate the possibility of making private profits from the fabrication of and trade with armaments. They recognized that armament firms intentionally '*stir up troubles*' and '*create wars*' to '*grow rich*' (Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence in IWCPP 1915:121). Thus, they suggested that governments should control these processes. Further steps towards general disarmament were not discussed.

#### 5.4. *Economic aspects*

Although the participants acknowledged the importance of international trade for the well-being of states, the aspects of the Congress' internationalism that related to economics were, above all, integrated because the participants saw '*causes of war*' in '*barriers of an economic character*' (Emily G. Balch in IWCPP 1915:149). They believed that whatever high the profits from an investment or trade deal could be, they should never negatively impact uninvolved people. The internationalism they constructed included, supported, and acknowledged the need for '*the peaceful ways of trade*' (Emily G. Balch in IWCPP 1915:149), but not at any price.

To guarantee safe-for-all trade relations, they integrated the right for all nations to engage in international commerce and demanded that all trade routes should be '*open*' (IWCPP 1915:40). This included land and sea routes, as they saw that one state's claim of important canals had caused conflicts in otherwise friendly relationships. Another potential source of conflict was detected in the unequal treatment of nations concerning shipping terms. This inequality was said to make those who felt left out '*restless and unhappy*' (Emily G. Balch in IWCPP 1915:149) and increased their hostility towards those graced with more preferable conditions. Therefore, they argued in favour of '*equal terms to the shipping of all nations*' (IWCPP 1915:40). Furthermore, the women voted that international '*investments shall be made at the risk of the investor, without a claim to the official protection of his government*' (IWCPP 1915:40). This would prevent disputes between private actors escalating into '*international complications*' (IWCPP 1915:40). Colonies were explicitly excluded from this, which means that investors in colonies would always be backed up by their governments, no matter their behaviour.

Unlike in liberal internationalism, the Congress participants proposed that international trade conditions should be regulated to reduce the risk of trade- or investment-related causes of war. Thus, their angle on economic aspects as not derived from a desire to maximize profits and economic well-being for individual states or other actors. Overall, the economic aspects represent a small part of the established internationalism.

#### 5.5. *(Settlement of) international disputes*

This category covers, on the one hand, the international organisation the participants envisioned to prevent international disputes ending in militarist conflicts and, on the other hand, mechanisms to settle militarist disputes by peaceful means.

To institutionalize the bond between nations and ensure global peace, the participants supported the establishment of a '*Federation of (...)Europe*'(Jane Addams in Addams et al. 1916:140). Furthermore, they favoured a further development of a Society of Nations, which also encompassed countries outside the European continent. It should include the international institutions that follow.

Firstly, international conferences should be convened '*for the scientific study(...)of the principles and conditions of permanent peace*'(IWCPP 1915:40). These conferences should thus not study war; they should study '*practical proposals for further International Cooperation*'(IWCPP 1915:39). Secondly, an International Court of Justice should be implemented to '*settle questions(...)of justiciable character*'(IWCPP 1915:38–39), e.g., questions concerning the interpretation of treaty rights. An International Court of Arbitration should be established to enforce international law and settle disputes of social or economic character. Additionally, the participants promoted a Permanent Council of Conciliation and Investigation, which would be responsible for interest or ideological differences arising from '*economic competition, expanding commerce, increasing populations, and changes in social and political standards.*'(IWCPP 1915:39). Further details on these institutions were not given.

If, despite these mechanisms for war prevention, militarist actions should occur, neutral nations have a great responsibility in the Congress' internationalism. They should immediately initiate a mediation process in which they should first explore the '*issues involved in the present struggle*'(Julia G. Wales in Addams et al. 1916:167) and then make informed, simultaneous conditional proposals which, if both parties agree, form the starting point for peace negotiations. A participant, Julia Wales, has written a plan for continuous mediation without armistice, the Wisconsin Plan, which the Congress endorsed. The participants thought it essential that the communication between the warring entities never ceased, and this could best be assured through mediation. Additionally, neutral countries should exercise '*social, moral and economic pressure(...) upon any country, which resorts to arms*' (IWCPP 1915:38).

Finally and most importantly, the participants insisted on just solutions for any conflict. They did not accept '*peace at any price*'(Jane Addams in Addams et al. 1916:131). The solutions proposed to discontinue war should align with the values and principles discussed. Like today's feminists, they did not want '*peace that is a negation of war, but peace that is living and growing and active*'(Chrystal Macmillan in IWCPP 1915:140). A peace '*won by force has no claims that any one is bound to respect*'(Emily G. Balch in Addams et al.

1916:116) and could not be lasting. The women wanted peace that protected all people from harm. They believed peace at the expense of one defeated party, as pursued in realist theories, would only stir a desire for revenge and cause further conflicts.

#### 5.6. *National level*

This category covers the national conditions for successful cooperation and relations between nations that the participants identified.

The Congress participants argued that internationalism complements real patriotism and that those two concepts were not exclusive. They believed that the highest good for their own countries could only be achieved through international cooperation and condemned the prevailing nationalism based on the hatred of other nations. *'The true meaning of patriotism is the honourable desire that one's own country should attain to its fullest(...) possible development, with no sort of interference with the development of other countries.'* (Margaret Sackville 1915:3). While most participants spoke of this true patriotism, a socialist participant, Leonora O'Reilly, talked about the participants' *'(...)altruistic cosmopolitanism'* and condemned *'narrow, egotistical patriotism of one country for itself and its people, regardless of what happened to humanity as a whole'* (1915). Their description clearly shows that both concepts are essentially the same.

Furthermore, the women found it essential to direct *'the education of children(...) towards the ideal of constructive peace'* (IWCPP 1915:40). They criticised the glorification of wars and the *'military discipline'* (Grace deGraff in IWCPP 1915:228) imposed in schools and wanted to reform the national school systems accordingly.

A *'free and courageous press'* (Jane Addams in Addams et al. 1916:90) was also deemed essential for decreasing the wish for war in populations. People of all nations should always have some insight into the situations of other nations. However, especially in times of war, a fair depiction of the warring entities must be guaranteed to avoid public opinion being dictated by *'military authorities'* (Addams 1915).

A major aspect of the Congress' internationalism is the right to autonomy of all nations. This means that every nation has *'the right(...) to self-government'* and that *'no territory should be transferred without the consent'* (IWCPP 1915:37) of its inhabitants. Forming an independent state should always be an option in such a decision. The Congress strongly condemned the denial of autonomy to the Polish and Finnish people.

Furthermore, a *'democratic parliament should not be refused to any nation'* (IWCPP 1915:37). One aspect discussed in that regard was the democratic control of foreign policy.

The participants argued that when war and peace were decided by democratic means, war would not break out as quickly. That is why they demanded that *'all treaties and conventions shall be ratified by at least one part of the government'* (Jane Addams in IWCPP 1915:102). Simultaneously, this aspect also stressed the people's responsibility in international politics. Citizens with pacific aspirations should not keep quiet but ensure that their environment is informed about relevant issues and propagate the ideas of peace. The women argued that *'even in the most autocratic countries governments respond to public opinion'* (Addams 1915), and that leaders *'must know that behind them, if they advocate for peace, there would be a grateful(...)opinion ready to support them against militarism'* (Jane Addams in Addams et al. 1916:90).

Finally, the Congress proposed the establishment of national commissions of experts responsible for the study of peaceful international cooperation, similar to the international conferences mentioned in the last subsection.

#### 5.7. *Points of disagreement*

To conclude this analysis chapter, I address the most important points of disagreement at the Congress, where *'It was agreed that it is no disadvantage if we do not all agree on these theoretical points'* (Emily G. Balch in Gwinn 2010:83).

One contested point concerns the treatment of Jews. A Jewish participant, Bala Birnbaum, tried to shed light on the *'suffering and persecution'* (IWCPP 1915:98/own translation) of Jews. However, the President said she had to rule *'the Jewish question(...)out of order'* (Jane Addams in IWCPP 1915:111).

Similarly, disagreements about the future and treatment of colonies were persistent. Ms. Bergsma asked *'to extend(...) [the right to autonomy] to the colonies'* (IWCPP 1915:106/edited by author). However, the question was ignored until she asked again. Addams answered, *'The Chair rules, that it does not necessarily include the colonies, but that it is open to that interpretation'* (IWCPP 1915:110). This reaction is exemplary of the general attitude of the Congress. However, some partisans advocated passionately for the independence of colonies not only because they saw in the oppression of these people conflict potential. While the Congress advocated for equal rights of every people, the participants also talked about *'weaker and backward peoples'* (Fannie Fern Andrews in IWCPP 1915:138) and about gradually adjusting *'primitive peoples(...)under an enlightened international public opinion'* (IWCPP 1915:39). When talking about *'Backwards peoples'* they meant *'savage nations, such as the Congo(...)'. It cannot apply*

to a European nation'(Jane Addams in IWCPP 1915:143). Such statements would today be considered Western-centric and racist.

The most discussed point of disagreement concerned the democratic control of foreign policy and the question of whether there are situations in which militarist actions are justifiable. While some thought that '*there shall be no war except one wished by the people*'(Mrs. Louis F. Post<sup>8</sup> in IWCPP 1915:96), most insisted that their '*work shall help to make an end to any kind of war*'(Rosika Schwimmer in IWCPP 1915:97). Another contested point was that some women demanded the control of foreign policy to be exercised through referendum, while others considered this idea '*obvious nonsense*'(Anita Augspurg in IWCPP 1915:91/own translation) and defined it as a matter for democratic parliaments. Another grey area covers the case in which one nation is attacked. According to some participants, attacked nations must '*aim at a peaceful solution to the conflict*'(Augusta Kirchhof in IWCPP 1915:92/own translation); other women could not '*vote for a truce*'(Eugénie Hamer in IWCPP 1915:135/own translation). Similarly, social, moral, and economic pressure from neutral nations towards attacking ones was the only pressure accepted by the whole Congress. As discussed before, all participants agreed that peace at any price was not acceptable. However, the majority of the participants were hesitant to bluntly support the idea that any kind of militarist action could be acceptable.

## 6. Discussion

The Congress' definition of internationalism, with its trust in the peaceful qualities of humans, is not free from idealism, but it should not be reduced to this. Other elements, especially those concerning the national level and the mechanisms for peaceful dispute settlements, are very elaborate. According to the participants, international politics should be a collective effort, as evidenced through their stances on education and the press. For permanent peace, a sustainable societal change was deemed necessary. International politics should work for the survival of the peoples, not the peoples for the survival of the international system.

The Congress' pronounced anti-militarist attitude and its emphasis on international solidarity and cooperation show the incompatibility between its definition of internationalism and the one in realist theories. The domination of other nations was criticised on multiple occasions during the Congress. The witnessing of the international

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<sup>8</sup> Maiden name: Alice Thacher.



politics of WWI and its negative consequences on Europe's population led the participants towards constructing an internationalism that avoids the former's perceived faults. They comprehended that a political international system built by brute force could not be sustainable.

At first glance, there are some apparent similarities between the Congress' internationalism and liberal internationalism, including the preference for democratic systems, the support for international institutions and law, and free trade. Striking differences, however, do exist. The Congress' internationalism is less nuanced regarding economic aspects as it merely integrated them as tools for preventing conflicts for commercial reasons, unlike in liberalism where they are fundamental. Furthermore, the Congress distanced itself from any militarism, while liberalism does not completely discard militarist actions. Especially the liberal distinction between liberal and non-liberal states and the ensuing consequences would not be an acceptable approach in the Congress' internationalism. This results from the latter explicitly distinguishing between states and their populations. The safety of civilians would not be risked to gain military dominance on foreign territory. Instead, other peaceful means to support local communities would be chosen. Finally, the pronounced solidarity aspect of the Congress' internationalism contradicts liberal individualism because, to the former, collective well-being is more important than individual success.

Solidarity and collective well-being, however, are shared foci of socialist internationalism and the Congress' one. Like in Luxembourg's understanding of internationalism, the Congress stressed that states have responsibilities that surpass their borders, and both opposed the idea that the well-being of one nation should be prioritized. The link between justice and peace is also common to the two bottom-up concepts of internationalism, as both reject the idea of peace based on the domination or oppression of some nations or classes. One difference between the two is the integration of women's perspective in one and its absence in the other. The latter focuses on the working-class experience without paying attention to gender-specific hardships women carry. Furthermore, the Congress was attended by women of different classes, including socialist women. This makes the Congress' internationalism broader. A difference regarding the content is the role of states. While nation-states are considered a nuisance in socialist theories, they play a central role in the Congress' envisioned internationalism. This is exemplified in the insistence on cosmopolitanism instead of patriotism by the socialist participant O'Reilly. In conclusion, socialist and the Congress' internationalisms are very similar but differ regarding the role of states, the integration of women's points of view and the various class influences.

In line with the earlier assumption, the Congress' internationalism overlaps most with feminist IR theories. This starts with the definitions of two main IR concepts: security and peace. In feminist theories and for the Congress' participants, peace means a positive, sustainable peace that goes beyond the mere absence of war and is based on justice. Similarly, security means the security of all basic needs of the people in both understandings. The security of states is merely a tool to assure the security of the population within it.

In comparison to today's FFPS, the same core goals for international politics can be determined, as I will show in what follows. The fact that mass occurrences of sexual violence against women were one of the reasons the Congress condemned militarist actions and war shows that the women at The Hague truly integrated a female perspective into international politics and thought about the security of the entirety of the people, including those beyond the battlefield. Without having today's feminist vocabulary, they expressed the sentiment that these sexual assaults, along with the resulting domination of women, were symptomatic of war as an act of domination. The link they drew between men and militarism was their way of describing international politics as a patriarchal system. They never mindlessly accused the men around them of being personally responsible for how things were; they criticised the system the male part of the population had constructed over centuries and expressed the wish to be a part of the system's reform. The Congress' demand for women's enfranchisement was fulfilled a few years after the Congress, at least for most Western countries. However, the call for equal representation in all political institutions and peace-building processes is still one of the main demands of today's FFPS. Even if arguments for this involvement relating to inherent female qualities resulting from motherhood are no longer used today. Likewise, general disarmament is still a long-term goal of FFPS, as the number and range of armaments have only increased in the years since the Congress. Another point of FFPS that can be drawn back to the demands of the Congress participants is the active role attributed to civil society in international politics. Both approaches support the idea that foreign policies and actions of states should be a collective effort or, at the very least, a transparent process.

The most significant difference between today's FFPS and the Congress' internationalism lies in the former's efforts in intersectional thinking. Regarding the rights of minorities in international politics, the Congress had difficulties detaching from the concept of nationalities. This becomes evident when one compares the Congress' treatment of the oppression of the Polish or Finnish people to the one of Jewish people. While every woman

was welcome and an equal member, their respective struggles were not treated equally. The Jewishness of a person was considered unpolitical and thus irrelevant to international politics. The same can be said about the Congress' treatment of race. While there were several occasions where the cooperation of 'every race' was declared, there was no discussion of how non-white people faced additional struggles. There was no discussion of any minority other than national minorities either. The lack of consideration of racism can also be seen in the Congress' dealing with colonies. While some participants were aware of the discrimination and oppression of the people in colonies, the general Congress seemed particularly cautious regarding this topic. Several European states had colonies during WWI. Here, national profits tainted the international and egalitarian ambitions of the Congress. Considering that the Congress talked about 'helping' non-Western nations, it becomes clear that they deemed themselves and, thus, their nations superior. Although with good intentions, this patronizing shows clearly how far away most women were from today's intersectional feminist thinking. Moreover, Asian, African, or South American women were not part of the Congress, again highlighting the Western-centrism of the Congress.

In conclusion, the internationalism defined by the Congress laid the foundation of today's feminist influence on international politics. However, significant developments towards more inclusive feminism and, thus, internationalism have replaced the discriminatory aspects of the Congress' internationalism.

## **7. Conclusion**

This master thesis analysed the internationalism constructed by the participants of the 1915 International Congress of Women and demonstrated how other understandings of the international relate to it. This was done inductively through a QCA of publications by the Congress and its participants.

The Congress' internationalism is people-centred. The women had much faith in the world's populations and wanted them to be a central force in the international system. Their influence on the international level should mainly be assured through democratic political systems on the national level. Simultaneously, the primary goal of the international system should be the well-being of every population. This could only be reached when the principle of justice replaced the principle of domination. The participants distanced themselves from realism, as they opposed the brute-force-politics of their time. They knew that a hierarchy

of nations would never lead to sustainable and just peace and called for solidarity and cooperation among all nations. These are the points where the Congress overlapped with the socialist movement. Finally, they also drew from liberalism as they included ideas like free trade and international institutions to reach their goal of permanent peace. On the other side, the Congress' internationalism, with its demands for women's inclusion in the international, general disarmament, and justice for every people, laid the fundament on which current feminist IR theories and FFPS are based. Since 1915, feminist IR has adopted the concept of intersectionality to address inequality resulting from multiple factors. Future research should be directed towards the study of implemented feminist foreign policy strategies.

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