

# historycast

was war – was wird



Unterrichtsmaterial zu Folge 06

## **GENF 1920: DAS MANDATSSYSTEM DES VÖLKERBUNDS: DEMOKRATIE ODER KOLONIALISMUS?**

Almut Finck im Gespräch mit Susan Pedersen

# Schritt 1: The League of Nations – What did it achieve?

- 1 **D1** The Canadian historian Susan Pedersen explains the lasting effects which the League of Nations left behind. The following excerpt is taken from the beginning of a podcast interview headlined “Geneva 1920: The mandate system of the League of Nations: Democracy or colonialism?” („Genf 1920: Das Mandatssystem des Völkerbunds: Demokratie oder Kolonialismus?“)
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- 10 The ethos of the League, I think, wasn’t democratic per se because it did hold to a kind of civilizational idea that was very hierarchical. States were ordered according to what were thought to be civilizational hierarchies, only some states were thought of as equal. What the League is interesting for - well, two things are particularly important. It was an arena for norm construction, and it was also an arena for experimentation. So, a lot of pressing problems were addressed by the League simply because states, and particular-
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- 20
- 25 ly the great powers, didn’t want to address them. Some of the most important kind of experiments of the League and some of its most lasting legacies fall into what was wrongly called at the time technical work, which is things like cross-border traffic, health care, child welfare, epidemic disease, all the things that actually right now we think of as very, very pressing global problems. The League’s largest and probably most important and most lasting sections were the economic and health sections and those are things that have direct legacies today. So it was that kind of work forcing states but also experts and peoples to look beyond issues of sovereignty, beyond the nation state, to think instead about things that were global problems, that could not be dealt with simply through bilateral negotiations between states. It’s that sort of thing that today makes us look back to the League.
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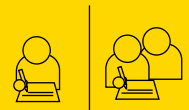
1 **Q1** **Der deutsche Philosoph Eduard Spranger (1882-1963) stellt den Völkerbund in einer Rede (Leipzig, 22. März 1919 – d. h. noch während der Friedensverhandlungen in Versailles) in eine Tradition des zivilisatorischen Fortschritts durch internationales Recht:**

5 Eigentlich kehrt damit das juristische Denken nur zu den Anfängen des neuzeitlichen Naturrechts zurück. Denn das klassische Werk des Hugo Grotius “De jure belli ac pacis”, das mit an der Spitze der ganzen Bewegung steht, war ein völkerrechtliches Werk, wenn es auch mehr vom Recht des Krieges als von dem des Friedens handelte. Diese Ausdehnung der Rechtsidee ins Völkerrecht ist seitdem in den Hintergrund getreten. Es schien, als ob mit der Ausbildung des Rechtsstaates im Innern diese Gedankenbewegung erschöpft und abgetan sei. Aber dies erklärt sich aus der politischen Entwicklungsstufe, zu der man im 19. Jahrhundert in Europa gelangt war: erst mußten die Staaten in sich als historisch-politische Individualitäten abgeschlossen werden. Erst mußte – um es anders zu sagen – die nationale Idee ganz reif und fertig werden. Diese Epoche ist gleichsam die Sturm- und Drangzeit der Nationen: auch im Einzelleben ist das Erwachen des Ich zum Selbstbewußtsein die kritische Durchgangsstufe, eine Zeit strenger Absonderung und krankhafter Verletzlichkeit, eine Zeit des ungehemm-

30 ten Selbstbehauptungsdranges. Ist aber das Ich zum Bewußtsein seiner selbst gekommen, so beginnt das männliche Alter des bewußten Zusammenwirkens und der willigen Einordnung in das Ganze. Diese Stunde ist jetzt für das Leben der Völker da. Im 19. Jahrhundert haben sie sich in sich selbst vollendet. Es war eine Zeit der großen nationalen Kriege, der schrankenlosen Selbstbejahung, der Expansion, des Imperialismus. Aber auch diese Stürme müssen sich einmal austoben. Aus den Glaubenskriegen erwuchs als letzte friedliche Frucht die Toleranzidee. So muß aus der nationalen Bewegung nach dem letzten großen Aufflackern der Gegensätze endlich ein übernationaler Gedanke hervorgehen, nicht als Wiederauslöschung der Nationalität, sondern als ihre bewußte und männliche Einordnung in größere Menschheitszusammenhänge. Dafür ist der Boden durch die unsäglichen Leiden des Weltkrieges geebnet worden. Aus dem Kriegsgewirr erhebt sich von nehem der Wille zum Recht, nicht nur als eine verschwiegende Idee und Sehnsucht, sondern als eine organisierende Kraft, die die Wirklichkeit gestalten will. Der Absolutismus der nationalen Machtansprüche – genannt Imperialismus – weicht dem höheren Gedanken eines völkerverbindenden Rechtes.

55 (aus: Spranger, Eduard. Völkerbund und Rechtsgedanke. Leipzig 1919, S. 12f.)

# Impulse



- Outline the characteristics of an hierarchical order and equality. Sum up their advantages and disadvantages.
- Explain the difference between a state and a league with regard to dealing with e. g. health care or epidemic disease.
- Zeige am Beispiel von Sprangers Ausführungen auf, dass der Völkerbund zu Recht als idealistische Organisation entworfen und wahrgenommen wurde. Welches realistische Problem ergibt sich daraus, dass der Nationalstaat 1919 noch gar nicht überall institutionell eingerichtet war?
- Beurteile Sprangers Konzept einer Analogie zwischen der Entwicklung der Staatlichkeit und der Überstaatlichkeit.
- Subdivide into groups and do some research on the present-day international organizations in charge of a) cross-border traffic, b) health care, c) child welfare, and d) epidemic disease. Prepare a short overview to be presented in class.

# Schritt 2: The Permanent Mandates Commission – How it came to exist

1 **D2** After the USA had entered the war in 1917, its president Woodrow Wilson suggested his famous “Fourteen Points” (January 1918), which outlined a post-war international order. Among its basic ideas, self-determination and the formation of a League of Nations turned out most important. At the same time, self-determination meant that the victorious nations could not simply take over e. g. German colonies as “colonies”. At the same time,

10 article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations declared that self-determination did not count for countries considered not “able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world”. Instead, they were given mandatory power over the German colonies and over the parts of the former Ottoman Empire which were not predominantly inhabited by the Turkish people.

1 **D3** The Canadian historian Susan Pedersen takes a close look at the side-effect that the League of Nations gathered and spread a lot of information on the mandate territories. The following excerpt is taken from podcast interview headlined “Geneva 1920: The mandate system of the League of Nations: Democracy or colonialism?” („Genf 1920: Das Mandatssystem des Völkerbunds: Demokratie oder Kolonialismus?“)

10 quite liked that answer, or held in abeyance until the territory would become independent. But the actual right of administration was handed over to the powers essentially that conquered them. So the imperial powers were given the right of administration and in some ways possession. You know, the imperial powers tended to think possession is nine tenths of the law. They’d be able to do what they wanted. What stood in the way of that are really two things. One is this Permanent Mandates Commission. Initially that was supposed to just be a kind of council of the great powers who were administering things. But because the Americans pulled out and it had to be reconstituted and because the powers couldn’t get along the League itself set up the Permanent Mandates Commission. It’s a body that was not to administer those territories, but it was to oversee the administration of those territories. It could call for reports annually, and those were sent by the mandatory power to the League. The Mandates Commission then reviewed those reports called in representatives from the mandatory powers and sometimes governors from the territories were called in to Geneva and sent to answer questions. And what that did – and this is where we get to the second important point which is publicity – what that did

15 The idea was they would be governed in some new way as a, quote, “sacred trust of civilization.” That’s that civilizational language again. So even though some of those territories were effectively promised and thought they would be given independence they were not given independence, but they were to be governed instead in trust. So the question was: Who should be the trustee? That was a legal question that was never resolved through the whole life of the League. There were fights about it all the time. But the League, after quite a long battle, did agree that whoever was sovereign in the mandated territories – the mandatory power, the power granted the power of administration, was not sovereign. Sovereignty was basically either held by the League, nobody



30 is amplify and kind of expose to public light how  
 these territories were being governed. Minutes of  
 evidence were published, they were sent out, an-  
 35 anyone could write to Geneva and say he wanted to  
 have all the records of the Mandates Commission  
 and the public material would be sent. It went to  
 all kinds of libraries, all of a sudden people star-  
 40 ted writing dissertations about mandatory ad-  
 ministration and the things that were happening  
 were covered in the newspapers. So when there  
 were scandals, when there was malfeasance of  
 various kinds – not everything, of course, came  
 45 to public notice – but it was possible to use the  
 League as a kind of megaphone or a kind of spot-  
 light, amplifying things that went on. The Manda-  
 tes Commission sometimes tried to damp down  
 public interest. These were not radical figures by  
 any means, they were, on the whole, quite con-  
 servative. But they took their task quite serious-

ly. And simply the mechanism – it's not so much  
 what they did and said as the fact that they in-  
 troduced this aspect of publicness into the arena.  
 50 One of the most innovative things about the Man-  
 dates Commission is that ordinary people, peop-  
 le either living in the territory or just outsiders  
 who thought something was being done that was  
 bad, could petition the League for redress. Now  
 55 those were very narrow rights because you could  
 only petition if the mandate wasn't being upheld.  
 The mandate said: people aren't ready to govern  
 themselves. So you couldn't petition for self-go-  
 vernment because the Mandates Commission  
 60 would just throw that out. But when the French  
 bombed Damascus there were tons of petitions  
 saying this was a complete abuse, that it was bru-  
 tal, that it showed that France shouldn't hold the  
 mandate, all kinds of things like that.



(gemeinfrei; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Damas\\_en\\_flamme.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Damas_en_flamme.jpg); 20 December 2006, 600x412 (36 KB), Damascus in flames as the result of the French air raid on October 18, 1925.)

**Q2 French bombing of Damascus, 18. Oktober 1925**

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## Impulse



- Look up the distribution of former German and Ottoman territories as mandates of the League of Nations. Which present-day states in the Near East and Africa developed from them?
- Sum up why the Permanent Mandates Commission emerged.
- Explain why a mandate would not be the same as a colony any longer.
- Comment on the role of the “fourth power” (also known as “fourth estate”) in the process of the mandate system. To what extent was the League of Nations itself part of the fourth power?
- Compare the League's role as “megaphone” or “spotlight” to the modern phenomenon of “embedded journalism”.

# Schritt 3: The Permanent Mandates Commission – weak or strong?

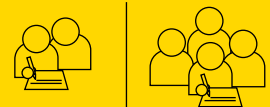
1 **D4** The Canadian historian Susan Pedersen takes a close look at the side-effect that the League of Nations gathered and spread a lot of information on the mandate territories. The following excerpt is taken from podcast interview headlined “Geneva 1920: The mandate system of the League of Nations: Democracy or colonialism?” („Genf 1920: Das Mandatssystem des Völkerbunds: Demokratie oder Kolonialismus?“)

**The Commission was sort of a publicity machine. It opened up a stage.**

15 That’s right. And that’s why ... one of the kind of amusing parts of doing this research is to watch everybody kind of scramble for position. Foreign offices and colonial offices in France and Britain, Belgium, all of these are mandatory powers, do

20 exactly what you’d expect. They try to chip away at the margins. They try to say: really, we don’t need to publish the records of the Mandates Commission. These reports shouldn’t be publicly available. They’re trying to make as much of the work secret as possible (...). They try to chip away at petitioning, and there are points at which all the mandatory powers gang up and take a few pot shots at the Mandates Commission. What is interesting about that is because the Mandates Commission is full of ex imperial governors they’re not the kind of guys who are used to being seen as problems by their own nation states. So they don’t take that well. The Mandates Commission tends to kind of hit back when it feels its powers are being encroached upon and it will, you know, talk about its duty, its responsibility, they’re sorry they’re causing offense, but they become very legalistic about what they’re supposed to do.

## Impulse



- Sum up how the mandatory powers reacted to the Mandates Commission.
- Collect arguments in favour of the weakness and or the strength of the Mandates Commission.

# Schritt 4: Neo-Imperialismus

1 **D5** The Canadian historian Susan Pedersen explains how imperialism changed to a more effective system of less political power, but more economic influence. During the short time Germany was a member of the League (1926-1933), it took considerable interest in foreign trade with the Mandates. The following excerpt is taken from a podcast interview headlined “Geneva 1920: The mandate system of the League of Nations: Democracy or colonialism?” („Genf 1920: Das Mandatssystem des Völkerbunds: Demokratie oder Kolonialismus?“)

## 15 Neoimperialism. Isn't it?

Exactly. It's an attempt to try and govern through economic power instead. And there are some consequences to this. Japan is able to basically destroy the Syrian silk industry, Germans take over plantations in the British sections of Cameroon and Togo. It's that kind of economic power that becomes very important. Plantations in Tanganyika are open to German investment. And the Mandates Commission, they defend these inter-

## Q3 Zwei Fachwörterbücher erklären „Neokolonialismus“

1 Neokolonialismus. Bezeichnung für eine Politik der Fortsetzung des Kolonialismus mit anderen Mitteln. Im Neokolonialismus tritt die formale politische Unabhängigkeit der Kolonien an die Stelle der Verwaltung durch die ehemaligen Kolonialmächte, die alten Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen bleiben jedoch bestehen. [...] Wichtiger Bestandteil des Neokolonialismus ist zudem die Unterstützung einer kooperationswilligen Führungsschicht in den unabhängigen Staaten durch die ehemalige Kolonial- oder eine andere Hegemonialmacht, notfalls auch durch militärische Intervention. [...] (aus: Mabe, Jacob E., ed. Das kleine Afrika-Lexikon. Stuttgart 2002, S. 140)

national rights. They're not defending the interests of the indigenous people. One of the things that they agree is that contracts made under mandatory rule will hold in a post mandate period. You can see how dangerous that is for states once they achieve independence because they're gonna be bound into all these contracts

**That's exactly what the Germans were hoping for. And that's why they so strongly supported the idea of slowly letting those mandatory territories achieve independence because they were so sure that once they were independent they'd gladly turn to the Germans for help and advice.**

Yes. I mean, this is only in this middle period of the League when the Germans are actually in the League. Once Hitler comes to power the colonial lobby reverts to its usual language which is entirely about territorial control: We want these territories back, they're ours. that's the language. In that middle period, what you can see is a kind of bid for a sort of order that we will see elements emerging of after 1945.

15 Neokolonialismus: internationales imperialistisches System der kolonialen Ausbeutung und politischen Bevormundung der Entwicklungsländer Asiens, Afrikas und Lateinamerikas. [...] Das strategische Hauptziel neokolonialistischer Politik besteht darin, die verlorengegangenen Einflusssphären zurückzuerobern, den Einfluß des Sozialismus, der innerhalb der sozialistischen Orientierung am deutlichsten hervortritt, zurückzudrängen und den Verbleib der jungen Nationalstaaten im kapitalistischen Weltwirtschaftssystem zu sichern, um die Vertiefung des revolutionären Weltprozesses aufzuhalten.

(aus: Wörterbuch der Geschichte. Berlin (Ost) 1983, S. 748f.)



# Impulse



- Outline the mechanism behind neo-imperialism.
- Arbeite die Unterschiede zwischen den Definitionen des „Neokolonialismus“ aus den Fachwörterbüchern heraus.
- Compare the British and German roles in Tanganyika during the inter-war period. Which one is likely to be more profitable?

# Schritt 5: Not part of a progress story?

1 **D6** The Canadian historian Susan Pedersen has studied the history of the Permanent Mandates Commission in detail. The following excerpt is taken from a podcast interview headlined “Geneva 1920: The mandate system of the League of Nations: Democracy or colonialism?” („Genf 1920: Das Mandatssystem des Völkerbunds: Demokratie oder Kolonialismus?“) In this passage, she explains why she rejects the common paradigm of historical progress in case of the Mandate territories.

I am not saying that what we learn from looking at the League is always a pleasant story. Some of the things we learn from the League have to do with the intense mobilization of racial hierarchies and racial language. That certainly was the case in Samoa. There’s a lot of dismissal of the Samoans who have very elaborate representative structures as childlike and unready to govern

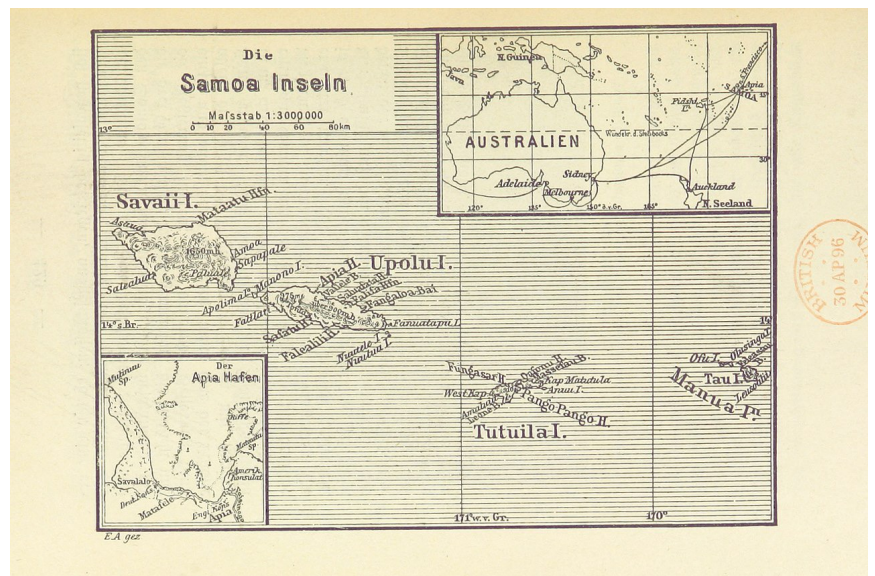
themselves and all this sort of thing. So yes, I mean,

**That’s even part of the Covenant. It says “People not being able to stand for themselves.” If that’s not racist, what is?**

That’s why I don’t wanna write this as a kind of story of some kind of upward climb. It was written that way in the past. That’s not what’s significant about it. The significance is that you need to look at aspects of the history that are new. That international arena and that international publicity is new. And then the aim is to track what effects that has. The main effort, always, for the mandatory powers is to legitimate alien rule. That’s what they’re after. But there are also unintended consequences which is this kind of contestation that I think does have an impact.

**D7** Die Samoa Inseln“, assembly of maps showing Samoa as a German colony. New Zealand acquired the Mandate for Samoa in 1920.

(gemeinfrei; Von The British Library - Image taken from page 778 of “Deutschlands Kolonien, ihre Gestaltung, Entwicklung und Hilfsquellen“; No restrictions, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=66684864>)





# Impulse



- Explain why the League of Nations may not follow the “upward climb”. Which other historical narratives of continuous progress have you already heard of?
- As an extra research: Compare New Zealand's Samoa policy with their treatment of the indigenous Maori population on their islands

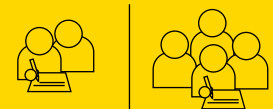
# Schritt 6

1 **D8** The Canadian historian Susan Pedersen has studied the history of the Permanent Mandates Commission in detail. The following excerpt is taken from a podcast interview headlined “Geneva 1920: The mandate system of the League of Nations: Democracy or colonialism?” („Genf 1920: Das Mandatssystem des Völkerbunds: Demokratie oder Kolonialismus?“) As part of a conclusion, Pedersen sums up what the League of Nations left behind as a legacy.

That said, I don’t think it’s just NGOs because they were parts of the League when the security apparatus failed. Organizations like Carnegie, Rockefeller started putting a lot of money, a lot of money – half the League’s health budget came from the Rockefeller Foundation. This is not NGO work, it’s the work of the League of Nations Health Organization which became the World Health Orga-

nization. So I think what you see is a kind of international governance of things that states are sort of willing to cede because they simply can’t do it. Who’s gonna decide air traffic control rules? You don’t wanna have dozens of individual states coming to bilateral agreements over how their planes are gonna take off and land. So it’s that kind of stuff that got a real boost with the League. And as the security arrangements failed those sorts of things became more and more important to the League and more and more central. And some interesting political thought came out of this. Particularly functionalism. People saying you should stop working on peace by trying to come up with security arrangements. What we need are arrangements of the practical things that only the international can do that act then to restrain the belligerence of states.

## Impulse



- Look up how a foundation functions. Where does the money come from? Where does it go to? Who decides?
- Discuss what might make an organization like the League of Nations attractive for foundations.
- Explain which part of international affairs may be dealt with more practically by states – and which one by international organizations.
- Extra research: Compare the League’s international tasks to those of the UN (foundations, NGOs, international affairs, UN organizations).

- |   |  |
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| <p>1 (to) inscribe – beschriften, einmeißeln<br/>       Covenant – Bund<br/>       (to) emerge – auftauchen, entstehen<br/>       atrocity – Grausamkeit<br/>       5 assessment – Beurteilung, Einschätzung<br/>       legacy – Vermächtnis, Erbschaft<br/>       fraught – belastet, problembeladen<br/>       Ottoman – osmanisch<br/>       (to) annex – beifügen, anhängen<br/>       10 in trust – zu treuen Händen<br/>       trustee – Treuhänder<br/>       mandated territories – Mandatsgebiete<br/>       mandatory power – mandatstragende Macht<br/>       administration – Verwaltung<br/>       15 abeyance – Schwebezustand<br/>       publicity – Öffentlichkeit<br/>       (to) amplify – verstärken<br/>       minutes – hier: Protokolle<br/>       dissertation – Dissertation, Doktorarbeit<br/>       20 (to) cover – umfassen<br/>       malfeasance – Vergehen, Amtsvergehen<br/>       (to) damp down – dämpfen, mindern<br/>       redress – Entschädigung<br/>       contestation – Auseinandersetzung, Anfechtung<br/>       25 (to) protract – in die Länge ziehen<br/>       (to) scramble – drängeln<br/>       (to) chip away at sth. – an etwas kratzen (so dass</p> | <p>ein „chip“ wegfliegt)<br/>       available – verfügbar<br/>       30 pot shot – Deuschuss, d. h. ein Schuss ohne zu<br/>       zielen, sondern allein mit der Absicht, einen Geg-<br/>       ner in Deckung zu zwingen<br/>       (to) encroach – eingreifen, (missbräuchlich) über-<br/>       greifen, beeinträchtigen<br/>       35 ostensibly – anscheinend<br/>       coincidentally – zufällig<br/>       harbinger – Vorbote<br/>       contract – Vertragswerk<br/>       unintended – unabsichtlich, unbeabsichtigt<br/>       40 gullible – naiv<br/>       pleasant – angenehm<br/>       impact – (Ein-)Wirkung, Effekt<br/>       side effect – Nebeneffekt<br/>       (to) extrude – verdrängen, ausstoßen<br/>       45 (to) reconcile – schlichten<br/>       antagonistic – gegnerisch<br/>       (to) content – einverstanden, zufrieden<br/>       pain in the neck – Quälgeist, Nervensäge<br/>       incipient – beginnend<br/>       50 in disguise – verkleidet<br/>       (to) scrutinize – untersuchen<br/>       (to) prompt – hinweisen<br/>       (to) prolong – verlängern</p> |
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## Impressum

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Gefördert von der Beauftragen der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien

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