“The New World will create the New Europe”:
Paul-Henri d'Estournelles de Constant, the United States, and
International Peace

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In 1911, the trustees of the newly established Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) appointed Baron Paul-Henri d'Estournelles de Constant to lead its European office in Paris. Few possessed d'Estournelles' credentials for advancing the CEIP's purpose, to “hasten the abolition of international war, the foulest blot upon our civilization.”¹ D'Estournelles had served on the French delegations to both Hague Peace Conferences (1899 and 1907) and had advocated and organized tirelessly for over a decade in support of international arbitration. Far from a marginal voice pleading the case for a disarmed utopia, d'Estournelles was a prominent and respected figure. His diplomatic service had earned him the Legion of Honor, he had important connections with the Quai d'Orsay, served in the Chamber of Deputies (1895-1904) and then the Senate (1904-24), and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1909. He advocated a policy of co-operation among European states that would lead to their federation and prevent the continent from declining into inconsequence as a result of its own internecine conflicts and competition from abroad. Franco-German conciliation was the linchpin of this transformation, but d'Estournelles came to regard the United States as an emergent moral force that could broker this relationship and serve as both model and catalyst for European federation. By the time of his appointment at the head of the CEIP's European Center, d'Estournelles had developed a network of relationships spread across either side of the Atlantic; several organizations that he had organized or helped to create –

including the CEIP itself – supported these efforts towards transforming the politics of Europe. D'Estournelles considered such a transformation within reach even after war broke out in 1914, lobbying relentlessly to convince the U.S. to lead the movement to lay the foundations of a just and durable peace.

An exploration of d'Estournelles' views about the American influence on European peace weaves together threads from different but related historical narratives. One thread connects with the history of the European peace movement during the years immediately preceding the First World War. D'Estournelles perfectly represented the “patriotic pacifism” prevalent in France and the rest of Europe at that time. Today pacifism connotes an unequivocal denunciation of any war, an absolute refusal to participate in warfare, and more broadly a critique of the unjust social, political, and economic status quo that fosters an endemic cycle of conflict. Those who originally introduced the term in the early twentieth century to describe their beliefs, however, primarily emphasized what would today be regarded as modest measures to reduce the likelihood of war breaking out: obligatory arbitration clauses inserted in international treaties, the steady codification of international law adjudicated by an internationally recognized court, and a general but gradual reduction in armaments. French peace activists at that time agreed that wars were justified when fought to defend la patrie and, at their 1902 national peace congress held in Nîmes, officially rejected a proposal supporting conscientious objectors. Largely professional, educated, respectable, and, in some cases, as with d'Estournelles, enjoying positions of some prominence and influence, French pacifists regarded the institutions underlying their society as fundamentally sound and leading humanity on a path to greater prosperity and justice. They identified closely with the republican values that seemed securely ascendant during the decade following the Dreyfus Affair, a period also marked by the French peace movement's most extensive growth. The membership of the Association de la Paix par le Droit, the most prominent peace society in France, for instance,

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expanded from 1,200 in 1902 to 3,250 in 1912; subscriptions to its journal, *La Paix par le Droit*, increased from 3,000 in 1899 to 5,000 in 1912. D’Estournelles may have expressed ambivalence about the word “pacifist” – reluctant to use it to refer to himself, he regularly identified those who shared his beliefs about reforming the international system as “les pacifistes” – but he was deeply committed to and involved in the pacifist movement since his experience as a delegate to the 1899 Hague Conference.

Another thread links d’Estournelles to the growing presence and influence of American ideas, institutions, and money in Europe during a time of increased transnational activity – “Americanization”. This development, with organizations like the CEIP and the Rockefeller and the Ford Foundations as significant agents, has been depicted by some as the early steps towards an “irresistible empire” of American hegemony, whether meant in a Gramscian or a Foucauldian sense. Critical assessments such as these appeared in reaction to earlier institutional histories of American foundations that embraced and perpetuated a triumphal narrative of progress that matched their guiding elites’ perceptions of themselves. Lately, “Americanization” generally and the role of American philanthropic foundations specifically have received attention from historians of transnational processes, who regard non-governmental organizations like the CEIP as vehicles transcending state structures that coordinated activists, experts, and others from around the world in addressing issues of common concern. Guided less by self-serving interest or ideological commitment than previous traditional and revisionist accounts had been, research by such scholars as Mary Nolan and Ludovic Tournès depicts a more

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8 See, for example, Jules Prudhommeaux, *Le Centre Européen de la Dotation Carnegie pour la Paix Internationale, 1911-1921*, (Paris, 1921).

9 Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*, (Cambridge:
complex and dynamic interaction between the “Old World” and the “New”. While
the emergence and growth of American influence is clearly evident throughout
the twentieth century, according to these interpretations, it involved reciprocity
rather than unidirectional diffusion, a process, or set of processes, whose
outcomes were contingent and multifarious rather than an inevitable and
inevitable march towards triumph or hegemony. This is particularly true
during the pre-war period, when the transnational networks that served as the
hubs of these exchanges had not yet reached the degree of maturity that they did
during the inter-war period and beyond. Shifting the chronological gaze to an
earlier period offers the opportunity to analyze the flow of American influence
into Europe before it became a torrent, when many Europeans looked at the U.S.
with more “fascination” than “misgivings,” and reveals a more nuanced
relationship at work in these trans-Atlantic exchanges. D’Estournelles was at the
center of a hub of transnational relationships that he actively cultivated and
mobilized to reform international relations, a hub that touched not only issues of
peace and diplomacy but also commerce, education, culture, and a wider range of
matters. He personifies the complex relationship between the U.S. and Europe
during this seminal period that more recent scholarship presents, viewing the
U.S. as an ally supporting and complementing European society, not rivaling or
replacing it, if Europeans and their leaders only had the wisdom to choose the
path towards a more peaceful stage of development.

Although married to an American, d’Estournelles first went to the U.S.
only in February 1902. Less than a month before embarking on this voyage,
d’Estournelles critiqued the politics of European rivalry with ominous urgency in
a speech made in the Chamber of Deputies that in part portrayed American
economic power and imperial ambitions as a force portending European decline.
He accused European leaders of exhausting their countries’ budgets in a
competition to increase and expand their militaries and colonial possessions,
while the economic power and global influence of non-European rivals grew.
D’Estournelles warned that the political course Europe was following, “must
fatally, mathematically lead to the most lamentable fiasco, to the most
lamentable crash.” The politics of rivalry and division was no longer sustainable
for Europe, and, “[g]lobal politics is not possible for Europe without European

10 Ludovic Tournès, Sciences de l’homme et politique: Les fondations philanthropiques
américaines en France au XXe siècle, (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011). See also: Ludovic
Tournès, “La philanthropie américaine et l’Europe: contribution à une histoire
transnationale de l’américanisation,” Bulletin de l’Institut Pierre Renouvin 31 (Spring

11 Jacques Portes, Fascination and Misgivings: The United States in French Opinion, 1870-
union.”\footnote{12} France had a duty, d'Estournelles insisted, to lead Europe towards an international system that would be “at the same time respectful of the national interests of each and conscious of the common interests of all.”\footnote{13}

His trip to the U.S., however, convinced d'Estournelles to re-evaluate that country's role in moving Europe away from its self-destructive politics. During a meeting at the White House, d'Estournelles, appointed as a judge to the Permanent Court of Arbitration created by the Hague Conference, encouraged President Theodore Roosevelt to make his the first government to submit a case for the court to consider, telling him, “You can show Europe the path to peace and guide it there.”\footnote{14} Roosevelt instructed Secretary of State John Hay to find a dispute of minor consequence that would nevertheless save the court – as Roosevelt later put it – “from becoming an empty farce.”\footnote{15} D'Estournelles deplored the shortsightedness and inertia of European governments content to ignore the Hague Court “as long as no one bothered with it,” and recognized the importance of the American gesture: “from the day when America did not hesitate to show confidence in an institution sitting in Europe, the situation changed once and for all.”\footnote{16} This development and the friendships he strengthened with like-minded Americans during that visit and on subsequent trips convinced him that the U.S. had “a noble, generous, and useful mission to fulfill”: “Europe created America,” he wrote in the American magazine \textit{The Outlook}, “and to-day America, paying her filial debt, will save Europe in regenerating, in re-creating her. The New World will create the New Europe.”\footnote{17}

Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, had been among those who had prompted d'Estournelles to undertake the demarche towards Roosevelt. Butler and d'Estournelles first met in 1900, and the two remained close friends and collaborators until d'Estournelles' death in 1924. Through Butler, d'Estournelles met Andrew Carnegie, who had for some time by then shown an active interest in arbitration and the peace movement. Beginning in 1904 d'Estournelles became Carnegie's principal contact in France; he organized much of the philanthropist's itinerary, arranged meetings with influential Europeans, and scheduled receptions and other events on the trips

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13 Ibid., pp.262-3.
Carnegie and his family made there through 1913. D'Estournelles believed that a Franco-German rapprochement could be reached only with American help and initiative, telling Butler in 1907 that “if President Roosevelt, yourself, Carnegie, and others among our American friends considered Franco-German reconciliation through mutual concessions as a question of universal interest, that question will be resolved.”\(^{18}\) The relationship between France and Germany stood as the main obstacle to European union, and the question of Alsace and Lorraine posed the greatest impediment to Franco-German conciliation. D'Estournelles insisted that “no policy is possible for Europe except a policy of peace, which can have only Federation as its purpose and basis. Federation is possible only after resolving the question of Alsace-Lorraine.”\(^{19}\) He rejected Gambetta’s counsel – “Y penser toujours, n’en parler jamais!” – as part of the outdated way of understanding the world that endangered Europe, asserting instead that “the less we talk about it, the less chance there is to resolve it.”\(^{20}\) Roosevelt, Carnegie, Butler, and Americans like them could talk about it more easily than French and Germans.

A prosperous, stable, united Europe was, moreover, in Americans’ own interest. He chastised those in the U.S. who attempted to convince the American public that

> European divisions are for their profit, and that a European union…will injure them. If Europe, united and prosperous, produces more, she will buy more; she will become a better client; she will multiply her exchanges, increase her consumption, quicken the general circulation, and, in consequence, augment the welfare and wealth by which each State will profit.\(^{21}\)

The benefits were reciprocal, he assured his compatriots, because “trade with the United States can only multiply over time, their production being most often complementary to ours, not rival.”\(^{22}\)

D'Estournelles joined the long line of supplicants at Carnegie’s door

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20 Ibid., pp.4-5.


seeking to convince him to benefit their cause through his philanthropy. During the summer of 1905 d’Estournelles wrote to Carnegie proposing his project for a “Maison des Étrangerses”:

a very plain big house, nothing of a palace, nothing of a club, a big house including several rooms for commissions, reading, writing and a big lecture-room…. [I]t will be a free ground open to all sound knowledge and initiative…; no violence, no revolution but science, progress, peace, conciliation…. [A]n international circulation of intelligence will be created, instead of the actual circulation of prejudice; an appeal from national ignorance to human impartiality.

It would be a complement to the many libraries Carnegie had already built:

Instead of books I would present men to the people. It would be for…the author and for the people, a precious discovery; at once the people would discover that they understand each other; that human sympathy which you feel as myself because…we have seen so many sad results of ignorance…. Men of different nationality could meet, agree, support and love each other. 23

When Carnegie demurred, d’Estournelles reassured him that “this union will not be a league of dreamers, it will speak…very high to the popular imagination. It will show that the popular dream is supported by sound and independent experience!” 24 He appealed to Carnegie’s ego, insisting that “it ought to be your foundation, the foundation Carnegie, no one except you can understand and realize together such a scheme…. 25

That initial proposal bore fruit two years later, when Carnegie agreed to underwrite an American branch of Conciliation Internationale, an organization that d’Estournelles had created in 1905. The complexity of the relationship between the parent organization in Europe and the American branch is evident when looking at the financial arrangements. Carnegie guaranteed a generous sum directly to the American Association for International Conciliation (AAIC), which then disbursed an annual subsidy of $6000 to the parent organization, even as Butler, president of the AAIC, characterized his as “merely an American

branch of your great International Society.”

D’Estournelles described his “great International Society” to Carnegie as a “gathering of the best men I have met in my diplomatic career for 25 years. It is the result and the reward of my life which I offer to the service of our cause.” Its work included the translation, publication, and distribution of books, articles, and speeches; student exchanges promoted through travel and letter-writing; prizes awarded in schools; medals and subventions given to journalists; accommodations and receptions organized for traveling scholars, etc. These efforts to promote personal and professional contact and communication were “the necessary prelude of our political and general action in favor of arbitration. They prepare our audience.”

They represented a gradualist approach of cultivating public opinion through non-official channels before any work by such international political organs as a Second Hague Conference or the Interparliamentary Union could be effective. D’Estournelles had confided to Carnegie in 1905 his own doubts concerning the success of another Hague conference “if there is not a strong opinion pressing from everywhere upon the governments. This opinion has to be led by…our international family and not by others who may be politicians instead of men of good will and science.”

The life that Roosevelt had breathed into the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 1902 had inspired d’Estournelles to organize a Groupe parlementaire français de l’arbitrage the following year, essentially a French caucus of the Interparliamentary Union, which since 1889 had attracted legislators from around the world to annual conferences where they discussed issues related to arbitration and international co-operation. D’Estournelles observed, however, that:

[w]hat our friends at the Interparliamentary Union need is not money as much as an organization. They have none, because they are not permanent and cannot build any permanency upon themselves. This permanency cannot exist inside the Parliament; it has to be found outside, not only in a central place, but in every country where a national group exists or may be constituted…. It is not Parliament which educates the country, it is the country which inspires its representatives.

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Conciliation Internationale undertook the longer-term, less immediately discernible task of creating public support for arbitration, co-operation, and ultimately federation, which could then be transmitted to legislators and other political leaders who would be compelled to act.

D’Estournelles, Carnegie, and Butler all had mixed feelings about the results of the Second Hague Conference. They regarded it as a victory for their ideas that the conference took place at all – and on a larger scale than the first had – but were disappointed that it failed to endorse the principal of obligatory arbitration. The next several years seemed to reward the activity of the American and European branches of Conciliation Internationale with steady success, however. D’Estournelles committed himself to strengthening the cause in Germany, writing to Butler from The Hague in May 1907 that propaganda in Germany was needed for their work to have any effect.\(^30\) He considered the creation of a German branch of Conciliation Internationale – the Verband für internationale Verständigung – in 1910 as a vindication of his efforts. D’Estournelles felt confident enough to address the question of Alsace-Lorraine in the speech he delivered at its first public conference, held at Heidelberg in October 1912. He evoked the image of ruins and monuments scattered throughout both countries that testified to the destructive consequences of previous wars and declared:

The question of Alsace-Lorraine will not be resolved by war, ever to start again; it will be resolved by the sentiment and by the will of two peoples that day, less distant than one thinks, when both of them, at last enlightened, regret the harm that they have done to each other, that day when they understand that their future lay not in hatred but in conciliation, in co-operation.\(^31\)

He spoke again the following year at the Verband’s conference in Nuremberg, then in Munich and Frankfurt, remarking afterwards how the Germans he encountered had the same passion for the politics of conciliation as the Americans he had encountered when he made 75 speeches and spoke at 35 luncheons and dinners during his tour around the U.S. in 1911.\(^32\)

By that time, Carnegie had committed ten million dollars to fund his

\(^{30}\) Letter from d’Estournelles to Butler, 21 May 1907, Fonds d’Estournelles, ADS 12 J 380.


peace foundation, whose bureau in Europe d'Estournelles organized with Conciliation Internationale as his model. The two organizations remained separate and distinct from each other, however, even while sharing office space and personnel. D'Estournelles maintained that “Conciliation has been the inspiration, and should remain the inspiration, the instruction, the example, while the Endowment is and should be the necessary administration for the diffusion and organization of that instruction.”

The CEIP disbursed tens of thousands of dollars per year to support peace societies and other organizations that promoted arbitration and international co-operation; to subsidize the publication of books, journals, and pamphlets aimed at cultivating what Butler called an “international mind” among political, business, and intellectual figures; and to underwrite educational initiatives aimed at diminishing national chauvinisms and fostering international conciliation. The European Center operated as part of the CEIP’s Division of Intercourse and Education, directed by Butler, who recognized the need to proceed cautiously in disbursing large sums of money to organizations seeking to influence the foreign policies of European governments, “to avoid the appearance...of going into Europe as American missionaries and teaching the older nations of Europe what they are to do.”

Still, in his remarks at the first of two August 1911 meetings in Paris to discuss the establishment of a European branch of the CEIP, Butler testified to his belief that the U.S. and France had a missionary role to play together. The two republican nations were “called to play a parallel role in the two worlds” with the peace movement “the natural extension of the French Revolution as well as the American Revolution.” The Paris office thus became the channel through which Carnegie money flowed into Europe. D'Estournelles recruited its Advisory Council and the smaller Executive Council from among legislators, diplomats, and other public figures whom he knew as sympathetic to the cause; special correspondents located across the continent kept the Paris office informed of developments that might require intervention through the press or even a high-profile commission of inquiry, such as the one organized to investigate the origins and the conduct of the Second Balkans War of 1913.

When war erupted across Europe in August 1914, it understandably left

34 Proceedings of a Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 14 December 1911, pp.67-8, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Records [CEIP], Box 12/folder 5, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University [RBML].
35 Compte-rendu des séances tenues à Paris, 1-2 août 1911 - Projet de Creation à Paris d’un Centre Européen Correspondant avec le Centre Américain de Washington, pp.6-7, Fonds d'Estournelles, ADS 12 J 203.
d’Estournelles devastated at first, but he rejected any claim that the catastrophe had proven him wrong. “Our only mistake is to have been too few in numbers!” he wrote in one of the hundreds of lengthy letters that he sent to Butler during the war, some of which Butler submitted – with d’Estournelles’ permission – to the New York Times for publication. “Your generous country is less selfish and more clear-sighted than the Old World; that will be its honor and its reward in the near future.”

D’Estournelles supported the U.S. decision to remain out of the war, writing as late as February 1917, after the U.S. broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, that the wise course would be to keep from declaring and thus avoiding the deep economic and social difficulties that the country would confront. He distinguished between military neutrality and moral neutrality, however, and chastised the U.S. and Woodrow Wilson for an apparent “indifference” to German violations of international law and human rights: “For me, who loves your country, who admires it, who never ceases to present it as an example and a resource for Europe, the attitude of Pt. Wilson is painful…and a profound surprise.” Rather than silence, he wrote, “A great country like the United States can and must protest against every violation of the rights of peoples, without then being obliged to declare war on those governments that are culpable,” observing further that “a great country can raise its voice without showing its fist.”

Butler reassured d’Estournelles that most Americans sympathized with the Entente and saw the conflict as one waged “between the cause of civilization and free institutions on the one hand and that of barbarism and military rule on the other hand.” Butler added:

I am sure that no matter how long we must wait the end will justify our faith in free institutions and in democracy. When this awful war is over, the work of our International Conciliation will be more important than ever. It will fall to us to bind up the wounds which the war has inflicted and to build up again bravely and with full faith the structure of international relations which has just been so rudely overthrown by cannon and by shot. I cannot resist the conviction that this war is the last desperate attempt of militarism to fasten itself upon the nations of the world.

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38 Letter no.221 from d’Estournelles to Butler, 8 February 1917, CEIP 474/1, RBML.

39 Letter no.17 from d’Estournelles to Butler, 9 January 1915, CEIP 472/2, RBML.

40 Letter no.9 from d’Estournelles to Butler, 13 November 1914, CEIP 472/1, RBML.

41 Letter from Butler to d’Estournelles, 4 September 1914, CEIP (Centre Européen) 189/3,
These thoughts echoed those of d’Estournelles himself, who specified three conditions necessary for ensuring a just and durable peace: first, the guarantee that Alsace and Lorraine would be free to return to France; second, general disarmament, beginning with Germany but with all other countries to follow; and third, a European federation responsible for organizing an international system aligned with and extending the principles developed in the Hague conferences. He considered himself a jusqu’au-boutiste in the cause of peace, maintaining that “a peace without victory would not be peace.” Throughout the war, though, he distinguished between German militarism and the German people and believed that the U.S. could play an important role in mediating post-war arrangements so as to prevent any isolation and humiliation of Germany that might undermine chances for a peace built on the principles that he and Butler had championed. These principles, d’Estournelles insisted, “are the true source of the noblest human efforts. They were the source of the French Revolution, as well as the American Revolution; they are the source of the resistance that will break militarism. They will never run dry, and it is they that, after the war, will be our salvation…. On the condition that we remain loyal to our faith, to our spirit of conciliation incompatible with the spirit of conquest.”

The spirit of conquest pervaded the Paris Peace Conference that produced the Treaty of Versailles, however, and the League of Nations that emerged from it fell short of what d’Estournelles had envisioned, despite his own ardent efforts working closely with his friend and colleague Léon Bourgeois on the pre-armistice commission formed by the French government to examine the conditions on which such a body might be conceived. While the U.S. remained out of the League of Nations, the CEIP’s American trustees chose to allocate resources towards the reconstruction of libraries in Louvain, Reims, and Belgrade, and the French village of Fargniers. One European peace activist admitted that it was certainly laudable to spend millions on such projects, but “what good is it if another war breaks out tomorrow and burns down the new library?!” The U.S. helped to rebuild Europe after the war, but never attempted to recreate it – at least not yet.

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42 Letter no.5 from d’Estournelles to Butler, 18 September 1914, CEIP 472/1, RBML.
43 Letter no.213 from d’Estournelles to Butler, 28 January 1917, CEIP 474/1, RBML.
44 Letter no.7 from d’Estournelles to Butler, 19 October 1914, CEIP 472/1, RBML.
45 Letter from Théodore Ruyssen to d’Estournelles, 6 August 1921, CEIP (Centre Européen) 190/6, RBML.