

Mark Mazower. *Governing the World: the History of an Idea.* London: Penguin, 2012. 496pp. ISBN 978-0-141-01193-6 (Paperback). Price £12.99.

Between the balance-of-power politics of the Concert of Europe and the contemporary ideals of the Responsibility to Protect lie two centuries' worth of attempts to create institutions of international government out of a world that over the same expanse of time has been ever more finely divided into nation-states. The tension between nationalism (a major theme of the author's earlier *Dark Continent*, on 20th-century Europe) and internationalism (the theme of his previous history of the United Nations, *No Enchanted Palace*) runs throughout Mark Mazower's survey of international governance in late modern history, *Governing the World*. Mazower suggests that what began as two 'nineteenth-century conceptions of international order' (p. 177) in European thought, when the romantic nationalism of Mazzini and the Communist internationalism of Marx began to oppose each other, was 'restaged' (p. 249) on an international diplomatic level through the UN in the second half of the 20th century, with the USA and USSR each holding to the opposite principle at different times. Along the way one reads, albeit briefly, of experiments in the international regulation of public health, inter-state arbitration, telecommunications and even language, some of which were folded into the League of Nations or UN bureaucracies while others testify to the limits of internationalism at any particular time.

Two topics within the book are of particular interest to military historians: attempts at the international regulation of armed forces and warfare; and the problem of enforcement that institutions of international governance have faced since the foundation of the League of Nations after the First World War. The foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863 is, in Mazower's account, less significant to the intellectual history of internationalism than the precedent of the 1864 Geneva Convention in suggesting that international affairs could be regulated by law – a legalistic concept that dominated thinking about internationalism in the late 19th century but was eclipsed by the parliamentarianism of the League of Nations and the technocracy of the specialist international bodies. From an early 21st century perspective, on the other hand, 'the dream of humanizing warfare seems less plausible than ever' (p. 402). Mazower is sceptical that international criminal justice will ever attain universal jurisdiction over war crimes, and he sees in the Responsibility to Protect a revival of 'the civilizing mission and the "humanitarian" interventions of previous centuries' (p. 395) rather than a glorious new international norm.

The problem of enforcement also recurs throughout Mazower's discussion of the 20th and 21st centuries. The 'most worrying' weakness of the League of Nations, in his

view, was that its structure contained no enforcement mechanism for the territorial aspects of the peace settlement that its members had pledged to uphold: France had proposed a standing force but could not get the proposal accepted (p. 136). Mazower's reading of the end of the British mandate in Palestine in 1947 is similarly that 'although the UN could shine a bright light of publicity on colonial rule, it lacked the military force necessary to enforce its own policies (p. 256). The Congo crisis of 1960–4 appears as a precursor of 1990s interventionism. In the post-Cold War period, however, peacekeeping takes something of a back seat to the themes of development and global finance, which take up much more of the final sections of the book. *Governing the World* will nonetheless be valuable reading for military historians whose interests have a diplomatic dimension, and will support the teaching of International Relations and diplomatic history for a long time to come.

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