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Women, Feminisms and Founding Myths in International Relations

Mujeres, feminismos y mitos fundacionales de relaciones internacionales

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, a significant body of academic writing in International Relations (IR) has contributed to critically reflecting on the traditional narrative of IR. Most of this literature has focused on the early years of IR, questioning its supposed birth in 1919, as well as the existence of liberal idealism and the first great debate. This article seeks to contribute to such critical efforts, adding as variables women internationalists and some feminisms of the early part of the 20th century —particularly related to socialism and/or pacifism— to show important shortcomings of conventional history. Through a textual analysis of the writings of various internationalists of the early 20th century, as well as their work in building institutions related to international affairs, the article exposes five disciplinary myths of IR. It concludes that there is a diversity of contributions from various feminisms and women to the discipline before 1980, although they continue to be obscured by orthodox history. This has important implications for our historiographical understanding of IR, the

RESUMEN

Durante los últimos años, un número importante de escritos académicos en relaciones internacionales (RRII) ha contribuido a reflexionar críticamente sobre la narrativa tradicional de la misma. La mayor parte de esta literatura se ha concentrado en los años tempranos de RRII poniendo en tela de juicio su supuesto nacimiento en 1919, así como la existencia del idealismo liberal y del primer gran debate. El presente artículo busca contribuir a dichos esfuerzos críticos, añadiendo como variables a las mujeres internacionalistas y a algunos feminismos de la primera parte del siglo XX —particularmente relacionados con el socialismo y/o el pacifismo— para mostrar deficiencias importantes de la historia convencional. A través de un análisis textual de los escritos de diversas internacionalistas de principios del siglo XX, así como de su trabajo en la construcción de instituciones relacionadas con asuntos internacionales, el artículo expone cinco mitos disciplinarios de RRII. Se concluye que existe una multiplicidad de contribuciones de diversos feminismos y de las mujeres

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roots of internationalist feminism, and the possibility of rescuing new theoretical approaches.

Keywords: women; feminisms; International Relations; foundational myths; idealism; socialism; pacifism.

a la disciplina antes de 1980, pese a que continúan siendo oscurecidas por la historia ortodoxa. Esto tiene implicaciones importantes en nuestro entendimiento historiográfico de RRII, las raíces del feminismo internacionalista, y la posibilidad de rescatar nuevos enfoques teóricos.

Palabras clave: mujeres; feminismos; mitos fundacionales; relaciones internacionales; idealismo; socialismo; pacifismo.

Introduction

One of the areas of research in International Relations (IR) that has garnered considerable attention from a growing number of scholars over the past two and a half decades is the disciplinary history of the field, particularly regarding the first half of the 20th century. The existence of the so-called "liberal idealism" and the first great debate has been questioned, along with the conventional date marking the genesis of IR as a discipline (Schmidt, 2012). Multiple studies have demonstrated that, since the early 20th century, various theoretical approaches to understanding international reality existed beyond the so-called idealism and classical realism, such as socialism and functionalism (Anderson, 1998; Ashworth, 2015). Moreover, a growing body of scholars has recently challenged conventional narratives by recovering the international thought of numerous women who wrote about and analyzed the world from their unique perspectives in the early 20th century (Owens & Rietzler, 2021). However, while this significant body of literature has sought to recover the contributions of women to international thought, it has been less focused on specifically challenging the disciplinary history of IR.

Efforts have been made to redeem the contributions of various female internationalists of the period, though not explicitly from a feminist perspective (Huber, Pietsch & Rietzler, 2021). Building on the work of this academic cohort, this article delves into the writings of several interwar internationalists to challenge conventional narratives. It argues that the contributions of early 20th-century female internationalists —some of whom identified as feminists— expose multiple myths in the disciplinary history of IR. The article is divided into four sections, addressing five disciplinary myths. The first section critiques the erroneous notion that feminism in IR emerged only in the 1980s. The second and third sections challenge the conventional origins of International Political Economy (IPE) (dated to the 1970s) and IR as a discipline (dated to 1919), respectively. Finally, the fourth section examines the related myths of liberal idealism and the so-called first great debate. The conclusions sum-

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marize the article's key findings, reflect on why early feminist contributions to IR have been overlooked, and offer suggestions for future research directions.

Following other revisionist works, this article understands *myth* as a narrative that presents a severely distorted and inaccurate account of disciplinary history (Carvalho, Leira & Hobson, 2011). This does not imply that these narratives are entirely mythical or fictional. However, while some distortion in historical accounts is unavoidable, the inaccuracies of IR myths are particularly pronounced, often omitting theories, debates, institutions, and figures that made significant contributions at the time. This article highlights the omission of feminist perspectives and female internationalists in the traditional disciplinary history of IR.

In this regard, it focuses on challenging the orthodox narrative of the discipline by examining the contributions of early 20th-century American and British women. These internationalists often worked within the same spaces as their male contemporaries, who, by contrast, have been incorporated into the conventional IR canon. Despite contributing to the same institutions, addressing similar topics, and engaging in shared debates, these women remain largely absent from the field's historical narrative. It is, of course, essential to continue conducting further studies that shed light on the contributions of women from the Global South to the development of the discipline and international thought.[1]

Myth 1: Feminism came to IR in the 1980s

According to the conventional narrative, the theoretical-methodological development of IR has undergone three or four major debates. The first is commonly described as ontological, addressing issues related to the primary international actors and international anarchy. It is said to have occurred during the 1930s and 1940s, with the supposed contenders being the liberal idealists —such as Woodrow Wilson, Alfred Zimmern, and Norman Angell— and the classical realists, led by E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau (Wæver, 1996: 150). The second debate, taking place in the 1950s and 1960s, was methodological, pitting traditionalists who favored historical and interpretative methods against those advocating a closer alignment with the natural sciences through the application of mathematics, statistics, and computational techniques. Hedley Bull represented the traditionalists, while Morton Kaplan stood for the behavioralists (Sutch & Elias, 2007: 8–10).

[1] Some studies have begun to highlight some significant contributions by Latin American women prior to the 1980s. For example, the international thought of Alicia Moreau (Villanueva, 2024) and Hermila Galindo (Labardini, 2022) has been recovered, as well as that of Minerva Morales, Olga Pellicer and Rosario Green (Brun, 2024). Although it is not dedicated to recovering contributions to international relations or international thought, the book *Diplomáticas Mexicanas* (Galeana, 2023) coordinated by Patricia Galeana, has made a valuable contribution by making visible the diplomatic work of ten outstanding Mexican women.

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The third debate is sometimes referred to as an inter-paradigmatic dispute because it occurred during the 1970s and 1980s among three major renewed visions in IR: the neorealists, represented by Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer; the neoliberals, by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye; and the neo-Marxists, by Immanuel Wallerstein. Although not directly involved in the debate, contributions from *dependency theory* scholars such as Raúl Prebisch, André Gunder Frank, and Theotonio Dos Santos are occasionally mentioned within the neo-Marxist framework (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013: 53–55).

Finally, the 1980s and 1990s were marked by epistemological quarrels focusing on appropriate knowledge-acquisition methods. At one end of the spectrum were rationalist or positivist theories, which emphasized the rationality of international actors and the possibility of objectively explaining global reality. At the other, critical or post-positivist approaches highlighted the inherent subjectivity of knowledge. Rationalist currents included classical realism, neorealism, and neoliberalism, while post-positivist perspectives embraced critical theory, led by Robert Cox; postmodernism, championed by Richard Ashley; and feminism, with significant contributions from Cynthia Enloe and Anne Tickner. Constructivism often occupies an intermediate position between these two camps. These intellectual disputes are commonly referred to as the Fourth Great Debate. However, some scholars question the existence of the inter-paradigmatic debate of the 1970s and 1980s and prefer to refer to the debates of the 1980s and 1990s as the third great debate (Marchand & Meza, 2014: 483–484).

One striking feature of traditional IR history is the absence of women until the alleged emergence of feminism in the 1980s. As Alberto Lozano (2012: 146) notes, according to this narrative, it is "within this theoretical complexity of the discipline of International Relations [that] feminism emerges at the end of the 1980s". However, it must be mentioned that Lozano himself revised his perspective in 2019, adopting a revisionist view that recognizes the existence of feminist internationalists during the first half of the 20th century, thus leading the way in Spanish-language literature (Lozano, 2019: 12). Another scholar who changed her stance is Ann Tickner, who previously believed herself to be among the pioneering feminists in IR but acknowledged in 2018 that feminist approaches in the discipline date back a century (Tickner & True, 2018: 221).

Recent years have been particularly fruitful in recovering the international thought of numerous women from the early 20th century. Notably, the Women and the History of International Thought project, launched in 2020 and led by Patricia Owens at the University of Oxford, includes contributions from scholars such as Katharina Rietzler, Kimberly Hutchings, Sarah Dunstan, and Joanna Wood. This project seeks to challenge the traditional IR canon, which excludes women's contributions to early 20th-century international thought (University of Oxford, n.d.). The project has brought to light the international thought of dozens of women who lived during the interwar period (Owens, Rietzler, Hutchings, and Dunstan, 2022).

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While many of these thinkers were unable to access academia due to gender barriers and analyzed international relations from different professional standpoints (Huber, Pietsch & Rietzler, 2021: 121–145), others succeeded in joining or working closely with academic institutions. Such is the case of American scholar Merze Tate (1905–1996), who studied under Alfred Zimmern at the Geneva School of International Studies. In 1931, she earned the distinction of becoming the first "Montague Burton" professor—male or female—at the University of Oxford and the first African American woman to earn a doctorate in Government and International Relations from Harvard University in 1935 (Savage, 2021: 266). Tate's work explored imperialism from gender and racial perspectives as well as the disarmament movement (Tate, 1942, 1943).

Another significant example is British scholar Lucy Philip Mair (1901–1986), one of the first academics appointed to the Department of International Studies at the London School of Economics in 1927. Her pioneering work addressed colonial administration and the protection of minorities, and she actively promoted related efforts within the League of Nations (Mair, 1928). Alongside liberal internationalist Gilbert Murray, Mair worked with the League of Nations Union, a non-governmental organization that advocated for peace, collective security, and international justice. Additionally, she contributed to establishing international relations as a distinct field, separate from political science (Owens, Hutchings, Rietzler & Dunstan, 2022: 46–48).

In addition to academic internationalists, early IR history includes women who authored significant works on international relations and maintained direct contact with prominent internationalists of their time. One such figure was Australian Florence Melian Stawell (1869–1936), mentored by Gilbert Murray at the University of Oxford, who also supervised Henry Brailsford, another distinguished internationalist of the era. Like Mair, Stawell was involved with the League of Nations Union. However, her main contribution was arguably the coining of the term *international thought* and the publication of one of the earliest books on its history (Stawell, 1929), possibly preceded only by *Histoire de l'internationalisme* (1919) by Christian Lange (Sluga, 2021: 235). Paradoxically, Stawell's *Growth of International Thought* reproduces the conventional canon, excluding women's contributions while including figures such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Immanuel Kant, and Hugo Grotius.

Another example of a woman who systematically contributed to the field of international relations during the first half of the 20th century is Russian American Vera Micheles Dean (1903–1973). Dean was a leading authority in IR during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Unlike other intellectuals who explored global issues alongside other disciplines —such as Lucy Mair, who received more attention outside IR for her work in anthropology— Dean specialized exclusively in international affairs. For this reason, her legacy remained relatively overlooked until it was recently highlighted in a book chapter (Jewett, 2021: 306–326). In 1925, Dean received support from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace —founded in 1910

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with significant contributions from Norman Angell— to pursue a master's in international law at Yale University. Later, in 1928, she began working at the Foreign Policy Association, a *think tank* founded in 1918, where she served as research director from 1936 to 1956 (Jewett, 2021: 308). Throughout her career, Dean was a prolific author, publishing over a dozen books and numerous articles on world politics. Her topics included the threat posed by Russia to international security, war, U.S. foreign policy, dynamics in the non-Western world, relations between Europe and the U.S., collective security, and peace (Dean, 1942, 1948).

It is worth noting that the recent monumental effort to recover the international thought of numerous women from the first half of the 20th century has been predominantly focused on the Anglophone world. An important exception is the rediscovery of the Mexican thinker Hermila Galindo's contributions by Indra Labardini. Although Galindo wrote outside academia, she addressed Latin American foreign policy issues. Notably, her work engaged with the writings of Norman Angell (Labardini, 2022: 49–60).

Myth 2: IR ignored economic issues before 1970

An integral part of the conventional narrative positions the emergence of IPE as a subdiscipline of IR during the 1970s or, at best, in the 1960s. This notion gained widespread popularity largely due to Susan Strange's influential article, "International Economics and International Relations: A Case of Mutual Neglect," in which she lamented the omission of economic issues in IR (Strange, 1970: 304–315). Since then, numerous textbooks have reiterated the idea that IPE emerged during the 1960s or 1970s, alongside claims of supposed neglect of economic issues by earlier scholars in the field. Indeed, the global financial turbulence of the 1970s —exemplified by the 1973 oil crisis— played a significant role in sparking initial interest in economic matters within IR (Cohen, 2008: 1; Jackson & Sørensen, 2013: 53–54; Ravenhill, 2020: 17–18). However, economics played a fundamental role in the analyses of many internationalists in the early 20th century.

Far from ignoring economic issues, several interwar internationalists regarded them as primary causes of conflict, as illustrated by Jessie Wallace Hughan (1875–1955), a committed pacifist who earned her master's in political economy at Columbia University (1899) and her Doctorate at Columbia's School of Political Science (1910). In 1915, Hughan encouraged women to fight peacefully against "the economic motives of the powers that produce war" (Hughan, 1915: 1). According to her, these motives included the pursuit of new markets and investment concessions in underdeveloped countries (Hughan, 1916: 13). Hughan presented a proto-dependency theory perspective as early as the 1920s, which is worth reproducing here. She argued that global economic relations had undergone drastic changes by the early 20th century:

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> Marx's prophecy was inaccurate regarding the specific form that the imperialist phase would take. While competition initially revolved around foreign markets in the literal sense, where consumer goods —from necklaces to whiskey— could be exchanged for the wealth of primitive communities, the type of investment gradually changed […] The industrial core of nations like England shifted from textiles to iron, from consumer goods to production goods. It became profitable to export machinery itself to underdeveloped countries rather than final products […] The possession of overseas territories began to serve as a market for manufactured goods […] The typical process in modern imperialism has been the investment of capital itself. (Hughan, 1924: 257)

Another internationalist of the era who emphasized the importance of material factors in explaining war was feminist Emily Greene Balch (1867–1961). By the late 19th century, Balch had undertaken several economics courses at Bryn Mawr College, the University of Berlin, the University of Chicago, and Harvard University, later winning the 1956 Nobel Peace Prize through a formal nomination by Norman Angell (Gwinn, 2010: 176). Echoing Marxist or socialist analyses of the time, Balch argued that one of the crucial motives driving imperialism was the pursuit of profits and concessions abroad, often pushed by groups such as bankers who strongly influenced governments to acquire new territories by force to secure preferential conditions in those markets. This dynamic reflected what she called the "unholy alliance between cannon and capital." Balch also believed the state was used to ensure the repayment of foreign debts, making it essential for the League of Nations to focus on economic aspects (Balch, 1924: 72–77).

Helena Maria Swanwick (1864–1939), described by Edmund Morel, founder of the Union of Democratic Control, as "a talented woman with an international mindset" (Morel, 1924: 7), also considered economic issues key to understanding war. In 1885, she completed her studies in economics, psychology, and logic at the University of Cambridge. Decades later, in 1922, she was scheduled to lecture on Europe's economic situation at Cambridge alongside Norman Angell, but students boycotted the event, accusing Angell's proposals of being communist (Swanwick, 1935: 355–366). Following Hughan and Balch's lead, Swanwick believed that "the love of profit" was central to explaining imperialist ventures. She viewed capitalism as "one of the root causes of war." Furthermore, she argued that financiers and arms dealers were the primary beneficiaries of territorial acquisitions, using the state as an instrument to fulfill their materialistic desires abroad. Swanwick also contended that underdeveloped economies' military and political domination allowed powers to provide concessions to their capitalist class while gaining access to raw materials like oil, coal, and iron (Swanwick, 1924: 45; 1938: 56–57).

Thus, far from neglecting economic issues, Swanwick, Balch, and Hughan incorporated them into their analyses, offering an international perspective on war and imperialism through political economy. Alongside their views on the economic motives behind war

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and the use of the state by privileged groups, these thinkers were also fierce critics of the global capitalist system and advocated for its reform through the gradual, democratic appropriation of the state. For example, Balch described capitalism as a system "intoxicated" by the pursuit of wealth, regardless of the precarity it produced in certain sectors of society. From a feminist perspective, she argued that women were among its primary victims (Balch, 1910: 64–69). This socialist feminism also permeated the perspectives of Swanwick and Hughan (Hughan, 1912: 165–175; Swanwick, 1921: 24–25, 34–39).

The socialist feminism of Balch, Hughan, and Swanwick also led them to emphasize the need to reform capitalism by eradicating both economic and gender inequalities. Politics was fundamental to implementing a more equitable system in both respects. Although the state was viewed negatively under capitalism for serving as a tool to secure material interests, it could gradually implement reforms in tandem with the League of Nations to reduce economic inequalities through support for education, housing, and public health. Additionally, ensuring equal rights and political opportunities for women was essential (Balch, 1922: 3; Hughan, 1913: 117, 123–125; Swanwick, 1913: 81–82). Through her writings and charitable work, Balch paid particular attention to the plight of refugees, highlighting their precarious conditions. She argued during the 1920s that the League of Nations needed to play a pivotal role in addressing these issues (Balch, 1925: 18). Ultimately, for these three thinkers, capitalism had to be replaced by a more equitable economic and social system, particularly for women, which distanced them from liberal perspectives.

Myth 3: the birth of IR in 1919

One of the enduring myths within Spanish-speaking academia is the notion of the foundational date of IR. According to the conventional narrative, "the formal study of International Relations as a scientific discipline began in 1919, after the end of World War I" (Ochoa, Schiavon & Tawil, 2014: 40). This narrative suggests that the horrors of the Great War spurred interest in international affairs among English-speaking intellectuals, leading to the establishment of the first academic chair in the discipline at what is now the University of Aberystwyth. While this account has largely been debunked within Anglo-American academia (Carvalho, Leira & Hobson, 2011: 745–755), it remains influential in the Spanish-speaking world (Ochoa, Schiavon & Tawil, 2014, pp. 27–43). Nonetheless, within Latin American academia, some scholars previously accepted this narrative but have since revised their positions (Lozano, 2019: 9). Celestino del Arenal, for instance, argues that it is no longer possible "to pinpoint a specific date for the birth of the discipline of International Relations" (Del Arenal, 2019: 48). Others, like Modesto Seara (2019: 33), have criticized the traditional periodization of the discipline as Eurocentric. In any case, it is crucial to revisit

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the contributions of women internationalists from the first half of the 20th century, particularly their institutional work and role in teaching related to IR.

Women and certain feminist approaches played a fundamental role in establishing institutions linked to the practice and study of international affairs. While many of these institutions emerged shortly after 1919, it is essential to highlight some of them, as they were often the result of pre-existing organizations that came into being before that date. Examining their evolution underscores the women thinkers' importance in building IR and supports the critique of the first myth addressed in this article.

Like all disciplinary myths, the narrative about the origins of IR contains a grain of truth. The year 1919 was significant because, during that period, the first academic department dedicated to studying international relations was established. However, it is worth clarifying that its name was, and remains, the Department of International Politics, indicating that IR was directly linked to political science from its inception in the United Kingdom (UK). In fact, at most universities in the U.S., IR is still considered a subdiscipline of political science. This connection is important because it ties the American Political Science Association (APSA), founded in 1903, to the institutionalization of IR (Schmidt, 1998: 439). In its early years, four of APSA's seven research areas focused on international relations: "the political relations among sovereign states […], imperialism, colonial administration […], and the factors guiding war and peace". This, of course, could be regarded as "the formal study of international relations." Woodrow Wilson and Paul Reinsch, who taught International Politics as early as 1899 and specialized in international affairs, were named vice presidents of the organization in 1903 (Willoughby, 1904: 109–110). Both Emily Greene Balch and Merze Tate were members of APSA (Gwinn, 2010: 53, 75). In fact, the organization annually awards the Merze Tate Prize for the best doctoral dissertation in international relations, politics, and law in honor of this African American scholar (Merze Tate Award, n.d.).

However, beyond membership, some early 20th-century women internationalists played pivotal roles in various institutions related to the practice and study of international relations. In some cases, they were involved in more than one such organization. For instance, Eleanor Rathbone Swanwick was part of the Advisory Committee on International Issues, founded by the British Labour Party in 1918. Prominent internationalists such as Norman Angell, Henry Brailsford, Leonard Woolf, Alfred Zimmern, and John Hobson were also members of this committee, where Swanwick debated key global issues and provided foreign policy recommendations to the British government. Another notable woman on the committee was Mary Agnes Hamilton, who made significant contributions to the field while not fully specialized in international affairs. Alongside Swanwick, Hamilton was part of the British delegation to the League of Nations (1929–1931) and worked on the Refugee Commission and the League's International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (Ashworth, 2011: 28). She was also a co-founder of the 1917 Club with Leonard and Virginia Woolf,

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which included distinguished internationalists such as Hobson and Brailsford. Founded in 1917, this club operated as an informal organization where British intellectuals discussed anti-imperialist ideas, opposed World War I, and reflected on the Russian Revolution of that year. Hamilton was also a founding member of the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), a pressure group established in 1914 that advocated against World War I, rejected secret diplomacy, and promoted causes like women's suffrage (Clay, 2020: 368). Remarkably, Hamilton's international thought has yet to be thoroughly explored in academic literature.

Swanwick also worked extensively with the UDC. According to E.D. Morel, one of the organization's main founders, Swanwick contributed a decisive international vision to the group (Morel, 1924: 7). As a member of the UDC, Swanwick wrote about peace and served on its Executive Committee, alongside other internationalists like Angell, Brailsford, Hobson, and Woolf. Among her colleagues were also Mary Hamilton and Margaret Bondfield, a socialist feminist who championed women's rights and whose international thought also merits examination. According to Swanwick, "Miss Margaret Bondfield's views on international politics have generally aligned with those of the UDC" (Swanwick, 1924: 166, 168, 171, 177). After Morel's death in 1925, Swanwick took on the editor for Foreign Affairs role until 1928, when Angell assumed the position (Obituary: Mrs. H.M. Swanwick, 1939: 4).

Another institution in which Swanwick worked intensely as chairman in the UK (1915-1922) was the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the world's oldest feminist and pacifist non-governmental organization still active in the fight against war and for women's rights (Swanwick, 1935: 277). The origins of this NGO date back to the Women's Peace Party, founded in 1915 by Jane Addams, one of the main organizers of the International Congress of Women held that same year in The Hague, where the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace was established. In 1919, this committee was renamed WILPF, with Balch serving as its international secretary and treasurer. In 1926, the organization appointed Balch to lead a committee to investigate the situation in Haiti following the U.S. occupation. During the interwar period, within WILPF, Balch contributed to the study and defense of women's rights, democracy, disarmament, and minority rights, as well as critiquing imperialism. She also served on the Executive Committee and, in 1935, became the organization's honorary president until her death (Gwinn, 2010: 176). As a result of her work, Balch had the opportunity to meet personally and correspond with President Woodrow Wilson (Turner, 1975: 622).

Hughan, for her part, also joined the Women's Peace Party in 1915. However, because WILPF did not fully embrace absolute pacifism in 1919, she and other radical pacifists founded the Women's Peace Society, which advocated for universal demilitarization and opposed all forms of violence, including World War I. As early as 1915, Hughan established the Anti-Enlistment League, which gathered 3,500 signatures from men and women declaring their opposition to military service (Early, 1995: 315-319). However, the organization had

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to be dismantled in 1917 following the U.S. entry into the war and statements from Roosevelt declaring it illegal. Nonetheless, convinced that the fight against war was not solely a women's cause, in 1923 Hughan promoted the creation of the War Resisters League, which today remains one of the leading voices against interstate and internal armed conflicts. Although these organizations led by this academic have primarily focused on functioning as advocacy groups, they have also contributed to analyzing war and peace through various publications since their inception (Hughan, 1935: 8; 1942: 17). In this sense, they have also contributed to studying international affairs.

In addition to women contributing to the analysis of international relations through various institutions in the early 20th century, they also sought to make contributions through education. However, it is important to note that internationalists of the time still faced significant challenges in academia. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s, as seen in the cases of Mair and Tate, that they entered this field. Hughan's thesis advisor, for instance, commented at the end of her doctoral studies that "although I would recommend Hughan for research work and was well aware of her qualities, I would block her candidacy for any academic position […] [because] membership in the Socialist Party precludes the possibility of an academic post" (Early, 1995: 311). Thus, both her gender and ideological orientation thwarted Hughan's academic aspirations. Nevertheless, she contributed to teaching IR through other means.

Commissioned by the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), Hughan and Nicholas Kelley of Harvard University prepared a proposal for a "course in international relations" in 1915. Under similar names, such as World Politics, this subject was already being taught in the U.S. at least at ten different universities by 1910 (Potter, 1929: 387). The task assigned to Hughan and Kelley was to provide an alternative curriculum with a broader theoretical scope than the courses being offered at various universities at the time. In February 1915, the proposal was published in The Intercollegiate Socialist Journal. The program's main topics were as follows: *1)* international trade, *2)* the causes of war, *3)* war and militarism, *4)* peace and non-resistance, *5)* international law, *6)* remedies for war, and *7)* socialism and war. Required readings included books and articles on Angell's internationalism, Alfred Mahan's realism or geopolitical approach, Jane Addams' feminism, Karl Kautsky's socialism, and Lucia Ames Mead's feminist pacifism. Mead was the secretary of the Women's Peace Party and one of the co-founders of WILPF (Hughan & Kelley, 1915: 14-15).

As an exception, Balch managed to enter academia in 1886 at Wellesley College in Boston, Massachusetts, which is currently the largest women-only college in the U.S. In 1902, John Hobson accepted Balch's invitation to visit Wellesley, coinciding with the publication of his famous *Imperialism: A Study* (Confortini, 2021: 248). Five years later, Balch designed and began teaching what she called "probably the first course on Immigration in the world" (Balch, 1972b: 50). In 1916, under the auspices of the Women's Peace Party, Balch and An-

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Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 207-229 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.85151

gell —both future Nobel laureates— delivered eleven lectures titled Current Developments in World Politics (Opfell, 1986: 42).

Myths 4 and 5: Liberal idealism and the first great debate

The myths of liberal utopianism and the first great debate are deeply interrelated. The traditional narrative on this topic has already been mentioned in the first section. According to this account, "liberal ideas dominated the early academic phase of IR" (Jackson and Sørensen, 2013: 38). This simplistic view, which reduces the interwar period to a hegemony of idealist liberalism, is frequently reiterated in the literature that adopts this perspective (Sutch and Elias, 2007: 8, 64). However, one of the main problems with this historical interpretation is that, although some internationalists of the time, such as Woodrow Wilson and Gilbert Murray, aligned with liberalism, the majority did not share this ideological orientation.

While several thinkers of the period were pacifists and could, at first glance, be considered idealists —although it will later be shown that pacifism and idealism are not synonymous— it is also true that a portion of the internationalists of the era were feminists. Balch and Swanwick identified themselves as feminists and played a key role in advancing WILPF (Swanwick, 1935: 277; Whipps, 2006: 25–26). Although Hughan —apparently— never explicitly identified as a feminist, her writings and activism reflected her commitment to women's equality and her belief in their fundamental role in promoting peace. In 1915, for example, she joined the Women's Peace Party led by Jane Addams; she would later co-found the Women's Peace Society (Early, 1995: 315–319). Others, like Mair and Tate, while not feminist activists, frequently wrote from a gendered perspective (Mair, 1953; Tate, 1942: 158–159).

Feminists of the time regularly analyzed war through a gendered lens, which is not reflected in conventional narratives. Swanwick, for example, often referred to women and children as the primary victims of armed conflict despite not being combatants (Swanwick, 1915: 222). Similarly, Balch criticized war for its violence and the suffering it caused, particularly for women (Balch, 1922: 110). A common perspective among feminist internationalists was that, while not all women were vehemently opposed to war, they tended to be more peaceful. Because women were often the primary victims of armed conflict, they had a more negative perspective on war and could, therefore, play a crucial role in eradicating it by sharing their views on its horrors and changing public opinion (Hughan, 1920: 329; Swanwick, 1921: XI, 24).

Another problem with the argument that IR was liberal in the early 20th century is that several of the internationalists of the time, in addition to being feminists, were socialists. While some socialist-influenced thinkers were not feminists, such as Vera Dean and Claudia

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 207-229 | ISSN-2448-492X
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Jones, their contributions will not be covered here due to the focus of this article, although they can be consulted in other sources (Jewett, 2021: 324). One example of a feminist who considered herself a socialist since the late 19th century is Swanwick, a left-leaning Independent Labour Party member. She also served as editor of the suffragist and socialist newspaper The Common Cause (Mitchell, 2018: 25). Similarly, Hughan identified as a socialist during her doctoral studies (1905–1910). During this time, she joined the Socialist Party of America and the SSI, whose quarterly magazine, The Intercollegiate Socialist, had an executive committee that included both Balch and Hughan (Gara, 2020: 101). Balch also vocally subscribed to socialism early in her career, although she stopped identifying as a socialist shortly after World War I ended, "not because I moved to the right in my political-social [thinking] […] but because the word increasingly carried connotations of the Marxist creed" (Balch, 1972a: 49).

The socialist influence on some of these feminists significantly shaped their approach to international reality, giving them a theoretical perspective distinctly different from that of liberals. First, as already discussed, it provided them with a highly critical view of capitalism, frequently associated with war from their perspective. Furthermore, capitalism created stark inequalities and economic exploitation that disproportionately affected women. Second, they perceived the state as an institutional apparatus often used by dominant classes for their own benefit. Third, the socialist influence on these internationalists led them to emphasize economic issues to understand international phenomena, particularly war. Finally, their leftist perspective informed their normative vision, suggesting in varying degrees that socialism could help address humanity's problems, particularly those related to inequality and war (Balch, 1972a: 3; Hughan, 1915: 3; Swanwick, 1921: xv, 97).

Some internationalists from the interwar period adopted an approach markedly distinct from the orthodox narrative often attributed to thinkers of that era. However, it is crucial to clarify that their perspective diverged from Marxist frameworks. First, as previously discussed, their approach was shaped by their gender perspective. This, combined with the pacifism to which they frequently adhered, led them to reject violence, including revolution, to achieve socialism (Balch, 1918: 41; Hughan, 1913: 60; Swanwick, 1938: 38). Second, rather than advocating for a violent appropriation of the means of production, these intellectuals supported parliamentary means to establish a more equitable society gradually. For them, democracy was indispensable and could not be compromised, even for the sake of achieving socialism (Balch, 1972c: 214; Hughan, 1912: 158; Swanwick, 1921: 92).

Third, as noted earlier, while capitalists often used the state for their own benefit, it could also serve as a tool for the gradual establishment of a more equitable society through policies they deemed socialist, such as education, public health, unemployment relief, and the protection of women. Fourth, although these thinkers acknowledged the economic causes of war, they also highlighted other factors, such as psychological aspects —including fear

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 207-229 | ISSN-2448-492X
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and nationalism— that were equally important (Balch, 1927: 238; Hughan, 1916: 13; Swanwick, 1915: 9). Finally, they almost unconditionally supported peaceful means of conflict resolution, including arbitration, public diplomacy, international disarmament, and —in Hughan's case— strikes (Balch, 1918: 52-55; Hughan, 1913: 107-108; Swanwick, 1923: 14). It is worth noting that during this time, many socialist parties, not just pacifists, supported these peaceful measures.

Nonetheless, it is evident that beyond their socialist and feminist approaches, pacifism significantly influenced some interwar internationalists. At first glance, it may seem that, at least in this regard, the traditional narrative holds true, as the so-called "utopian" generation sought peace through peaceful means, particularly by unconditionally supporting the League of Nations. Indeed, conventional history views "classical idealism as an instrument to resolve the condition of anarchy […] through the pursuit of collective security" (Velázquez & Mungaray, 2014: 178). However, even this parallel is limited. Feminist pacifists, unlike the supposed idealist generation, were critical of the League of Nations, and their pacifist stance occasionally led them to debates with some of the most prominent internationalists of the era.

Balch, for instance, was cautious in her support for the League of Nations. While she recognized it as a significant effort with the potential to serve as a forum for cooperation, she lamented the absence of the U.S. and the initial exclusion of Russia (Balch, 1918: 223, 273-274). She also had reservations about the effectiveness of the collective security mechanism, which was central to the organization (Pois, 2004: 234). Moreover, the League's Covenant was silent on the economic causes of war, which she believed explained its inability to curb the imperialist aggressions of Germany, Italy, and Japan (Balch, 1948).

Similarly, Hughan found it problematic that the League initially excluded the Central Powers, the U.S., Mexico, and Russia, as this undermined the institution's international legitimacy. Furthermore, the organization often tolerated capitalist imperialism. Hughan also criticized the League's lack of democracy, not only because several of its member governments were autocratic but also because the delegates were not elected in their respective states. Lastly, she found the Covenant ambiguous regarding disarmament, as it failed to specify when, to what extent, or how disarmament should occur (Hughan, 1924: 177).

Following Hughan, Swanwick argued that the League of Nations should be more international in its membership, more democratic in selecting its delegates, and ideally less capitalist to prevent imperialist activities (Swanwick, 1920: 15-16, 1934a: 3-5). However, the most significant issue for Swanwick was the organization's core concept: collective security. For her, as for other pacifists, this principle was problematic because it required the use of violence against potential aggressors. The League lacked its own army and depended on the will of states, which history showed often broke their commitments when their interests were at stake. Moreover, imposing military sanctions on an aggressor would

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necessitate military training, increased armament production, and, ultimately, more deaths (Swanwick, 1934a: 40).

The feminist pacifist writings of the time elicited reactions from prominent internationalists, particularly against Swanwick, with whom they frequently interacted in various institutions. Zimmern, for instance, dismissively labeled Swanwick an "absolute pacifist" and argued that peace could be achieved if the great powers were united in imposing sanctions. Swanwick countered that if the powers cooperated, peace would be possible without sanctions (Swanwick, 1937: 18). Leonard Woolf criticized Swanwick's views on collective security as impractical for the turbulent 1930s: "Mrs. Swanwick simply stands on dry land and advises a man drowning in deep waters to hurry back home as quickly as possible" (Woolf, 1937: 410). Angell, meanwhile, argued that because states often prioritized national interest over peace, a punitive mechanism was necessary to sanction those who disrupted international harmony. Using her previous arguments, Swanwick replied that states frequently broke their agreements, making it unlikely that they would jointly sanction an aggressor, as demonstrated by the repeated violations of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which had declared war illegal. Consequently, the unrealized mechanism of collective security merely delegitimized the League of Nations, particularly among the great powers, which increasingly viewed it as a farce (Swanwick, 1934b: 12-13, 17-21).

Thus, while the intellectual debates between Swanwick's feminist pacifism and the interwar internationalism of Zimmern, Woolf, and Angell, which supported collective security, should not be overstated, neither should their existence be denied. This is particularly significant given that interactions between the so-called liberal idealists and classical realists were relatively limited (Schmidt, 2012: 1). Interestingly, in his autobiography, Angell references three debates concerning his defense of the collective security system: the first with "the nationalist conservative who […] could not distinguish between pacifists and internationalists" and failed to see that security alliances were crucial; the second with pacifists —"the non-resisters"— who opposed all forms of violence; and the third with "Marxist-leaning socialists," who did not believe in the possibility of establishing a collective security mechanism composed of capitalist governments and instead advocated for socialism as a means to achieve peace. Notably, Angell found the last debate the most "energy-draining" (Angell, 1951: 266-267).

Swanwick, Hughan, and Balch would fall within the second debate described by Angell, though to some extent, they could also be placed within the third due to their critique of capitalist imperialism. Ultimately, these debates reveal a more complex history of the early disciplinary development of International Relations than the conventional narrative suggests.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 207-229 | ISSN-2448-492X
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Conclusions

Women, along with the socialist and pacifist feminisms of the early 20th century, help expose several foundational disciplinary myths in International Relations (IR). The supposed emergence of feminist approaches and women's contributions only in the 1980s, the establishment of IR and IPE's origins in 1919 and around 1970, respectively, as well as the dichotomous view of the so-called first great debate, are not only incomplete disciplinary narratives but also harmful. They obscure the contributions of women, feminist or otherwise, to understanding the discipline's early development.

Socialist and pacifist feminisms, as well as women more broadly, have been essential to the development of IR, not just since the 1980s but since its very beginnings. Alongside other theoretical approaches such as pacifism and socialism, feminism influenced the international thought of several early 20th-century internationalists, providing them with perspectives distinct from the realist or liberal views of the time. While many shared with internationalists like Angell a belief in progress and international cooperation through international organizations, they were far more critical of the League of Nations and rejected collective security. Swanwick, in fact, engaged in a debate on this issue with Angell, Woolf, and Zimmern. Additionally, they considered economic factors central to explaining international realities, abhorred capitalism and had a gendered perspective that enabled them to expose injustices in the international system against women and propose their inclusion as integral to solutions.

Beyond offering perspectives distinct from realism and liberalism and participating in at least one early disciplinary debate, early 20th-century internationalists contributed to shaping IR through teaching and institutional work. Some of the organizations that advanced the analysis and practice of international affairs, where women played a key role, included the Foreign Policy Association, the Advisory Committee on International Questions, the War Resisters' League, the ISS, the 1917 Club, the UDC, and the WILPF. Hughan and Balch contributed in various ways to teaching topics directly related to IR before 1919, while Mair and Tate followed in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively. Stawell, for her part, authored one of the earliest monographs on the history of international thought, and it is likely to her that we owe the term itself. Despite their contributions, women have been relegated from the IR canon.

The marginalization of women and feminism in IR before the 1980s can be explained in three ways. First, the traditional narrative, as shown in this chapter, is built on several disciplinary myths that poorly reflect the development of IR. The discourse surrounding the so-called first great debate, where realism emerges as the dominant theory, has served as a convenient tale for realists or scholars aligned with this tradition to legitimize their approaches (Mearsheimer, 2005: 139-152; Vasquez, 1999: 33).

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 207-229 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.85151

Second, as this article demonstrates, the absence of women in the early IR canon is not due to a lack of contributions but rather to gender-related issues. The early IR canon was constructed with a patriarchal bias. One might argue that many thinkers covered here —especially those from the early 20th century— were not academics. However, the same is true for figures like Angell, Woolf, Brailsford, and Hobson, who are not academics and are part of the IR canon (Bull, 1972: 33; Griffiths, 1999). Both groups contributed prolifically to the analysis of international issues and frequently participated in the same institutional forums. Finally, the radical socialist and feminist perspectives of some women thinkers of the time made for poor credentials in academic circles. As previously mentioned, Hughan's academic aspirations were suppressed on these grounds. Another illustrative example is that Hughan, Balch, and Jane Addams were included in a 1919 list of 62 "dangerous radicals" submitted to the U.S. Senate (Howlett, 2006: 293).

Despite recent monumental efforts to recover early 20th-century women's international thought, several intellectuals remain subjects for future research. Such is the case of Mary Hamilton and Margaret Bondfield, who, while not specializing in international issues, contributed significantly to their analysis and practice and worked closely with some of the most recognized internationalists of the time. However, the most pressing work remains the recovery of the international thought of women outside the Anglo-American sphere. As in the English-speaking world, various feminisms also shaped Latin American women's international views —particularly on war— during the early 20th century. Alicia Moreau, Marta Vergara, and Paulina Luisi are notable examples who, from different contexts, wrote and fought for peace and women's rights.

Ultimately, this article seeks to encourage greater interest and highlight the fundamental role women —feminist or not— played in IR's early formation. It is essential to acknowledge the work of internationalist and feminist women who, from diverse arenas and perspectives, made significant contributions to peace studies, the development of numerous institutions related to the practice and analysis of international affairs, the promotion of women's rights, the enrichment of disciplinary debates, and the teaching and construction of IR. Only then can the most entrenched foundational myths in the discipline be dismantled.

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Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 207-229 | ISSN-2448-492X
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