

**Women Advocating Peace: Analysing Interwar Discourse of the Women's
International League for Peace and Freedom**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analysed the prevalent themes of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) during the interwar years and what this reveals about the WILPF's objectives, development, and positioning. It did this using topic modelling and discourse analysis to analyse the reports of Congresses of the WILPF. Five topics emerged from this topic model analysis: the Kellogg-Briand Pact; Transnationalism and the New International Order (NIO); Self-Determination and Humanitarianism; Peace Advocacy and the Rise of Fascism; and Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War.

The empirical chapters demonstrate that the WILPF, saw self-determination as a critical aspect of their social justice goals and of sustainable peace. When the current international structure fell short in achieving self-determination, the WILPF's started pursuing the NIO. By critiquing existing systems and advocating for comprehensive reforms from a pacifist perspective, the WILPF demonstrated its commitment to challenging systemic injustices and reshaping global governance. Moreover, from the late 1920s, the WILPF embraced the Kellogg Briand Pact as a symbol of peace and aligned it with their feminist and pacifist ideals. Thus, the WILPF strategically and intentionally used the Pact to influence public opinion and advocate for and justify its broader social justice goals. During later interwar years, the WILPF focused on transnational worldwide disarmament initiatives and perceived non-intervention and neutrality as pivotal for peace and social justice. This highlights the link between its peace advocacy, feminist goals, and broader societal progress. However, while the WILPF still presented a united front during this crucial period, internal disagreements on neutrality were also becoming more visible.

Overall, the WILPF pursued the overarching goal of reshaping international norms of militarism towards pacifism, employing pragmatic strategies despite their idealistic objectives. As a pioneering platform for women in global activism, the WILPF advocated for women's participation in diplomacy. This challenged their exclusion from peace and security decision-making processes and increased the recognition of women's roles in peacebuilding. Gender permeated every aspect of their advocacy, from inherently linking pacifism with feminism to launching transnational initiatives and strategically employing maternalist language. Through influencing public opinion and broadening peace discourse, the WILPF consistently emphasised the interconnected nature of peace and freedom amidst escalating global tensions. **KEYWORDS:** *WILPF, Interwar, Peace Movement, Pacifism, Suffragists, Topic Modelling, Self-Determination, Kellog-Briand Pact, Neutrality, Disarmament*

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Theoretical Concepts and Historiography.....	8
1.2. Sources.....	19
1.3. Methods.....	20
Chapter 2. The Computational Analysis.....	24
2.1. Preparation of the Corpus.....	24
2.2. Topic Modelling Results.....	27
2.3. Defining the Topics.....	30
2.4. Interpreting Topic Presence and Absence: Unveiling WILPF's Priorities.....	34
2.5. Conclusion.....	38
Chapter 3. Forging a New World: WILPF's Vision for the Post-WWI International Order....	39
3.1. Self-Determination.....	40
3.2. The 'Irish People' case.....	42
3.3. From Self-Determination Towards a Restructuring of the International Order.....	44
3.4. The New International Order: Advancing Peace and Freedom through International Law and Transnationalism.....	45
3.5. Conclusion.....	49
Chapter 4. Advancing Diplomacy: WILPF's Efforts Amidst the Kellogg-Briand Era.....	50
4.1. Kellogg-Briand Pact and Adherence to the Rule of Law.....	51
4.2. Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.....	54
4.3. Economic Dimensions and the Renunciation of War.....	56
4.4. Conclusion.....	58
Chapter 5. Neutrality in the Face of Fascism: WILPF's Direct Response to International Conflicts.....	60
Disarmament Initiatives against Fascism and Aggressors.....	61
Spanish Civil War and Neutrality.....	64
Maternalist Pacifism, Disarmament, and Social Justice.....	66
Conclusion.....	69
6. Conclusions.....	70
7. Bibliography.....	75
7.1. Primary Sources.....	75
7.2. Secondary Sources.....	77

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CBW	Chemical and Biological Warfare
CMF	Comité Mondial des Femmes Contre la Guerre et le Fascisme
ICG	International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament
LDA	Latent Dirichlet Allocation
LNU	League of Nations Union
LoN	League of Nations
NIO	New International Order
WDC	World Disarmament Conference
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

List of Figures

Table I, Corpus Summary	Page 26
Table II, Topic Lists and Description	Page 28
Figure I, Topic Development	Page 29
Figure II, Topic Frequency per Congress	Page 29

Chapter 1. Introduction

There were no women present at the table at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, nor at any other official peace talk during the interwar years.¹ This seeming absence of women makes it easy to overlook and ignore the role women played in shaping the global order during the interwar period. However, by exploring the multifaceted ways in which women engaged in the international sphere, it becomes clear that their contributions were varied and significant, challenging the prevailing narrative of their marginalisation in historical accounts.

Women found different pathways on the national and international levels to organise themselves and exert their influence. One such avenue was through organising themselves into peace movements. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was one of those movements and would grow to be the biggest transnational women's movement of that time, with around 50.000 members worldwide during the interwar period.² Founded in 1915, the WILPF is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation with headquarters in Geneva but with members from all over the world. The WILPF advocates for peace, disarmament, and women's rights through activism, lobbying, and campaigns.³

The interwar period is a crucial period to focus on due to its unique historical dynamics, marked by the aftermath of World War I (WWI) and the rise of fascism, but also since these were the first years where transnational women's movements became particularly active.⁴ Traditional scholarship on this era often focused on high politics, military history, and prominent male figures, using sources like governmental archives or diplomatic correspondence.⁵ However, by analysing the WILPF's key objectives and decision-making processes, this thesis contributes to the historiography of women's activism and peace advocacy by highlighting what issues were important to the wider society at the time, not just the male elite. Subsequently, by looking at the WILPF's concrete decisions and actions, this thesis will position the WILPF as actively striving to be an important actor in international political advocacy by attempting to influence public opinion during the interwar period. This

¹ Mona L. Siegel, 'The Paris Peace Conference and the Origins of Global Feminism,' in *Cambridge University Press eBooks*, 2023, 337–60, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108907750.017>.

² Laura Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars,' in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (Taylor & Francis, 2015), 293–312.

³ Jo Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,' *Women's History Review* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 1993): 23–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0961202930020002>

⁴ Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939,' *Women's History Review*, September 30, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2016.1181332>.

⁵ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 2014), 6.

thesis, by focusing on the WILPF as a case study, not only illuminates the specific contributions of the WILPF but also exemplifies a bigger societal picture—that marginalised actors, particularly women in this context, played a substantial role in challenging the global order and challenging the established norms of the time. This thesis specifically illuminates this by focusing on the objectives of the WILPF that have been overlooked in previous research. By drawing parallels between these different objectives and creating a general framework of their functioning, this study positions the WILPF and provides a lens through which to analyse the organisation as a whole.

Moreover, this study remains relevant to the field of peace studies today, especially since the WILPF still exists, largely with the same ideals. The general framework of the functioning of the objectives of the WILPF and peace movements might thus still be significant in the present. For example, the WILPF's advocacy for self-determination during the interwar period finds resonance in modern movements for indigenous rights and autonomy. Similarly, the debates on non-intervention in international conflicts during the interwar period echo current discussions on the role of external actors in conflicts like those in Syria and Ukraine. These parallels underscore the societal relevance of this thesis since it highlights the continuity of challenges faced by peace movements.

Therefore, the main aim of this thesis is to examine the prevalent themes within the WILPF's discourse, and to analyse what this reveals about the organisation's objectives, development, and positioning during the interwar era.

This thesis will be unique compared to other works on similar topics due to its distinctive sources and methods. While many related studies primarily rely on external materials, this thesis brings a new approach by incorporating a different collection of primary sources, namely eight transcripts of the congresses from the WILPF.⁶ This collection of firsthand accounts serves as the backbone for a two-fold analysis, employing a mixed-method approach. This method is the second innovative aspect of the study. While the WILPF has been studied extensively, these studies have primarily been conducted through qualitative close-reading methods.⁷ This thesis incorporates a quantitative analysis as well, through the

⁶ For example, see: Melinda Ann Plastas, 'A Band of Noble Women': The WILPF and the Politics and Consciousness of Race in the Women's Peace Movement, 1915–1945' (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, 2001), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304751219/previewPDF/1ACA22CB9DED4C2APQ/1?accountid=13598&sourcecetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>.

⁷ For example, see: Molly Cochran, 'Activism and International Thought: The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the Problem of Statelessness in the Interwar Period,' *Global Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsg/ksad011>. ; Sarah Hellawell, 'Feminism, Pacifism and Internationalism: the Women's International League, 1915–1935' (PhD Dissertation, University of Northumbria

method of topic modelling, which will be utilised to locate themes in the primary sources. This method not only enables this thesis to incorporate a more efficient examination of a larger amount of sources but also provides a more neutral and objective 'entry' point into the congresses.⁸ This approach facilitates an alternative way of objectively studying the internal dynamics and positioning of the WILPF and bridges the gap between traditional qualitative analyses and the benefits offered by a computational method.

The second chapter of the thesis will consist of these quantitative results, which will reveal the prevalent themes and guide the empirical chapters. Five topics emerged from this topic model analysis: the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Transnationalism and the New International Order, Self-Determination and Humanitarianism, Peace Advocacy and the Rise of Fascism, and Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War.

Subsequent chapters will explore these topics in further detail, largely in chronological order. Thus, qualitative chapters 3, 4, and 5 act as mini-case studies into one specific aspect of the WILPF's advocacy, analysing how that topic evolved and responded to geopolitical events of the interwar period. Combining these three case studies will sketch a broader picture of how the WILPF turned its ideals into practical objectives.

Chapter 3 combines the topics of self-determination and the New International Order, since the two are inherently connected as the first topic eventually submerges in the second. It explores how the WILPF critiqued the League of Nations (LoN) when it fell short in achieving self-determination, leading to the WILPF's vision for a 'New International Order', which emphasised comprehensive reforms from a pacifist perspective.

Chapter 4 analyses how the WILPF reacted to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Despite criticisms, the WILPF embraced the Pact as a symbol of peace and aligned it with their feminist and pacifist ideals. Therefore, it is argued that the WILPF strategically used the Pact to influence public opinion and advocate for broader social justice goals.

Chapter 5 centres around WILPF's response to growing fascism and conflicts during the last years of the interwar period, focusing on their stance on neutrality and disarmament, especially during the Spanish Civil War. This involves a nuanced analysis of the WILPF's role within the broader peace movement landscape, as this was a period where peace

at Newcastle, 2017),

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2204719927?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Disseminations%20&%20Theses>.

⁸ Ryan Light and Jeanine Cunningham, 'Oracles of Peace: Topic Modeling, Cultural Opportunity, and the Nobel Peace Prize, 1902–2012,' *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 50, <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671x-20-4-43>.

organisations were urged to collaborate towards disarmament. Moreover, despite internal disagreements, the WILPF kept emphasising worldwide neutrality and non-intervention as crucial for peace and social justice.

Overall, the thesis argues that the WILPF's overarching goal was to influence international norms regarding militarism and peace and that despite its idealistic objectives, its pathways to change were pragmatic and practical. Moreover, it argues it is crucial to consider each of the WILPF's objectives in relation to each other, as they are all inherently connected. For instance, social justice goals could not be achieved without the freedom of self-determination, and vice versa, just like women's rights could not be achieved without disarmament and vice versa. In this same regard, it argues feminism and pacifism are inherently connected for the WILPF.

1.1. Theoretical Concepts and Historiography

This historiography will start by analysing what characterisations of peace movements scholars recognise. This establishes a theoretical foundation that informs the analysis of the WILPF's underlying ideology and strategies. The subsequent exploration of the diverse approaches, ideologies, and (false) narratives within and about interwar peace movements helps contextualise how to look at the perceived success of the WILPF.

The historiography will then discuss feminist (theory) histories, which is essential as it sheds light on the gendered aspects of peace movements. By examining feminist theory as a methodological practice, this section emphasises the importance of a gendered lens in historical analysis to understand better how gender dynamics influenced the WILPF's operations. This will be divided into two parts. Firstly, it will consider feminist history as a practice and will look at the importance of looking back at history through a gendered lens. It will then look more specifically at the history of feminist peace movements. Since the interwar period itself falls mostly within the first wave of feminism, feminist ideas likely influenced the workings of the WILPF. In this section, the concepts of peace movements and feminism will thus be combined, with a specific focus on the research that has been done on the WILPF.

1.1.1. Studying Peace Movements

A peace movement is generally defined as ‘a specific coalition, or purposeful grouping, of peace organisations that, together with elements of the public, seek to remove a threat of war or to create institutions and cultures that obviate recourse to violence’, but it is also the ‘organisational infrastructure to do so’.⁹ It is clear from this definition that the ‘movements’ component is relatively well-defined. However, defining the ‘peace’ component proves difficult for both scholarly studies and peace movements themselves. The lack of a clear, universally accepted definition introduces variations in perspectives, resulting in distinct ideologies and methodologies within these movements despite their shared goal of fostering peace.¹⁰ Knowing how the WILPF conceptualised peace is important as it influences the organisation's broader motivations and strategies.

There are a few important distinctions within peace movements that are linked, but important to consider separately to situate the WILPF. The first of these is whether peace movements aim for negative peace or positive peace. Negative peace is seen as the absence of war and violence. Positive peace goes further and wants to eliminate all causes of war by, for instance, creating socially just and equal systems or aiming for more international cooperation.¹¹ Since positive peace is more difficult to conceptualise, negative peace attracted significantly more scholarly attention, leaving a gap in the research of positive peace organisations.¹² Analysing peace movements that were focused on achieving negative peace, as well as studying peace movements from a negative peace perspective, is much more straightforward. In such cases, the motives and effectiveness of the movement become clearer, as the cessation of conflict defines success. If the conflict stops, the movement is deemed successful; if not, it is not.¹³ For instance, scholars coming from a negative peace perspective deem neither the WILPF nor any other peace movement during the interwar period successful as they were unable to prevent World War II (WWII).¹⁴ This analysis shifts

⁹ Robert D. Benford and Frank O. Taylor, ‘Peace Movements,’ in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, ed. Lester Kurtz, 2nd ed. (Academic Press, 2008), 1500, <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-012373985-8.00127-6>.

¹⁰ Benford and Taylor, ‘Peace Movements,’ 1500.

¹¹ Benford and Taylor, ‘Peace Movements,’ 1499-1500.

¹² Yuri Van Hoef, ‘Positive Peace through Personal Friendship: Franco-German Reconciliation (1974–1995),’ in *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Peace*, ed. Katerina Standish et al. (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021), 1037–38, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-0969-5_54.

¹³ Barbara Welling Hall, ‘The Antinuclear Peace Movement: Toward an Evaluation of Effectiveness,’ *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 9, no. 4 (October 1, 1983): 475–517, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437548400900402>.

¹⁴ John W. Masland, ‘The ‘Peace’ Groups Join Battle,’ *Public Opinion Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (December 1, 1940): 664–93, <https://doi.org/10.1086/265446>.

when scholars focus on the success of peace movements in their pursuit of positive peace, which is what this thesis aims to do.¹⁵ According to Beers, the efforts of the WILPF extended beyond merely preventing immediate war outbreaks; they aspired to shape a global order founded on principles of equity and understanding.¹⁶ This focus on attaining positive peace during the interwar years is fitting when considering the cycles of peace movements.¹⁷ According to Benford and Taylor, peace movements experience cycles with an increased focus on negative peace during wars and expansions. Post-war, with the violence fresh in mind, efforts tend to shift towards positive peace. This cyclical nature reflects the challenges of maintaining momentum in advocating for lasting peace, but it also highlights the limitations of exclusively measuring success through the lens of negative peace. Neglecting the efforts and achievements of post-war positive peace goals can obscure the broader efforts and success of peace movements.¹⁸

Another important distinction is that between absolute pacifism and pragmatic pacifism. Pragmatic peace movements often focus on conflict resolution, negotiation, and the practical mitigation of violence, similar to the concept of pacificism. On the other hand, absolute peace movements aspire for a utopian vision where all forms of violence are eradicated, similar to pacifism.¹⁹ Pacificists often focus on establishing strong international cooperation to prevent war and could justify limited conflict if that was necessary to create the conditions for lasting peace. This perspective is criticised by pacifists, as they deem any kind of war morally unjust. In turn, this is then critiqued by the other side for being unrealistic.²⁰ In practice, Saunders and Summy use this distinction in WILPF studies to differentiate the absolute pacifist Australian WILPF section from the more pragmatic pacifist sections, analysing how these differences developed.²¹ In contrast, other scholars see assigning either pacifism or pacificism to a movement as something artificial, as the

¹⁵ For example, see: Sharp and Stibbe, “Women’s International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.”

¹⁶ Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars.'

¹⁷ Kate Grady and Gina Heathcote, 'Jane Addams: Positive Peace from the Everyday to the International,' in *Portraits of Women in International Law: New Names and Forgotten Faces?*, ed. Immi Talgren (Oxford Academic, 2023), 99–108, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198868453.003.0007>.

¹⁸ Benford and Taylor, 'Peace Movements.'

¹⁹ Richard Jackson, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Relevance of Pacifism for Security Studies and IR,' *Critical Studies on Security* 6, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 155–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2018.1472917>.

²⁰ Jackson, “Introduction: Rethinking the Relevance of Pacifism for Security Studies and IR.”

²¹ Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, 'Odd Ones Out: The Australian Section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom: 1919-41*,' *Australian Journal of Politics & History/Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40, no. 1 (April 1, 1994): 83–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.1994.tb00093.x>.

distinction is not always clear, and even within peace organisations, the two could overlap.²² According to Ceadel, for instance, the WILPF was a pacifist organisation that included a strong pacifist ideal.²³ Despite this argument, the distinction remains useful for chapter 5 of this thesis. Like Saunders and Summy's spatial analysis, it delineates varying approaches within peace movements and the WILPF, especially in the late interwar years.²⁴ This proved useful for a temporal analysis in tracking changes in the perceived feasibility of each approach.

1.1.2. Interwar Peace Movements

When looking at peace movements during the interwar period specifically, there is a clash between two narratives.²⁵ On one side, there was the dominant narrative directly after the interwar period. This meta-narrative claimed that peace movements were naive and could even be considered dangerous. This narrative disregarded these movements as idealist and liberal and, consequently, deemed peace movements not worthy of serious consideration.²⁶ This perspective took on a very classical realist perspective by stating that peace movements inhibited the power politics, security policies, and arms race that were necessary to keep war at bay. Therefore, peace movements were blamed for faulty policies, or even for the outbreak of WWII. This is exemplified by Lippman, who blamed advocacy by peace movements, specifically including the WILPF, towards appeasement for the failure to keep pace with German armaments.²⁷ On a similar note, the scepticism towards the value of peace movements can be recognised in the work of Masland.²⁸ He critiqued the agency and influence of interwar peace movements by predicting, in 1940, that peace movements either 'will not want' or 'will not be able' to keep America out of war.²⁹

²² Norman Ingram, *The Politics of Dissent: Pacifism in France, 1919-1939*, 1991, <https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/6876/1/259182.pdf>.

²³ Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1980), 319.

²⁴ Saunders and Summy, "Odd Ones Out: The Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: 1919-41*."

²⁵ Cecelia M. Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics,' Data set, *The SHAFR Guide Online*, October 2, 2017, 2, https://doi.org/10.1163/2468-1733_shafr_sim120080108.

²⁶ Cecelia Lynch, "Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative," in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, ed. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, 2006, 302.

²⁷ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943).

²⁸ John W. Masland, "The 'Peace' groups join battle," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (December 1, 1940): 664-93, <https://doi.org/10.1086/265446>.

²⁹ Masland, 'The 'Peace' Groups Join Battle,' 673.

Lynch critiques this narrative in several ways. Firstly, she states that this interpretation creates a paradox. On the one hand, scholars such as Lippman and Masland deem peace movements as idealists and deny them any real agency. On the other hand, these same scholars still make peace movements the scapegoat and blame them for faulty policies. Moreover, she states that the dominant perspective looks at peace movements with a predetermined set of 'right' norms based on classical realism. For instance, Lipmann asserts that maintaining pace with the arms race is crucial for a nation's defence.³⁰ Since these norms inherently contradict the principles upheld by peace movements, it is unsurprising that they are consistently cast in a negative light.³¹ By deconstructing these norms, Lynch challenges the validity of the negative characterisation imposed on peace movements during the interwar period.

Lynch's alternative approach does not absolve peace movements of all policy or normative faults, but this approach differs from the first in that it takes on a more objective and empirical stance in interpreting these movements. This alternative interpretation takes a neutral standpoint, recognising that while peace movements may not directly shape policies, their significance lies in reshaping normative frameworks and facilitating international cooperation.³² This perspective sees peace movements as agents of normative change that can indirectly, through changing public opinions, impact future policies rather than as direct policy influencers. Lynch's examination of historical records serves as a foundation for her argument, pointing to direct examples of how peace movements contested norms. For instance, she cites the example of the League of Nations Union's (LNU) response to the Coolidge proposals. She states that the LNU's proactive engagement by consistently requesting government involvement in the Disarmament Treaty and exposing government contradiction in discussions about the proposals demonstrates how peace movements indirectly influenced policy discourse by changing public norms about this treaty.³³

This broader shift in the field of peace movements is also evident in empirical studies predating Lynch's theoretical arguments, such as those by Caedel. In his study of British peace movements from 1854 to 1945, Caedel similarly critiques one-sided historical

³⁰ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*.

³¹ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative,' 303–4. ; Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics,' 1–3.

³² Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics,' 13–18 and 26.

³³ Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics,' 80–82.

narratives and advocates for a more comprehensive account.³⁴ By extensively studying primary sources like organisational records, Caedel interprets British peace movements as 'ideological protagonists'.³⁵ He argues that despite the difficulty in precisely measuring their impact, these movements' constant criticism of militaristic norms has changed how governments explain policies regarding military intervention during WWI and WWII and how the public responded to them.³⁶ Caedel's work, particularly his analysis of the British peace movement's role in the formation of the LoN, parallels Lynch's broader analysis of how interwar peace movements shaped international norms and policies.

By critically employing primary sources, scholars like Caedel and Lynch provide a more balanced view of peace movements' aspirations and impacts. This shift towards a more nuanced understanding of peace movements reflects changes in methodology and sources, which this thesis, with its nuanced methodology of topic modelling, aims to contribute to.

1.1.3. Studying History through a Gendered Lens

Before feminist historical studies gained prominence, historical perspectives were predominantly shaped by accounts authored by political figures directly involved in the 'official' events, or by transcripts from those events. For example, during the interwar period, the Paris Peace Conference was often viewed through the memoirs of Clemenceau and David Lloyd George, emphasising political and diplomatic aspects. Consequently, many historical studies about the interwar period focused on this specific aspect.³⁷ However, these accounts come with limitations. They are only able to provide an in-depth perspective on the role of this particular group of men, and focus on official meetings and negotiations where women were traditionally excluded.³⁸

This male-centred perspective gained critique somewhere in the 1980s when feminist perspectives gained more ground and the influence of women during historical events attracted more debates.³⁹ An example of this shift is the Vienna Congress, which, in earlier

³⁴ Martin Caedel, *Semi-detached Idealists : The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945*, 2000, <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA50112382>.

³⁵ Caedel, *Semi-Detached Idealists : The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945*, 6.

³⁶ Caedel, *Semi-Detached Idealists : The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945*, 233.

³⁷ For example, see: Bernadette Schmitt, 'The Peace Treaties of 1919-1920,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 104, no. 1 (February 15, 1960), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/985606>. ; Frank T. Abone, 'The Human and the Historical,' *The Social Studies* 51, no. 2 (February 1, 1960): 62–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1940.11018301>. ;

³⁸ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 6.

³⁹ Sue Morgan, 'Theorising Feminist History: A Thirty-year Retrospective,' *Women's History Review* 18, no. 3 (July 1, 2009): 381–407, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020902944437>.

literature, consistently overlooked or ignored the impact women had on its proceedings. In contrast, recent scholarly works have challenged that narrative by reinterpreting the event, revealing that women, through various channels, actually did wield influence during the proceedings.⁴⁰

Moreover, the state-centric perspective was also challenged as scholars realised this approach fell short in fully describing the complexities of international relations. This perspective neglects the roles of non-state actors like international or transnational organisations. This led to a reevaluation of historical narratives, pushing for a more inclusive understanding that acknowledges the diverse actors shaping global affairs.⁴¹

Feminist theories encompass various waves and perspectives, which all differ slightly in the way they change this narrative. They range from the initial wave, rooted in positivism and marked by liberal feminism striving for formal gender equality, to postcolonial feminism, which aims to tackle persistent colonial power dynamics and critiques ethnocentric perspectives.⁴² These perspectives, and all those in between, collectively challenge the conventional narrative that relegated women's history to the private realm. Thus, it departed from the outdated view that overlooked women's roles due to limited direct participation in diplomatic events.

The introduction of the concept of gender in the 1980s transformed feminism from more than a critique of these traditional narratives towards the call for a reconstruction of these narratives.⁴³ An influential work for this perspective was the one by Scott.⁴⁴ She argues for the recognition of gender as a fundamental category of historical analysis. She critiques the notion of historical objectivity, arguing that historians often unconsciously bring gendered assumptions and biases into their work. It was not just about including women in history anymore; it was about changing how we look at history to understand that gender is a crucial factor in how the global order is structured.⁴⁵ To illustrate this, consider Jane Addams, a

⁴⁰ Glenda Sluga, 'On the Historical Significance of the Presence, and Absence, of Women at the Congress of Vienna, 1814–1815,' *L' Homme* 25, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 49–62, <https://doi.org/10.7767/lhomme-2014-0205>.

⁴¹ For example, see: James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). ; Louise L'Estrange Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1995).

⁴² Ann Tickner and Laura Sjoberg, 'Feminism,' in *International Relations Theories, Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), 205–19.

⁴³ Morgan, 'Theorising Feminist History: A Thirty-year Retrospective,' 383.

⁴⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis,' *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1, 1986): 1053–75, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376>.

⁴⁵ Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.'

prominent figure in the WILPF. A study solely focused on Jane Addams would biographically detail her individual achievements and contributions to social reform. In contrast, a gender perspective study would provide a deeper analysis, examining how gender and power dynamics influenced her work, and how she navigated and challenged societal gender norms. This added layer makes it crucial to adopt a gendered lens when revisiting history, bringing attention to the often overlooked roles of marginalised women and consistently questioning, 'Where are the women?'.⁴⁶

One of the more feasible methods of applying this gendered lens has been through case studies examining the role of women during specific periods, a strategy this thesis employs. Various feminist accounts, such as Siegel's exploration of women's peace activism after WWI or Calver's exploration of the Comité Mondial des Femmes Contre la Guerre et le Fascisme (CMF), exemplify how a case-study approach sheds light on women's substantial influence during specific historical periods when their efforts were understudied before.⁴⁷ What makes these studies stand out is a methodology that goes beyond relying on official state meeting transcripts, opting for a more inclusive approach that considers alternative sources. This case-study approach enriches our understanding of historical dynamics by giving the much-needed context for dominant narratives.

However, more recently, contemporary literature influenced by postcolonial feminism also underscores the importance of intersectionality when studying feminist history.⁴⁸ The tendency to only focus on the experience of Western women is criticised as it gives an incomplete picture of the experience of women. As Enloe stated: 'making diverse women visible exposes the actual workings of international politics.'⁴⁹ Not only does this restore stories of marginalised individuals, but it can make analyses more meaningful by uncovering how multiple social identities intersect to shape experiences of oppression and privilege within societal structures. This can directly be related to the inclusivity of women's peace movements.⁵⁰ The book by Siegel, for instance, underscores the experiences of Mary Terrell,

⁴⁶ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 6.

⁴⁷ Jasmine. Calver, *Anti-Fascism, Gender, and International Communism: The Comité Mondial Des Femmes Contre La Guerre Et Le Fascisme, 1934 - 1941* (Routledge, 2022). ; Mona L. Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, trans. Wilma Paalman (Athenaeum, 2022).

⁴⁸ For example, see: Anna Carastathis, "The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory," *Philosophy Compass* 9, no. 5 (April 7, 2014): 304–14, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12129>. ; Morgan, "Theorising Feminist History: A Thirty-year Retrospective," 392–97.

⁴⁹ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 14.

⁵⁰ Melinda Plastas, *A Band of Noble Women: Racial Politics in the Women's Peace Movement* (Syracuse University Press, 2011).

the sole black woman present at the first WILPF congress. Terell said she solely felt responsible for representing all women from non-white countries, underscoring the importance of addressing intersectionality within peace movements.⁵¹ In later years, however, the participation of members of minority groups increased, which perhaps also influenced the priorities of the WILPF.⁵²

While this thesis's current research design may not incorporate a specific intersectional lens due to the constraints of using topic modelling, which only reveals the overarching objectives of the WILPF, it is important to recognise that the opinions expressed by the WILPF may not fully represent the diverse perspectives of all women within the organisation. To address this limitation, future research could delve into the individual experiences of women within the WILPF to better understand the intersectional dynamics at play.

1.1.4. Women Challenging Global Order

Applying a gendered lens to the interwar period thus provides a valuable opportunity to illuminate and reinterpret the role of women in the realm of international relations. On the other hand, examining the same events through a feminist lens during their occurrence is equally significant. At the time, the feminist perspective was not merely a retrospective analysis but a pressing need. It recognised that excluding women from the peace-making process was not only unjust but also unsustainable for creating enduring peace.⁵³ Amidst first-wave feminism, which predominantly concentrated on obtaining formal equal rights, a related phenomenon then emerged—women's peace movements. When WWI ended, Sharp and Stibbe argue that women were able to set aside their pro- and anti-war differences as a consensus was reached that women needed to unite for international peace through initiatives like the Women's Peace Party.⁵⁴ However, they faced exclusion from peace talks in Paris, highlighting ongoing challenges in asserting their influence on global matters.⁵⁵ This exclusion also meant that peace talks failed to address issues like women's suffrage and equal citizenship, leaving these matters to individual nation-states rather than declarations, with

⁵¹ Lisa Leitz and David Meyer, 'Gendered Activism and Outcomes: Women in the Peace Movement,' in *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism*, ed. Taylor McCannon, Taylor Reger, and Einwohner (Oxford University Press, 2014), 714–17. ; Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, 75-127.

⁵² Leitz and Meyer, 'Gendered Activism and Outcomes: Women in the Peace Movement,' 716.

⁵³ Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*.

⁵⁴ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939,' 163.

⁵⁵ Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars.'

little success.⁵⁶ Siegel states that these shortcomings resulted in the women turning their temporary Women's Peace Party into the permanent WILPF.⁵⁷ Despite the setbacks on a global level, the women's organisations that emerged to fill this gap thrived.⁵⁸ Sharp and Stibbe stated that this rise in women's internationalism was part of a broader surge in internationalism. This was caused by several reasons, such as the loss of nationalist movements' driving force, the post-war context's instability reinforcing pre-war commitments to internationalism, the urgency fueled by the fear of potential conflicts, and the LoN's exemplifying role in internationalism.⁵⁹

Scholars generally agree that the WILPF marked the emergence of the first non-communist feminist–pacifist organisation in the transnational pursuit of peace and justice. It united women who were previously divided by war zones, marking the beginning of a form of global feminism.⁶⁰ This was extraordinary, as previous peace movements, like the Women's Peace Society, mostly participated on the national level, while other transnational organisations acted from a primarily ideological or religious standpoint, like the CMF or the Young Women's Christian Association.⁶¹

The general sentiment among women at the time was that achieving the necessary conditions for peace required the inclusion of half the world's population, inherently linking feminism and pacifism as intertwined causes.⁶² Scholars have noted that for some, this perspective was accompanied by an essentialist outlook, stating that women are by nature 'pacifist and nurturing [...] moral authorities and nurturing mothers of the nation'.⁶³ While this perspective helped integrate women into peace movements, it also faces criticism as it could reduce women to the classic 'motherhood-and-apple-pie' mythology.⁶⁴ In contrast, others, adding to the critiques by Lippland and Masman as mentioned previously, raised

⁵⁶ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939, 4.'

⁵⁷ Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, 23.

⁵⁸ Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*.

⁵⁹ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.'

⁶⁰ Benford and Taylor, 'Peace Movements.'; Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, 75.

⁶¹ Calver, *Anti-Fascism, Gender, and International Communism: The Comité Mondial Des Femmes Contre La Guerre Et Le Fascisme, 1934 - 1941*.

⁶² Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, 21.

⁶³ Leitz and Meyer, 'Gendered Activism and Outcomes: Women in the Peace Movement,' 717.

⁶⁴ Jo Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,' *Women's History Review* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 1993): 23–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029300200021>.

concerns that women's involvement might be too focused on compassion and mutual dependency.⁶⁵ This fear reinforced existing ideas about women's perceived incapability to make strong decisions and fueled scepticism about their prioritising peace and reconciliation over their commitment to military strength and power politics—considered essential by some for self-preservation and wartime morale.⁶⁶ This can, however, also be related to Scott's previously explained critique of the notion of historical objectivity; is either of these arguments valid or just a consequence of gendered assumptions?⁶⁷ Further scrutiny of WILPF's discourse during these years is needed to determine the validity of these arguments and their use by WILPF.

Interestingly, there is also a shared aspect between these opposing views, which is their assumption of a collective identity among women and, by extension, of the WILPF.⁶⁸ The notion of a 'mythically homogeneous' view of social movements has recently faced increased scrutiny in gender and queer activism scholarships.⁶⁹ Scholars now question how the definition of gender and women within the context of a diverse organisation influences its workings.⁷⁰ Rather than assuming a uniform collective identity, the focus has shifted towards acknowledging internal diversities.⁷¹ This shift aligns with contemporary discussions in activism scholarship, where the emphasis lies on recognising the multiplicity of voices and experiences within a movement, but also on the overall exclusion of some voices, which relates to the aspect of intersectionality.⁷² This view can be exemplified by voices within the movements as well, as shown by Garzia's assessment of the Black Lives Matter movement. She cautions against the 'worn-out and sloppy practice of drawing lazy parallels of unity between peoples with vastly different experiences and histories.'⁷³ For the study of the

⁶⁵ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.'

⁶⁶ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.'; Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*.

⁶⁷ Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience,' 786.

⁶⁸ Sharer, 'The Persuasive Work of Organizational Names: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Struggle for Collective Identification,' 247.

⁶⁹ Holly Jeanine Boux, 'Towards a New Theory of Feminist Coalition: Accounting for the Heterogeneity of Gender, Race, Class, and Sexuality through an Exploration of Power and Responsibility,' *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 10, no. 10 (June 1, 2016): 5,

<https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=jfs>.

⁷⁰ Boux, 'Towards a New Theory of Feminist Coalition: Accounting for the Heterogeneity of Gender, Race, Class, and Sexuality through an Exploration of Power and Responsibility.'

⁷¹ Jón Ingvar Kjaran and Mohammad Naeimi, 'Marginal Militants: Queer Reclaiming, Politics, and Activism in the Global North,' in *Queer Social Movements and Activism in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 63, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15809-4_3.

⁷² Boux, 'Towards a New Theory of Feminist Coalition: Accounting for the Heterogeneity of Gender, Race, Class, and Sexuality through an Exploration of Power and Responsibility.'

⁷³ Alicia Garzia, 'A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,' *The Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, <https://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>.

WILPF, this view is interesting in understanding how the heterogeneity of identities and needs within the group has transformed into a seemingly homogenous standpoint. This will, for instance, be significant in Chapter 5, where it will discuss why and how differing opinions about non-intervention still resulted in a seemingly homogenous stance.

1.2. Sources

The primary sources used for the quantitative and qualitative analysis are the reports of eight international congresses of the WILPF, ranging from 1919 until 1937. Specifically, these are the reports of the Second Congress in Zürich, 1919; the Third Congress in Vienna, 1921; the Fourth Congress in Washington, D.C, 1924; the Fifth Congress in Dublin, 1926; the Sixth Congress in Prague, 1929; the Seventh Congress in Grenoble, 1932; and the Ninth Congress in Luhačovice, 1937. For the Eighth Congress in Zürich in 1934, the official report was never published. Therefore, the minutes of proceedings were used instead, which have largely the same content, just in a different, less structured format. As for the other congresses, no minutes of proceedings were published, necessitating this variation in sources. These transcripts are obtained through multiple archives, such as the Peace Palace Library and the Alexander Street database. These congresses happened mostly triannually, lasted multiple days, were open to each member of the WILPF, and were the highest decision-making body of the WILPF. According to the WILPF itself, they were aimed to ‘bring together members from all over the world to set the policies and direction of our organisation’.⁷⁴

Congress reports are chosen as the main primary sources since they offer a distinct advantage over other primary sources, as they are the most direct way of analysing the organisations' internal dynamics. While newspaper articles, advocacy documents, or speeches might offer external perspectives or public-facing messages, the congress transcripts contain the nuanced interactions, debates, and evolving priorities among league members. The WILPF itself has even stated that the congresses ‘offer insight into the rigorous political debates within our organisation’.⁷⁵ This granularity can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the organisation's peace advocacy strategies, thus being the ideal source to unravel the ‘prevalent themes’, as stated in the research question.

⁷⁴ Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, ‘WILPF 33rd International Congress - WILPF,’ WILPF, September 21, 2023, <https://www.wilpf.org/calendar/wilpf-33rd-international-congress>.

⁷⁵ Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, ‘Resolutions from WILPF’s Triennial Congresses - WILPF,’ WILPF, August 18, 2022, <https://www.wilpf.org/resolutions-from-wilpfs-triennial-congresses/>.

Understanding these internal dynamics provides valuable insights into the organisation's ideological shifts and processes that shaped its approach to peace advocacy. This will, in turn, illuminate not only the 'what' and the 'how' of the WILPF's actions but also the 'why,' offering a deeper understanding of the motivations that drove them. This can be illustrated through chapter 4, which focuses on the Kellogg Briand Pact. While external sources might show that the WILPF occasionally referred to this Pact (the 'what') and that they did this at information conferences (the 'how'), only the congress reports reveal that they did this because the Pact legitimised their pacifist ideals (the 'why').

The other primary sources this thesis occasionally uses for the qualitative analysis are the resolutions that were decided on by the WILPF during these congresses. There is overlap between the congresses' discussions and the actual resolutions, but the resolution offers an efficient way of interpreting the concrete result of the discussions. This proved to be helpful in chapter 5, for instance, when the combination of transcripts and resolution illustrated how the discussions around neutrality in the transcripts manifested themselves into the WILPF's outward-facing resolutions.

It is, however, also important to note the limitations of using transcripts as the main primary source. This is primarily because the women present at the congresses were likely not a fair representation of the sentiments of all the women in the national segments of the WILPF. The group of women able to travel to and attend the international congresses was a small, largely white, and likely privileged selection of women.⁷⁶ Furthermore, it is likely that even among this already privileged group, the more prominent members of the WILPF wielded greater influence in setting the agenda. Moreover, although these transcripts are deemed official records, they underwent slight editing by members of the WILPF before publication, potentially leading to an incomplete portrayal of the discussions and nuances at the congresses, as evidenced by the subtle disparities between the congress reports and the minutes of proceedings, as discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, there are gaps of multiple years between the congresses, making the analysis of the WILPF's evolution less precise than desirable. Related to this, the last transcript dates back to 1937, making it more difficult to analyse the last years of the interwar period.

⁷⁶ Leitz and Meyer, 'Gendered Activism and Outcomes: Women in the Peace Movement.'

1.3. Methods

A mixed-method approach, combining close and distant reading methods, will facilitate the research. The thesis first uses topic modelling on the congress reports. This method comprises a set of machine learning techniques used to uncover thematic insights within extensive text collections automatically. These thematic insights are derived through algorithms.⁷⁷ The chosen algorithm for this thesis is Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), implemented through the programming language R. LDA generates multiple topic word lists, acting as indicators for the prevalent themes in the texts.⁷⁸ After pre-processing the transcripts, topic modelling will be applied to all the transcripts together. This method assumes that the most recurrent words in the topic model reflect the most discussed topics, which in turn signifies their significance within the organisation.

Topic modelling allows this thesis to analyse and incorporate a larger amount of texts than has previously been studied, namely eight transcripts of over 300 pages each. Moreover, employing topic modelling is an optimal method for uncovering the internal dynamics of the WILPF for several reasons. Firstly, it offers a comprehensive overview of the predominant themes, shedding light on the priorities of the WILPF and aiding in the interpretation of their stance within the peace movement. For instance, the topic model showed a strong presence of words associated with the Kellogg Briand Pact, which indicated a connection between the WILPF and the principles of that Pact. Moreover, given that the congresses span multiple years, an examination of how topics evolved over time indicates any shifts in the WILPF's priorities, offering insights into the WILPF's perspective and responsiveness to changing geopolitical events. For example, a growing emphasis on words related to neutrality towards the end of the interwar years indicated heightened discussions around this principle.

It must be noted that topic modelling also comes with limitations, since it includes some arbitrary aspects, and theoretical guidelines for determining the number and definition of topics are lacking. Furthermore, topic lists alone are of limited use for interpreting themes in the text as certain topics or themes can be missed, and it could potentially result in false relationships between words and topics.⁷⁹ Therefore, empirical examples offer valuable insights into the best ways of interpreting topics, which all highlight the importance of

⁷⁷ Gavin Brookes and Tony McEnery, 'The Utility of Topic Modelling for Discourse Studies: A Critical Evaluation,' *Discourse Studies* 21, no. 1 (December 21, 2018): 17.

⁷⁸ Jordan Boyd-Graber, Yu Hu, and David Mimno, 'Applications of Topic Models,' *Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval* 11, no. 2–3 (January 1, 2017): 144.

⁷⁹Brookes and McEnery, "The Utility of Topic Modelling for Discourse Studies: A Critical Evaluation," 17.

context and a dynamic process in topic identification.⁸⁰ The interpreting process for the topic lists of this thesis is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

To aid in the interpretation of these results as well as in exploring these topics in a more meaningful way, a qualitative discourse analysis method will also be applied.⁸¹ The topic models will structure this analysis in two ways. Firstly, the topics derived from the model will serve as the key thematic considerations in the qualitative chapters. Secondly, the analysis will pinpoint specific congresses and segments within them where these topics were most prevalent, which will then be the focus of the empirical chapters.⁸²

For this discourse analysis, it is important to constantly keep in mind not only the bigger research question but also how the themes relate to peace movement studies (e.g., does the language imply absolute or pragmatic pacifism?) and feminist studies (e.g., in what ways do the identified themes in the transcripts relate to feminist/suffragist issues?).

Moreover, two discourse concepts are considered the most important: gender and transnationalism. Concerning gender, a slightly Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis is employed. This method examines discursive practices to discern how power is both exercised and contested.⁸³ For instance, if the thesis found maternalist language is used consistently, it could conclude that the WILPF (strategically) employed dominant gender dynamics. The second concept relates to transnational discourse analysis, which studies how discourse operates across national boundaries and within global contexts.⁸⁴ For instance, if the analysis found a notable emphasis on the global consequences of a local conflict, like in Chapter 3 with the Irish War, it underscores WILPF's efforts to emphasise the interconnected nature of (feminist) struggles worldwide.

⁸⁰ See, for empirical examples of interpreting topics through qualitative reading: Christof Schöch, 'Topic Modeling Genre: An Exploration of French Classical and Enlightenment Drama,' *arXiv (Cornell University)* 11 (March 25, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.48356>; Daria Gritsenko, Mariëlle Wijermars, and Mikhail Kopotev, *The Palgrave Handbook of Digital Russia Studies*, Springer eBooks (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 433–35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42855-6>; Light and Cunningham, 'Oracles of Peace: Topic Modeling, Cultural Opportunity, and the Nobel Peace Prize, 1902–2012.'

⁸¹ Stefan Jänicke et al., 'On Close and Distant Reading in Digital Humanities: A Survey and Future Challenges,' *Eurographics*, January 1, 2015, 84.

⁸² Schmidt, 'Words Alone: Dismantling Topic Models in the Humanities.'

⁸³ For examples of empirical studies employing a gendered Foucauldian discourse analysis, see: Claudia Zitz, Jan Burns, and Erasmo Tacconelli, "Trans Men and Friendships: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis," *Feminism & Psychology* 24, no. 2 (March 14, 2014): 216–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353514526224>; Olga Sutherland et al., "Gendered Patterns of Interaction: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Couple Therapy," *Contemporary Family Therapy* 38, no. 4 (September 13, 2016): 385–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-016-9394-6>;

⁸⁴ For examples of empirical studies employing discourse analysis on transnational organisations, see: Helena Flam, "The Study of Transnational Movements," in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. Matthias Middell (Routledge, 2018), 82–90.; Michael Stewart Strange, "The Articulation of Transnational Campaigns: A Discourse Theoretical Analysis," *CADAAD* 5, no. 1 (June 1, 2011): 73–91, <https://forskning.ruc.dk/da/publications/the-articulation-of-transnational-campaigns-a-discourse-theoretic>.

The combination of topic modelling and close reading methods will diminish the possibility of human bias in the first phase of research and diminish the possibility of computational bias in the second phase of research.⁸⁵ This human bias arises from the inherent risk of manually predefining topics or coding each document. These manual processes entail the risk of researchers bringing pre-existing knowledge into the analysis, potentially leading to the selective extraction of specific portions of the text or unintentional favouritism towards certain aspects, i.e. cherry-picking. For example, if this study were initiated with a preconceived notion that mentions of suffragism were prominent, the analysis might become skewed towards focusing only on texts aligned with this expectation. The computational bias is seen in the over-interpretation of thematic coherence. These causal errors can be quite big; for instance, one study utilising topic modelling for patient comments about the National Health Service misinterpreted one topic as comments on the experiences of a pregnant partner, whereas upon the close-reading analysis, the majority were first-person narratives.⁸⁶ The combination of the two methods is thus utilised to prevent this, creating a best-of-both-worlds scenario.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Light and Cunningham, 'Oracles of Peace: Topic Modeling, Cultural Opportunity, and the Nobel Peace Prize, 1902–2012,' 50–51.

⁸⁶ Brookes and McEnery, 'The Utility of Topic Modelling for Discourse Studies: A Critical Evaluation,' 20.

⁸⁷ Light and Cunningham, 'Oracles of Peace: Topic Modeling, Cultural Opportunity, and the Nobel Peace Prize, 1902–2012,' 50–51.

Chapter 2. The Computational Analysis

This chapter delves into the topic model analysis. This analysis serves as the cornerstone for the in-depth exploration of the WILPF, following the assumption that the topics that come out of the topic model are the topics most thoroughly discussed within the WILPF, which are then their most significant objectives. Hence, this chapter explores how the primary sources were pre-processed and how the text mining process was conducted. This examination is followed by an exploration of how these recurring patterns of co-occurring words are defined as distinct topics. For example, this entails linking the terms 'Spain' and 'Spanish' to the concrete topic of the Spanish Civil War.

Five main topics emerged from this analysis: the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Transnationalism and the New International Order, Self-Determination and Humanitarianism, Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism, and Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War. The discussion then analyses how the prominence of these topics aligns with or differs from the existing historiography. What can already be noted is that these topics highlight the comprehensive approach of WILPF towards peace, striving beyond mere cessation of hostilities. Also noteworthy is the absence of certain topics that would be expected on the basis of the historiography, like a topic focusing on women's rights. It is argued that this does not necessarily mean this topic was absent in the WILPF's discourse; rather, it could also suggest its omnipresence.⁸⁸ This omnipresence likely explains why qualitative studies have largely concentrated on women's rights in relation to the WILPF. Its pervasive nature makes it an easily studied topic, potentially leading to the oversight of less prominent topics that did emerge from the topic model.⁸⁹ Moreover, the statistical development of each of the five topics underscores the WILPF's reactivity to the geopolitical events happening at the time and already indicates that these events influenced the direction of the WILPF's advocacy.

2.1. Preparation of the Corpus

The initial corpus consists of eight PDF files of the reports of WILPF congresses. These PDFs are first converted into Optical Character Recognition PDFs and then into txt files using Adobe Acrobat. Although some unreadable portions of text might have gone missing during this conversion process, almost all text remained intact. Additionally, considering

⁸⁸Daria Gritsenko, Mariëlle Wijermars, and Mikhail Kopotev, *The Palgrave Handbook of Digital Russia Studies*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 438, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42855-6>.

⁸⁹For examples of studies focusing largely on the WILPF in relation to women's rights, see: Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.'; Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*.

WILPF's usage of three official languages—English, German, and French—certain speeches were not conducted in English. Fortunately, English remained the predominant language for most speeches, discussions, and all resolutions. Nonetheless, these non-English speeches are manually excluded due to the absence of a mixed-language analysis option in topic modelling. Consequently, insights from some speakers, particularly during the early congresses when German was more frequently employed, are absent.

Following data collection, the text was preprocessed. This preprocessing involved the removal of punctuations, white spaces, numbers, stopwords, and other filler words—elements deemed irrelevant for uncovering topics. To exemplify the transformation of a sentence, consider the original:

'This Congress recommends to all belligerent nations that, upon the signing and ratification of the Peace Treaty, amnesty be proclaimed to all who have been made prisoners for conscientious objections in regard to enforced military service.'⁹⁰

Post-preprocessing, the sentence turned into:

'congress recommends belligerent nations upon signing ratification peace treaty amnesty proclaimed prisoners conscientious objections regarding enforced military service'

After undergoing preprocessing, the congress reports now contain the data outlined in Table I, specifying the types (i.e., the number of distinct words used in the text), tokens (i.e., the total number of words in the texts), and sentences in the texts.

⁹⁰ Report of the International Congress of Women. Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919.

Table I, *Corpus Summary*

Text	Types	Tokens	Sentences
2Zurich.txt	9815	87588	4630
3Vienna.txt	7462	61021	2807
4Washington.txt	9333	76619	4573
5Dublin.txt	10040	81020	3779
6Prague.txt	9630	76703	3692
7Grenoble.txt	2817	13654	717
8Zurich.txt	7075	46350	1821
9Luhačovice.txt	6694	44246	2186

To enhance the quality of the data, corpus-specific stop words, like ‘international’ or ‘peace’, were removed, as they would otherwise dominate each topic. Furthermore, bigram detection incorporated word pairings that exhibit a higher frequency of occurrence together than when considered independently. For example, from the 1092 times the word ‘nations’ was used, 582 times it was used in the conjunction ‘league_nations’. This might hint at the prevalence of a topic related to the League of Nations but would have gone missing when using solely unigrams. This step also enhances the significance of extraneous words, such as ‘women’s,’ when they are combined with its conjunction.

The following decision of determining the number of topics, denoted as k , was made using the code developed by Nikita.⁹¹ This code utilised four metrics to ascertain the optimal number of topics for the LDA model. Analysis of these metrics involved the creation of a table to identify extremums. In this case, the minimisation of the Arun2010 and CaoJuan2009 metrics and the maximisation of the Deveaud2014 and Griffiths2004 metrics would identify the most significant number of k .⁹² This ultimately suggests an optimal range for k between

⁹¹ Murzintcev Nikita, 'Select Number of Topics for LDA Model,' April 20, 2020, <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/ldatuning/vignettes/topics.html#references>.

⁹² Juan Cao et al., 'A Density-based Method for Adaptive LDA Model Selection,' *Neurocomputing* 72, no. 7–9 (March 1, 2009): 1775–81, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neucom.2008.06.011>. ; R. Arun et al., 'On Finding the Natural Number of Topics With Latent Dirichlet Allocation: Some Observations,' in *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 2010, 391–402, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-13657-3_43. ; Romain Deveaud, Eric SanJuan, and Patrice Bellot, 'Accurate and Effective Latent Concept Modeling for Ad Hoc Information Retrieval,' *Document*

five and eight. A definitive choice was reached to set k to five. This decision was based on the observation that the log-likelihood reached its lowest value at $k=5$, specifically -703130.3. This is regarded as favourable compared to the log-likelihood values for other candidate values of k , which were -681981 for eight topics, -682130.8 for seven topics, and -690568.6 for six topics. Furthermore, opting for more than five topics introduced a considerable amount of 'noise' to the topics. This was evident in the inclusion of procedural words like 'proceed' and 'applause' in the subsequent topics. Limiting the number of topics to five effectively mitigated this noise and upheld the coherence of the extracted topics.

Finally, the topic model was applied to all congresses collectively rather than individually to identify recurring themes across multiple congresses. This approach was preferred because analysing each congress separately might oversimplify and generalise the topics too much. Consequently, the resulting topics do not correspond to one theme per congress but rather encompass broader patterns and recurring themes across the entire dataset, which makes it ideal for analysing change over time.

2.2. Topic Modelling Results

The resulting five wordlists, consisting of the 15 most frequently found words within the topics and their corresponding topic description, can be found in Table II. The order of these topics is random, thus not ranked by prevalence or chronological sequence. Countries and names are written out in the word lists for clarity, even if the model only gave part of the conjunction. For instance, 'u_s' becomes 'United States', and 'emily_g' becomes 'Emily Greene Balch.' The Topic Description is the overarching theme identified in the Word List. The colours in Table II represent word groupings that either correspond directly with the topic description or are subtopics within those topics. These colour groupings will be referred to and explained in more detail below and also act as important signposts in later chapters. Words in *cursive* are procedural words where no direct link to the topic can be found. Several names of women in the WILPF also showed up in the Topic Word lists. Some names helped with defining topics, as they were prominent members in those areas, like Gabrielle Duchêne, who led the NIO. The other names in pink are names of specific women who showed up in the wordlists but where there was no direct link to the overarching topic. These names likely showed up simply because these women are mentioned a lot throughout all the congresses but

Numérique 17, no. 1 (April 30, 2014): 61–84, <https://doi.org/10.3166/dn.17.1.61-84>. ; Thomas L. Griffiths and Mark Steyvers, 'Finding Scientific Topics,' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 101, no. suppl_1 (April 6, 2004): 5228–35, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0307752101>.

have no direct relevance to the main theme being discussed. They are included for transparency and completeness, acknowledging that their frequent appearance across all congresses most likely means these women were influential within the WILPF.

Table II, *Topic Lists and Description*

Topic	Word List	Topic Description
1	Kellogg - Dispute - Kellogg Pact - Poison Gas - Chemical - Chinese - Economic Imperialism - Markets - Majorities - Great Powers - Free state - Emigration - Trade- Poison- International Law	Kellogg-Briand Pact
2	International Order - Labor - Civilization - Gabrielle Duchêne - League of Peoples- Camille Drevet - Disarmament - Cahier- Dr. Ethel Williams - Vice President ⁹³ - Reparations - Turkey ⁹⁴ - Milena Rudnycka - Steel - International Law	Transnationalism and the New International Order
3	Self-Determination - Natives - Emily Greene Balch - Women's Peace Society - Relief - Use of Force - Famine - Non-Resistance - Human Life - Irish People - Cooperate - Siberia - Minorities - Dr. Ethel Williams	Self-Determination and Humanitarianism
4	Chrystal Macmillan - United States - Fascism - Peace Treaty - Fascist- Franco-German -Mother - International Committee - pacifists - Wage - Dr. Aletta Jacobs - Rosa Genoni - Bloodshed - Gabrielle Duchêne - Mothers	Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism
5	Neutrality - Aviation - Refugees - Spanish - Fascism - Spain - Aircraft - Czechoslovakia ⁹⁵ - Labor - Civil Aviation - Aggressor - Germany - Republics - Sovereignty - Prestige	Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War

Figure I gives a general overview of how each of the above topics developed over time and per Congress. Its data is calculated by summing the word count within each transcript of all of the 15 words in each of the five-word lists. The graph does not incorporate colour groupings, as they may represent subtopics but still align with the overarching themes. This figure is constructed based on the relative prominence of each topic within its corresponding congress. This calculation thus adjusts for the diverse word counts in each congress report, addressing the necessity for normalisation. For instance, the Sixth Congress report had almost double the Seventh Congress's word count; the results could be skewed without this adjustment.

⁹³ Showed up in the topic but is merely a procedural word.

⁹⁴ Showed up in the topic but is only mentioned because there were quite a few women from Turkey present, while Turkey does not have a special role in the NIO.

⁹⁵ Showed up in the topic but is only mentioned because the congress was held in Czechoslovakia.

Figure I, *Topic Development*, own calculations

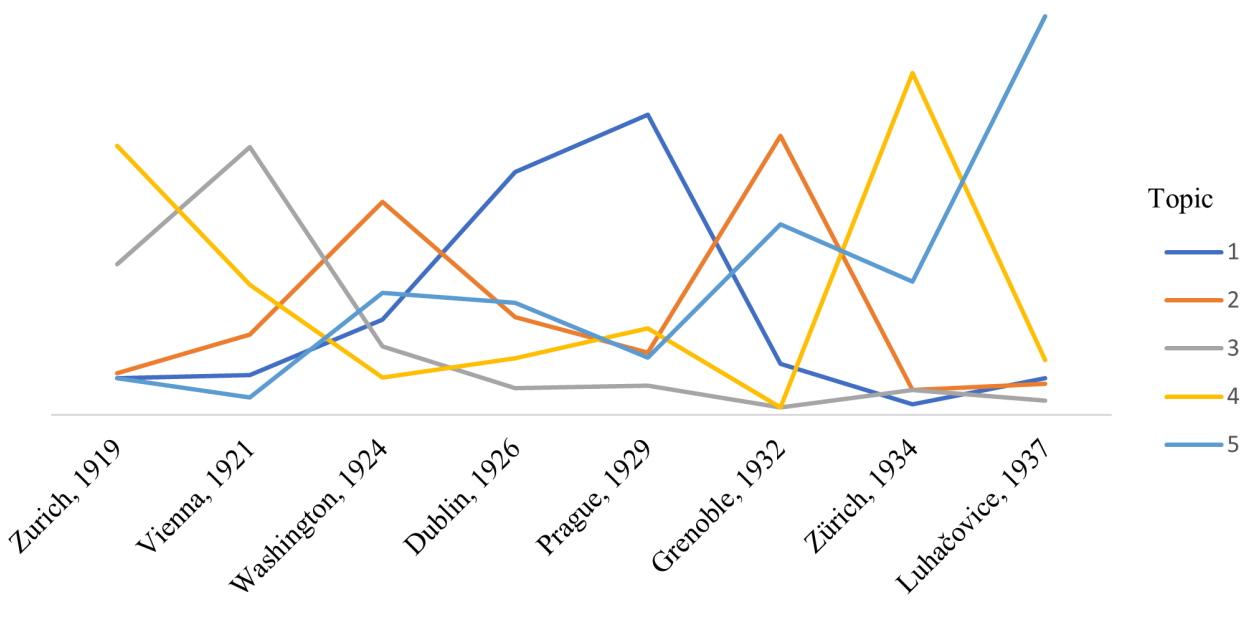
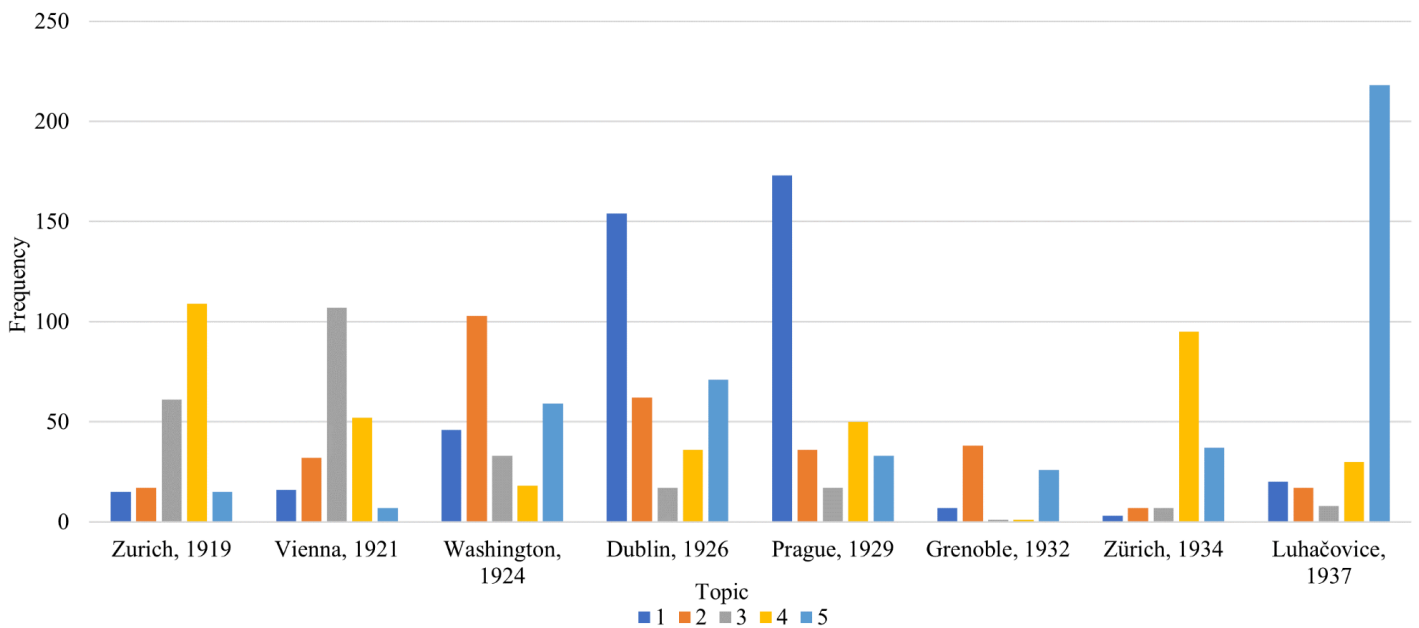


Figure II gives a more in-depth overview of the absolute differing frequency of each topic within each congress. This is relevant because it offers a clear, objective method for comparing the prominence of topics within each congress rather than across different congresses.

Figure II, *Topic Frequency per Congress*, own calculations



A higher frequency of the topic words in the congresses indicates that the corresponding topics were focal discussion points for the WILPF during those years. Analysing topic frequency thus provides a good indication of the evolution of the WILPF's priorities throughout the interwar period. The graphs reveal notable patterns. Certain topics, such as the first (**Kellogg-Briand Pact**) and fifth (**Neutrality** and the **Spanish Civil War**), stand out as outliers in specific congresses, suggesting a strong focus on those issues during those times. Conversely, the fourth topic (**Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism**) maintains a somewhat consistent presence across all congresses, indicating its enduring importance to the organisation's agenda.

The Seventh Congress in Grenoble appears as somewhat of an outlier. This could be attributed to the relatively shorter length of the report compared to others. It is not mentioned why this report is shorter than the others; this might just be because of procedural reasons, but it also might be because there were fewer pressing problems for the WILPF to discuss this particular year. Despite normalising the word count, the limited space may have constrained the representation of certain words.

2.3. Defining the Topics

The topic descriptions for the five-word lists were assigned by means of a two-phase analytical process.⁹⁶ The first phase relied on interpreting topics based on the topic list alone, although using previous knowledge of the WILPF and the interwar circumstances. The second phase focused on close reading sections of the reports with a high frequency of words on the topic word list.⁹⁷ This second phase of naming the topics was a long and dynamic phase, and some topics changed name throughout the qualitative analysis, such as Topic 5, when it only became apparent during the qualitative research that the Spanish Civil War was so important within this topic that it should be included in the general description for the topic. It is also essential to keep in mind that the first words in the topic word list carry more weight than the later words, as they are written in descending order. These two phases were then combined in order to find the most accurate description for each topic, which will be explained in more detail per topic in the following sections.

⁹⁶ Brookes and McEnery, 'The Utility of Topic Modelling for Discourse Studies: A Critical Evaluation,' 9–10.

⁹⁷ George Gkotsis et al., 'Characterisation of Mental Health Conditions in Social Media Using Informed Deep Learning,' *Scientific Reports* 7, no. 1 (March 22, 2017): 3.

Topic 1: Kellogg-Briand Pact

The initial topic exhibited its highest prominence during the Fifth Congress in 1926 and the Sixth Congress in 1929, as seen in Figure I. This heightened attention aligns with the historical context of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which was agreed upon in 1928. The prominence of this topic, especially during the Sixth Congress, makes sense, considering the Pact's principle of renouncing war as a means to resolve conflicts and commitments to diplomatic solutions and adherence to the rule of law as alternative approaches. This principle aligns with the WILPF's commitment to the pursuit of arbitration. While the other terms seem random, upon examination of these words in the texts, they all often appear together, all referring to specific efforts to prevent conflicts during the interwar years.

Instances where green terms (such as poison gas or chemical) are mentioned indicate a concern for disarmament and the prohibition of chemical weapons, which will be extensively discussed in the second section of Chapter 4. These clearly mirror the principles outlined in the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Furthermore, discussions surrounding the purple words are predominantly linked to (dis)armaments as well, mainly its economic dimension, as evidenced by statements such as, 'When faced with the evils of economic imperialism or the oppression of weaker peoples, we are told that trade would never flourish unless those engaged in it could rely, in the last resort, upon the protection of their interests by armed force.'⁹⁸

Topic 2: Transnationalism and the New International Order

The second topic reinforces the historiographical claim that the WILPF was of the opinion that matters of peace and freedom were better resolved through international declarations and international law than through individual nation-states.⁹⁹ The discussions and speeches within this topic indicate a commitment to creating a framework for cooperation and conflict resolution on a global scale. It also indicates a collective effort to strengthen and collaborate with international institutions. Notably, the WILPF prioritises collaboration with other international peace groups rather than solely focusing on inter-state cooperation and even advocates for their voices to be included in the LoN, which is why the term 'transnationalism' is chosen to define this topic.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Report of the Fifth International Congress of Women Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 14.

⁹⁹ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939', 4.'

¹⁰⁰ *Report of the Fifth International Congress of Women Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*. 20.

As seen in Figure II, this topic was very prominent during the Fourth Congress in Washington, which was when the WILPF introduced its ‘New International Order’ (NIO). The NIO was part of a collaborative project called ‘Les Cahiers de la Paix,’ which is what ‘Cahier’ refers to. The Cahiers project aimed to let people voice their opinions about the international order.¹⁰¹ The WILPF Committee on NIO and the Cahiers de la Paix was led partly by **Gabrielle Duchêne**, which explains why her name is so high on the topic word list. The WILPF's involvement in the Cahiers project thus further shows its collaboration with other associations and its role in globally organised peace efforts of the time. One of the proposals in this NIO was renaming the League of Nations into the ‘**League of Peoples**,’ which explains this term in the wordlist and also indicates that transnationalism is a big part of the NIO. **Ethel Williams** led many of these discussions in this political aspect. The economic aspects of the NIO are also thoroughly discussed, which is what the words in **yellow** refer to.

Topic 3: Self-Determination and Humanitarianism

This topic delves into the importance of self-determination (**orange**) and into the humanitarian dimension (**green**) for the WILPF, which, upon closer examination of the text, are inherently linked. The discussions on self-determination reveal the WILPF's commitment to realising nations' aspirations for autonomy.¹⁰² The WILPF's position on the Irish pursuit for autonomy from the British (**‘Irish people’**) reinforces their belief in the right to self-determination for small nations.¹⁰³

Simultaneously, the Humanitarian dimension reflects another side of the League's proactive approach. The term '**Non-Resistance**,' a word widely used and introduced by the **Women's Peace Society**, embodies a purposeful rejection of employing force. This resonates with the league's unwavering commitment to achieving resolutions through peaceful means, purposefully going against the notion of fighting evil with evil.¹⁰⁴ The explicit inclusion of '**Famine**' and '**Siberia**,' the latter referencing war prisoners in Siberia, underscores the league's acute awareness and responsiveness to humanitarian crises.

¹⁰¹Sheri Labenski, ‘The World Is Not Organized for Peace’: Feminist Manifestos and Utopias in the Making of International Law,’ *Global Constitutionalism*, November 4, 2022, 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s204538172200017x>.

¹⁰² *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 90.

¹⁰³ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*.

¹⁰⁴Harriet Hyman Alonso, *The Women's Peace Union and the Outlawry of War, 1921-1942* (Syracuse University Press, 1997), 52. ; *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*.

That this dual commitment is classified within one topic makes sense since the WILPF's campaigning for self-determination can also be considered a humanitarian act. According to Laque, humanitarians stressed the urgency of swift political measures to prevent suffering, a principle echoed in WILPF's discourse, where they see advocating for self-determination as essential for "the duty of safeguarding the interests of minorities."¹⁰⁵

Topic 4: Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism

The fourth topic is the broadest as it does not refer to one specific geopolitical event but rather corresponds to the general peace advocacy of the WILPF, especially in the context of the rising threat of fascism. The mention of the terms in grey signifies a broad engagement with international affairs, particularly addressing the rise of fascist ideologies and the aftermath of conflicts. Their discussions on this topic exhibit a multifaceted nature, exploring economic considerations and the human toll of conflict.

The appearance of terms like 'mother' and 'mothers' in red represents the only instance within the topic model where explicit references to the specific perspective of women are made. This occurrence hints at the significance of motherhood in relation to the objectives of the WILPF.

Since this topic entails the WILPF's overall commitment to peace, essentially referring to the *raison d'être* of the WILPF, it makes sense that this topic is seen throughout all the interwar years, as evidenced in Figures I and II. For this reason, and because it is difficult to pinpoint one specific aspect of WILPF's peace advocacy within such a broad topic, it is not the main focus of any single chapter. Instead, its themes are considered throughout all chapters, most thoroughly in Chapter 5, since terms related to 'fascism' and 'pacifism' closely link to the topic of neutrality, and maternalist terms are frequently used in discussions around the Spanish War. This overlap justifies their combined discussion. Additionally, the omnipresence of this topic makes it more likely to have already been addressed in the historiography of the WILPF, which is why it is not the sole focus here.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Laqua, "Inside the Humanitarian Cloud: Causes and Motivations to Help Friends and Strangers," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 2 (May 1, 2014): 178, https://doi.org/10.17104/1611-8944_2014_2_175.

¹⁰⁶ For examples of studies focusing on the WILPF in relation to its broader peace advocacy, see: Confortini, 'Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).'; Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.'

Topic 5: Maintaining Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War

The fifth topic had the most disparities between the first and second phases of the analytical process. For instance, the word ‘Czechoslovakia’ seemed to refer to the crisis around the annexation of the Sudetenland. However, during the second phase, it became clear that this was a computational bias. Almost all references to ‘Czechoslovakia’ were procedural referrals, as this congress took place in Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia.

However, the fifth topic also stands out as the one displaying the most evident outlier during a congress. Looking at Figure II, it becomes clear that there is a notably higher prominence or frequency of the topic during the Ninth Congress in Luhačovice compared to the other congresses. This corresponds with the identified topic, as it aligns directly with the historical events that defined the last years of the interwar period. Notably, the Spanish Civil War (‘Spanish,’ ‘Spain’) and the increasing concern regarding the feasibility of remaining neutral during a period where fascism was rising is mentioned, as indicated by the recurrent terms in red.

Another interesting aspect of this topic is the repeated inclusion of the terms relating to aviation in dark red. These terms seem random, but upon closer examination, they fall within the overall theme of neutrality. The WILPF’s discussion on the role of aviation during conflicts aligns with the WILPF’s broader pursuit of peace, as they view the internationalisation of civil aviation as a means to prevent the destructive use of aircraft in wartime.¹⁰⁷ The inclusion of aviation-related terms also reflects an understanding of how technological advancements could impact geopolitical scenarios. This fits with the WILPF’s proactive stance in maintaining peace and avoiding global conflicts through global cooperation.

2.4. Interpreting Topic Presence and Absence: Unveiling WILPF’s Priorities

The five topics that emerged from the computational analysis provide an evidence-based perspective on how well the WILPF’s objectives resonate with the existing historiography. While some of the five topics align with and reinforce the established historiography, others challenge some of the perspectives or introduce new topics that may have previously been overlooked, highlighting the importance of this nuanced analysis.

Firstly, the mere fact that in such a short period in the history of the WILPF, such a wide array of topics was discussed illuminates the WILPF’s efforts to address the widespread

¹⁰⁷ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 37–39.

concerns of women thoroughly. It also becomes clear from the topics that the WILPF is very reactive, as the prominent topics often respond to specific geopolitical events, such as the Irish and Spanish Wars, which will be elaborated on in the subsequent chapters. This might reflect a commitment towards a pragmatic kind of pacifism. Moreover, the WILPF addresses conflict resolution in some way within every topic, including relief efforts and the practical mitigation of violence, aligning with the concept of pacifism. This finding then aligns with the previously stated argument by Caedel that the WILPF is a pacifist organisation, with a strong pacifist ideal.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, the topics align with the historiography as they confirm that the WILPF goes beyond merely advocating for negative peace, reinforcing the importance of looking at the success of the WILPF beyond its capability of merely preventing a new conflict. The WILPF takes on a much broader perspective and actively advocates for eliminating the root causes of war. Particularly, topics 2 ([Transnationalism and the New International Order](#)) and 3 ([Self-Determination](#) and [Humanitarianism](#)) suggest that the WILPF aspired to shape a global order grounded in international collaboration and equity. This pursuit aligns with the overarching goal of positive peace.

Additionally, when drawing on Lynch's interpretation of interwar peace movements, some of the topics clearly challenge the notion that peace movements are merely idealistic in global politics. Lynch portrays interwar peace movements as pragmatic actors addressing global conflicts with nuance rather than as naive idealists or accidentally facilitating aggression.¹⁰⁹ The WILPF's prominent topics reinforce Lynch's view as the WILPF's pragmatism and active involvement in transnationalism and humanitarianism indicate a nuanced approach aimed at promoting collaboration on an international scale. This challenges the prevailing realist perspectives of Lipmann and Masland and suggests that the WILPF's objectives extended beyond traditional paradigms of peace activism.¹¹⁰

Moreover, the temporal evolution of these topics mirrors the cyclical pattern observed in peace movements by Benford and Taylor, as described in the historiography.¹¹¹ The pronounced prominence of Topics 2 ([Transnationalism and the New International Order](#)), 3 ([Self-Determination](#) and [Humanitarianism](#)), and 4 ([Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism](#)) immediately following WWI indicates a deliberate shift towards addressing the aftermath of

¹⁰⁸ Caedel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith*, 319.

¹⁰⁹ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative.'; Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics.'

¹¹⁰ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic.*; Masland, 'The 'Peace' Groups Join Battle.'

¹¹¹ Benford and Taylor, 'Peace Movements,' 1500.

this conflict and laying the foundations for a harmonious global order. This evolution aligns with Benford and Taylor's conceptualisation of peace movements, where post-war periods transitioned from a focus on negative peace to a more proactive pursuit of positive peace.¹¹² Conversely, the prominence of Topic 5 (**Neutrality** and the **Spanish Civil War**) towards the end of the interwar period indicates a more direct engagement against specific conflicts and against the outbreak of another war. This type of advocacy amidst the rise of fascism then underscores the WILPF's focus on safeguarding negative peace.

Moving onto the specific topics, one of the notable findings is the WILPF's commitment to a new international order rooted in pacifist ideals rather than specific political ideologies or religious beliefs, unlike many other peace movements at the time, like the CMF or Young Women's Christian Association. The topics identified in the analysis, particularly **Transnationalism and the New International Order** (Topic 2), underscore the WILPF's proactive stance in advocating for a collaborative and equitable framework for international cooperation, challenging the male- and state-centred perspectives prevalent in earlier historical accounts.

This topic also indicates a commitment to going beyond 'traditional' multilateral and international agreements. Instead, the organisation promotes a transnational perspective, exemplified by its efforts to rename the LoN to the League of People. This reflects their goal of addressing global issues inclusively and democratically, highlighting the involvement of grassroots organisations and the significance of individuals. This gendered perspective on policymaking aligns with Sharp and Stibbe's observation that women found neither the nation-state nor the male-dominated international peace talks adequately addressing women's issues, prompting them to seek alternative avenues.¹¹³

In conducting this analysis, it is important to also recognise the significance of the topics that appear to be absent from the examination. Perhaps the most striking absence is a distinct topic that focuses solely on women's rights or suffrage. This absence carries significance as it may suggest two plausible scenarios. One interpretation could be that topics related to women's rights were not deemed crucial within the scope of the WILPF. However, a more plausible explanation, supported by historiography and the word frequency in the texts (with 'women(s)' mentioned 1441 times and 'suffrage' 79 times), is that the language associated with women's rights may be dispersed across multiple topics rather than consolidated into a singular one. In the context of topic modelling, where word associations

¹¹² Benford and Taylor, 'Peace Movements,' 1500.

¹¹³ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.'

are based on co-occurrence patterns, the prevalence of women-related terms across diverse contexts could prevent their emergence as a distinct topic despite their substantive presence and importance within the corpus and the work of the WILPF. This observation reinforces the idea that feminism and pacifism were intertwined causes of the WILPF. The theme of women's issues influences each topic inexplicitly 'behind the scenes', indicating its pervasive influence rather than being highlighted as a separate focus.

The only term that directly relates to the gender aspect of the WILPF in the topic lists is the word 'mother' and 'mothers' in Topic 4 (Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism). Interestingly, when looking at the parts of the text where this topic is prominent, the topic of mothers is used in two distinctive ways, both inherently connecting to its overall theme of Peace Advocacy and the Rise of Fascism. Firstly, mothers are mentioned in the context of acknowledging the significance of the domestic work women are subjected to. For instance, it is stated that 'the recognition of women's service to the world, not only as wage earners but as mothers and homemakers, is an essential factor in the building up of the world's peace.'¹¹⁴ Secondly, the discourse on mothers and motherhood extends beyond this practical recognition of motherhood into a rhetorical elevation of women as the 'mothers of humanity.'¹¹⁵ This rhetoric aligns with the essentialist thinking that defines women as peacemakers, as described in the historiography.¹¹⁶ By embracing the symbolic identity of 'mothers of humanity,' women are positioned as inherent and natural advocates for peace, emphasising their nurturing and protective roles. This utilisation of essentialist thinking aligns with the speeches given on this topic by Jane Addams, who highlighted the natural and ethical impulses within women, especially mothers, to contribute significantly to the prevention of war: 'morally women are more humane, juster, and more sensitive [...] the mothers of humanity better appreciate the value of the individual life.'¹¹⁷

However, beyond the direct mention of mothers, the gendered dimension of WILPF's advocacy is also already evident in its active promotion of positive peace, as highlighted earlier. This proactive approach challenges Lipmann's assertion of women's inability to make complex decisions in matters of conflict resolution as they are inherently inclined to strictly prioritise negative peace.¹¹⁸ The WILPF's proactive engagement in advocating for social justice as an essential precursor to peace underscores a perspective often overlooked in

¹¹⁴ *Report of the International Congress of Women. Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919.*

¹¹⁵ *Report of the International Congress of Women. Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919.*

¹¹⁶ Leitz and Meyer, 'Gendered Activism and Outcomes: Women in the Peace Movement,' 717.

¹¹⁷ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924.*

¹¹⁸ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic.*

male-dominated spheres. For instance, the Peace Party Union, another interwar, largely male-dominated peace organisation, had a more narrow anti-militaristic and negative peace focus.¹¹⁹ In contrast, the diverse five topics the WILPF engages with demonstrates its commitment to prioritising both anti-militarism and broader social justice initiatives, challenging the misconception that women's involvement in peace processes is one-dimensional.¹²⁰

2.5. Conclusion

While the computational analysis marks the first rather than the last step in the examination of the WILPF, the emergence of the five distinct topics already offers valuable insights into the WILPF's objectives, development, and positioning. These topics not only underscore the WILPF's reactivity to the geopolitical events happening at the time of the interwar period but also underscore the WILPF's commitment to a broad spectrum of peace-related initiatives. This approach reinforces claims in the historiography, as it transcends negative peace efforts and focuses on addressing the root causes of conflict and war, which can then be connected to a gendered perspective of peace-building and policy-making.

The temporal evolution of these topics traces a pattern that aligns with not only Lynch's interpretation of peace movements but also with the cyclical patterns peace movements undergo, transitioning from post-war aftermath considerations and rebuilding efforts to actively safeguarding against the potential outbreak of another conflict closer to WWII. Finally, the analysis also offers interesting ground for further analysis. For instance, the absence of a distinct topic dedicated to women's rights signals a nuanced interpretation for subsequent chapters is needed, as it could suggest an intertwining of feminism with every aspect of the WILPF's discourse rather than isolating it as an independent subject or topic.

¹¹⁹ Richard Davis, 'Le Mouvement Pacifiste Britannique De L'entre-deux-guerres,' *Revue Française De Civilisation Britannique* 22, no. 3 (June 15, 2017): 7, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.1415>.

¹²⁰ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 109.

Chapter 3. Forging a New World: WILPF's Vision for the Post-WWI International Order

Topic 2	International Order - Labor - Civilization - Gabrielle Duchêne - League of Peoples- Camille Drevet - Disarmament - Cahier- Dr. Ethel Williams - Vice President - Reparations - Turkey - Milena Rudnycka - Steel - International Law	Transnationalism and the New International Order
Topic 3	Self-Determination - Natives - Emily Greene Balch - Women's Peace Society - Relief - Use of Force - Famine - Non-Resistance - Human Life - Irish People - Cooperate - Siberia - Minorities - Dr. Ethel Williams	Self-Determination and Humanitarianism

In 1919 and 1921, self-determination emerged as a central theme in the WILPF's discourse. The WILPF argued that the right to self-determination was not only a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone of sustainable peace.¹²¹ A few years later, during the Fourth Congress, the WILPF presented its visionary proposal for a 'New International Order' (NIO). This NIO still included aspirations for self-determination, but now alongside a broader framework aimed at restructuring the global landscape. This proposal was built upon the notion that the current world was not 'organized for peace.'¹²² The WILPF argued that the intricate and interconnected mechanisms governing human society were so delicately balanced that 'one can not touch one part without disorganizing the whole.'¹²³ Consequently, the call for an NIO echoed the imperative need for a comprehensive restructuring of the world, asserting that genuine peace could only emerge as the outcome of such a profound reorganisation.¹²⁴ This chapter explores the interconnection between the themes of self-determination and the NIO, examining their evolution and what they reveal about the objectives, development, and positioning of the WILPF.

The computational analysis discovered these themes with Topic 2 and Topic 3 and highlighted their prominence at the beginning of the interwar period. This chapter argues that discussions around self-determination gradually transitioned towards a broader discourse on reorganising the entire international structure. This evolution is evident in Figures I and II, where the topic around self-determination emerges prominently in the first two congresses in

¹²¹ Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp, *The Women's Movement in Wartime: International Perspectives, 1914-19* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 15.

¹²² *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163.

¹²³ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163.

¹²⁴ Labenski, 'The World Is Not Organized for Peace': Feminist Manifestos and Utopias in the Making of International Law.'

1919 and 1921 but swiftly diminishes in prominence during the Third Congress, giving way to the topic of the NIO in 1924. However, the way the theme of self-determination becomes submerged within the discourse on the NIO and the way the LoN connects to this became notably clear during the discourse analysis. This highlights the added value of integrating a qualitative analysis alongside the quantitative findings. The inherent connection between the two topics and their developmental process offers valuable insights into how the WILPF interacted with the global environment. This explains why the thesis combines these two topics in one chapter rather than considering them separately.

The concept of self-determination will be explained using the WILPF's stance on the Irish struggle for autonomy as the primary example, as this was the issue regarding self-determination most prominently highlighted in the topic word list. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the WILPF's relationship with the LoN in the context of self-determination, as the LoN frequently appeared in this discourse. The shift in the WILPF's attitude towards the LoN and the international structure is crucial in explaining their priorities change from self-determination towards the NIO.

As the WILPF became less convinced that self-determination would be realised through the pathways of the LoN, the WILPF started to find different ways of pursuing this objective. This marked the beginning of a shift towards embracing the concept of the NIO. This overhaul included restructuring the LoN, as its current form had proven disappointing to the WILPF in realising its goals. The NIO then inherently intersects with issues of self-determination, as the pursuit of a new global order involves addressing the aspirations of marginalised communities for autonomy and self-governance. The NIO is an interesting case study because it lays out the WILPF's overarching idea of how they envisioned a just world order founded on pacifist principles and equitable international cooperation. Moreover, the NIO and its transnationalism aspects highlight a gendered aspect of the WILPF as it was an alternative way of international cooperation outside male-dominated spheres.

3.1. Self-Determination

Self-determination appeared as the most prominent concept in the first two congresses after WW1. The discourse surrounding this concept clearly indicates how the women saw self-determination as necessary for peace and how they deemed the LoN important for its implementation. Self-determination as a concept, defined as the right of nations and people to determine their political status, gained more prominence in the early 20th century with the

establishment of the LoN.¹²⁵ As traditional colonial empires declined, the LoN emerged as a proponent of internationalism, introducing mechanisms such as trusteeships and mandates to facilitate the exercise of self-determination. However, despite this rhetorical emphasis on self-determination, it is argued that its practical realisation faced numerous challenges.¹²⁶

It is thus interesting to see that the WILPF directly participated in these debates, even so much that it was the most prominent topic during the Second and Third Congresses. It is clear from the discourse of these congresses that the WILPF saw self-determination for nations as a prerequisite for creating sustainable peace.¹²⁷ As articulated by the organisation during the Third Congress: 'Independence is of vital importance to the civilised world, in as much as peaceful international relations cannot be assured until the principles of self-determination and government by consent are universally accepted.'¹²⁸ Moreover, the WILPF stated during this same congress that self-determination might mitigate the competitive tensions characteristic of the pre-war imperial system, which the WILPF had viewed as a significant contributor to the outbreak of WWI.¹²⁹ The fact that the WILPF made this connection between self-determination and peace reinforces some of the claims made in historiography. Self-determination can be seen as a form of social justice and inclusive peace-making, which Beers already recognised as integral to women's participation in this era.¹³⁰ In this sense, self-determination, and its connection with humanitarianism as explained above, can then also be seen as promoting positive peace and even advancing a gendered perspective on peace-building. By advocating for self-determination, women aimed to dismantle entrenched power hierarchies and competition while fostering equality.

Given the WILPF's support for self-determination, it is understandable that during the first two congresses, the WILPF vocally endorsed the LoN, as they believed it aimed to guide nations towards achieving self-determination.¹³¹ For instance, the WILPF expressed optimism regarding collaborative efforts with the LoN on the issue of self-determination during the

¹²⁵ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2015), 192.

¹²⁶ Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The end of Empire and the ideological origins of the United Nations* (Princeton University Press, 2010), https://doi.org/10.1163/2468-1733_shafir_sim300060060; Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*.

¹²⁷ Volker Prott, *The Politics of Self-Determination: Remaking Territories and National Identities in Europe, 1917–1923*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016), 21–22.

¹²⁸ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921.*, 86.

¹²⁹ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163.

¹³⁰ Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars.'

¹³¹ 'No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975,' *Choice (Chicago, Ill.)* 42, no. 06 (February 1, 2005): 150, <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.42-3492>.

Third Congress, stating that '[the LoN] can be used to further pacifist and true internationalist aims.'¹³² The WILPF's willingness to collaborate with other international organisations underscores a pragmatic approach to pacifism. They were open to partnering with organisations that could potentially advance their objectives, reflecting a pragmatic stance to achieve tangible progress. This also aligns with Sharp and Stibbe's assertion in the historiography that internationalism was on the rise, apparently not only within individual organisations but also in collaborative efforts between them.¹³³

3.2. The 'Irish People' case

The 'Irish People' are explicitly mentioned in the topic word list of Topic 3 (self-determination and humanitarianism), underscoring the significance of this case within discussions surrounding self-determination. The WILPF's stance on the LoN's handling of the Irish issue is a clear example of the organisation's perspective on self-determination and its evolving relationship with the LoN.

The Irish War of Independence emerged as the most prominent topic during the 1919 and 1921 congresses of the WILPF. During these congresses, the WILPF articulated that while the conflict between the British and Irish nations may seem like a domestic issue, it holds significant implications for people all over the world, stating that 'any small nation oppressed and denied its freedom as the Irish has been is a matter of importance to the whole world.'¹³⁴ This already reinforces the transnational nature of the WILPF's discussions. Moreover, this wording indicates that the WILPF saw the Irish case as a clear example of what was happening to minorities around the globe. Additionally, adopting a normative framework consistent with Lynch's perspective, the WILPF saw this perpetuation of oppression of smaller nations as threatening peace, as it diminished global moral standards and ideals of justice.¹³⁵

In order to achieve Irish independence, the WILPF proposed several resolutions. These involved a commitment to non- and passive resistance. This entailed promoting non-violent forms of resistance, either through diplomacy or civil disobedience, thus demonstrating a commitment to absolute pacifism.¹³⁶ Interestingly, passive resistance was an ideology that famous members of the WILPF, like Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch,

¹³² *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 63.

¹³³ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939.'

¹³⁴ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 89-90.

¹³⁵ Lynch, "Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative." ; *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 90.

¹³⁶ 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 3rd Congress Vienna, Austria July 10 - 17 1921,' 5.

had been actively advocating for, which might indicate that these prominent members had significant influence in determining the direction of the WILPF's peace advocacy.¹³⁷

While Ireland was considered significant by the WILPF regarding self-determination, the LoN placed much less emphasis on this issue. Ireland was not considered for the mandate system by the LoN, as it was not under the control of one of the Central Powers and thus did not fall within the scope of the mandate system. Furthermore, the WILPF states that the LoN had actually argued for Ireland to remain under British control.¹³⁸ This then caused the first cracks in the trust of the WILPF towards the LoN, which can clearly be recognised in the discourse around Ireland. For instance, the LoN saw the Irish case as a domestic issue for Britain, which went against the transnational nature the WILPF attributed to the issue.¹³⁹ Moreover, the argument frequently employed in support of mandates and colonies by the LoN — that the Irish people are not yet individually mature enough as a nation to govern themselves — was directly refuted by the WILPF in 1921.¹⁴⁰ The organisation attributed this perspective to the historical ties of the English to a vast empire, suggesting that it blinds them to the benefits of and need for the sovereignty and individuality of nations within the empire.¹⁴¹ Interestingly, this counterargument was put forward by the British section of the WILPF, suggesting a kind of homogeneity that transcended nation-states within the WILPF. The WILPF underscored this point by highlighting the enduring desire for self-determination among the Irish population, evidenced by the overwhelming support for their preferred form of government in recent years.¹⁴²

This stance on self-determination for the Irish people resulted in the approval of a resolution by the WILPF to send a telegram to David Lloyd George and Éamon de Valera. In this telegram, the WILPF reaffirmed its belief in the right of small nations to self-determination and urged that the ongoing negotiations in London recognise this principle.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Deegan, 'Jane Addams and the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, 1920-1922.' Judy D. Whipps, 'The Feminist Pacifism of Emily Greene Balch, Nobel Peace Laureate,' *NWSA Journal* 18, no. 3 (October 1, 2006): 122–32, <https://doi.org/10.2979/nws.2006.18.3.122>. ; Mary Deegan, 'Jane Addams and the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, 1920-1922,' *Sociological Origins* 5, no. 1 (1998).

¹³⁸ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 90.

¹³⁹ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 90-91.

¹⁴⁰ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 41.

¹⁴¹ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 90.

¹⁴² *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 90.

¹⁴³ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women Vienna July 10-17, 1921*, 91.

A few more observations can be made regarding the WILPF's stance on self-determination through the lens of the Irish question. Firstly, the very concrete resolution exemplifies the WILPF's proactive approach to shaping the global order from a position where it is unable to participate in diplomatic negotiations directly. Instead, it aimed to influence norms among people and politicians through actions like sending letters. This relates to the claim made by Lynch that peace movements attempted to be normative influencers in the historiography.¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is interesting that the Irish case stands out as the most prominent case within this topic, despite the fact that the LoN primarily focused on overseas colonies.¹⁴⁵ To illustrate this, half of all the resolutions of the Second and Third Congress regarding self-determination are solely about Ireland.¹⁴⁶ This emphasis likely has to do with the fact that the WILPF had a large British section but can also be seen as an indicator of a Western-centric focus within the organisation.

3.3. From Self-Determination Towards a Restructuring of the International Order

The evolving discourse on self-determination within the WILPF reflected changing attitudes towards the current international structure and a shift towards advocating for an NIO.

Discussions surrounding Ireland declined in the following congresses, as evidenced by the topic model and Figure I. This was likely because the Irish Free State marked a step towards the realisation of Irish self-determination, thus, the topic now necessitated less discussion. However, the subsequent discussions on the broader topic of self-determination indicate that the WILPF was not satisfied with its overall realisation.¹⁴⁷ The LoN's stance on Ireland might have already planted the seed towards a shift in how they were perceived by the WILPF. Still, the change in discourse reveals that the WILPF's trust in the LoN kept declining in the subsequent years as it became clear that national self-determination was not being realised globally. For instance, during the WILPF's 1926 congress, the organisation's position on the mandate system was clearly articulated: 'We can demand that instead of concealing a new method of colonisation under the name of mandates, the [LoN] strive to

¹⁴⁴ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative.' ; Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics.'

¹⁴⁵ Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, 1–3.

¹⁴⁶ 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 2nd Congress Zurich, Switzerland 1919,' 8–15. ; 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 3rd Congress Vienna, Austria July 10 - 17 1921,' 3–5.

¹⁴⁷ *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 82

place all colonies under real and efficacious international control.¹⁴⁸ With this statement, the WILPF expressed many of the contemporary historiographical critiques of the LoN and its mandate system as a continuation of the imperial world order.¹⁴⁹ Although thus initially aligning with the LoN's stance on self-determination in general, the WILPF increasingly opposed the idea of a hierarchical system that saw certain nations as unfit for autonomy.¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, according to Beers, this shift in support can partly be attributed to an increase in non-western women in the league.¹⁵¹

It is, therefore, likely that the declining confidence in the LoN and its mandate system in the early interwar years prompted the WILPF to reconsider its strategy within the international framework. While the discourse at first indicated a relatively strong trust in the LoN for realising self-determination, now, there was a shift towards advocating for a more comprehensive restructuring of the entire international system.¹⁵² The WILPF still collaborated with the LoN throughout the interwar years as it provided them with an international platform, but it also urged the LoN to implement reforms aimed at broadening and strengthening international governance.¹⁵³ Consequently, this change in direction prompted the WILPF to prioritise lobbying for the transformation of the entire international system, as articulated in its vision of the NIO. This broader perspective, encompassing not only the principle of self-determination but also wider transnational governance mechanisms, gained prominence in the subsequent congress.

3.4. The New International Order: Advancing Peace and Freedom through International Law and Transnationalism

Thus, the shift from self-determination to an NIO was realised. Topic 3, most prominent during the 1919 and 1921 Congresses, was now submerged into the broader plan of an NIO. According to figures I and II, the NIO was most prominent during the Fourth Congress in

¹⁴⁸ *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 82.

¹⁴⁹ For example, see: Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, 41.; Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations.*; Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire.*

¹⁵⁰ *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 82.

¹⁵¹ Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars,' 304.

¹⁵² Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars,' 304.; *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163.; *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 82.

¹⁵³ Molly Cochran, 'Activism and International Thought: The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the Problem of Statelessness in the Interwar Period,' *Global Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksad011>.

1924. During this congress, the NIO was thoroughly discussed, and its written manifesto is attached to the congress report. This manifesto is eleven pages long and describes in detail how every aspect of the international sphere should be restructured to create a peaceful global order.¹⁵⁴ The NIO was created as part of a larger initiative ('Cahiers de la Paix') for which multiple international associations were asked to construct a document aimed at addressing the root causes of war and the problems of the international order.¹⁵⁵ The fact that the WILPF was invited to contribute to this project already indicates its prominence in the landscape of peace organisations.

Looking at the contents of the NIO as discussed during the congress, the NIO reinforces the WILPF's previous commitment to self-determination but in a broader framework. When comparing the way the discourse around the NIO is framed with the previous discourse around self-determination and Ireland, a few things are apparent. Firstly, WILPF's earlier discussions around self-determination were primarily about national rights and its necessity for peace, directly linking it to the decline of colonial empires and the role of the LoN. Now, by reframing self-determination within the context of the NIO, WILPF broadened its advocacy to a more global and egalitarian perspective, going directly against the civilised hierarchy of the LoN. To exemplify this, in the discussions of the NIO, the women stated that 'Nations are equal in rights. Whether rich and powerful, or small, each nation without exception is entitled to justice and respect.'¹⁵⁶ In this regard, the NIO extends beyond conventional frameworks, envisioning a global order where the principle of self-determination is not only logical but also foundational.

Furthermore, within this broader framework, the WILPF more explicitly connects women's rights and social justice to a more inclusive international order. During the NIO discussions, one woman asked, 'Why are we a Women's League? Why don't we work together with men?' and answered, 'We remain among ourselves to avoid adopting methods used by men. We need one great International.'¹⁵⁷ Another woman then articulates this 'International' as clearing misunderstandings 'between classes, creeds, races, and sexes.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163-174.

¹⁵⁵ Labenski, 'The World Is Not Organized for Peace': Feminist Manifestos and Utopias in the Making of International Law,' 454.

¹⁵⁶ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 164.

¹⁵⁷ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 53.

¹⁵⁸ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 54.

This reframing indicates a significant shift from a focus on national self-determination to integrating self-determination into a more comprehensive vision of global justice and equality, with gender and social justice as core principles of the new international framework.

In order to reach this, the WILPF calls for a shift from a state-centric to an individual-centric international order, advocating for equality between nations while recognising their interdependence.¹⁵⁹ By this point, the WILPF had thus already critiqued the LoN's effectiveness regarding self-determination, and it continued to question whether it would be able to contribute to the goals of the WILPF in its current form.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, in the NIO, the WILPF envisioned renaming the LoN into the League of Peoples. This League of Peoples, a prime example of transnationalism, would be responsible for enforcing economic, political, and individual rights.¹⁶¹ The WILPF even states in this regard that 'the rights of human beings to live and develop individually and in spontaneous groups must be considered as of first importance since the grouping into nations should be a transitory phase.'¹⁶²

This can be exemplified by the discourse around the envisioned League of People's economic dimension, which came forward in the topic model. This part of the NIO echoed the state-centric critique by calling for a transformation of the economic order, 'which in line with the evolution now going on tends to limit National Sovereignties in the common interest.'¹⁶³ By implementing economic reforms, this NIO would mitigate economic conflicts, of which they state 'the costs of which are borne entirely by the workers.'¹⁶⁴ Thus, emphasis is placed on a transnationalist perspective and on marginalised groups. Going beyond nation-states makes sense for the WILPF as a feminist pacifistic organisation. Firstly because, as discussed in the historiography, women were excluded from, and women's issues were ignored during the state-centric diplomatic discussion.¹⁶⁵ Secondly, there is an inherent interconnectedness between feminism and transnationalism. After all, feminist issues do not adhere to nation-state lines; gender inequality is not limited to one country or region but is a global issue that requires collective action, which the WILPF clearly acknowledged with the

¹⁵⁹ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163.

¹⁶⁰ Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism Between the Wars,' 303.

¹⁶¹ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 165.

¹⁶² *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 164.

¹⁶³ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 170.

¹⁶⁴ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 170.

¹⁶⁵ Sharp and Stibbe, 'Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939,' 163.

NIO.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the thorough discussion of the economic dimension of peace and conflict indicates a broader conception of peace beyond merely an anti-militaristic view.

This broader perspective of peace can be recognised in other aspects of the NIO as well. Using words from Topic 2 and Topic 3 in the context of the utopian League of Peoples reinforces the importance of positive peace in the NIO. For instance, one woman highlighted the need to protect minority rights through disarmament, stating that 'innocent civilians and women invariably suffer the consequences of such measures, and [the League of Peoples] intends to ensure their representation.'¹⁶⁷ This humanitarian dimension exemplifies gendered policymaking since this approach reflects a nuanced understanding of peace that includes equality and dismantling traditional power hierarchies.

The NIO, which has received limited scholarly attention, underscores the potential of topic modelling to reveal significant themes overlooked in current WILPF historiography. Labenski, one of the few scholars who has written about the NIO, describes it as a feminist utopia and links such manifestos to International Customary Law through normative influence.¹⁶⁸ This process of 'critique, utopia, reform,' as described by Lacey, aligns with Lynch's interpretation of peace movements' efforts to alter established norms.¹⁶⁹ Labenski argues that the NIO provided the WILPF with a platform to spotlight ongoing gender inequalities and propose alternative systems. This is evident in statements in the discourse, such as, 'War is only one of many manifestations of one cause: social inequality. As long as we do not fight the cause, other measures will be merely palliatives.'¹⁷⁰ This underscores the NIO's focus on positive peace objectives. In this regard, Labenski also stated that by imagining different realities, these manifestos could inspire legal reform, raise awareness about patriarchal injustices, and drive collective action for change, linking the discourse to international law—a term also recognised in the topic word list.¹⁷¹ This aligns with the

¹⁶⁶ Melinda Adams and Gwynn Thomas, 'Transnational Feminist Activism and Globalizing Women's Movements,' *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, March 1, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.490>; *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 163-165.

¹⁶⁷ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 167.

¹⁶⁸ Labenski, 'The World Is Not Organized for Peace': Feminist Manifestos and Utopias in the Making of International Law.'

¹⁶⁹ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative.'; Nicola Lacey, *Unspeakable Subjects: Feminist Essays in Legal and Social Theory*, 1998, 248, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472561916>.

¹⁷⁰ *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 50.

¹⁷¹ Labenski, 'The World Is Not Organized for Peace': Feminist Manifestos and Utopias in the Making of International Law,' 439.

WILPF's vision articulated when they stated that war and imperial domination are crimes, and 'international law must be codified on that basis,' illustrating their intent to codify these principles, which already hints at how the WILPF perceived the Kellogg-Briand Pact, discussed in the next chapter.¹⁷² Thus, the NIO's vision of encoding positive peace principles in international law reinforces the WILPF's commitment to fostering self-determination as a fundamental principle in shaping a just and equitable world order.

3.5. Conclusion

Evidently, self-determination was a cornerstone principle for the WILPF, as they deemed it necessary to establish sustainable peace. The intensive discussions on the Irish Case and the inclusion of this concept in their envisioned International Order further highlight the deemed importance of this issue for the WILPF. Moreover, the development from focusing on self-determination as a stand-alone issue towards incorporating it in the broader NIO is an interesting case study of how the WILPF actively changed the direction of their objectives in direct response to geopolitical shifts and evolving views on international organisations like the LoN. This exemplifies how they pragmatically reframed their objectives to achieve their ultimate goal of global peace most efficiently.

While it would be easy to connect the NIO's idealistic nature to Lipmann's critique of interwar peace movements as too utopian, it could also be seen as an example of how the WILPF intended to challenge international systems and norms by introducing alternative ways of governing the global order, which corresponds with Lynch's perspective.¹⁷³ Moreover, the connection between social justice and the NIO underscores the WILPF's commitment to positive peace. Viewing the NIO through a gendered lens reveals how transnationalism served as a feminist approach to cooperation, while women's rights were also subtly interwoven into the discourse due to its inherent connection with social justice and, consequently, peace. The NIO eventually declined in prominence in subsequent congresses, as evidenced by Figures I and II, possibly due to the emergence of more immediate concerns, as discussed in subsequent chapters. However, the way it (re)interprets a peaceful international order remains telling of the WILPF's advocacy right after WWI.

¹⁷² *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924*, 51.

¹⁷³ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*. ; Lynch, "Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics."

Chapter 4. Advancing Diplomacy: WILPF's Efforts Amidst the Kellogg-Briand Era

Topic 1	Kellogg - Dispute - Kellogg Pact - Poison Gas - Chemical - Chinese - Economic Imperialism - Markets - Majorities - Great Powers - Free state - Emigration - Trade - Poison - International Law	Kellogg-Briand Pact
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The Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in 1928 by representatives of 15 countries, theoretically ending the justification of wars as a means of resolving conflicts. As is now known, it did not succeed in preventing another great war from breaking out, and it faced many criticisms, viewing the Pact as ‘meaningless.’¹⁷⁴ However, at the time, the Pact was a revolutionary and innovative document for promoting a peaceful world order.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, according to Limberg, the Pact became a ‘cultural icon’ for peace movements, influencing their goals and strategies.¹⁷⁶

Looking at the topic modelling results as a guide, the Kellogg-Briand Pact quickly became the most prominent topic in the Congresses around its signing in 1926 and 1929. Therefore, this chapter will use the Kellogg-Briand Pact as a case study and analyse what role the Pact played in the peace advocacy of the WILPF and how this role changed over the years. Notably, one congress predates the treaty's signing while the other immediately follows it, providing a valuable opportunity to assess the Pact's impact on the League across different temporal stages. It will do this by following the coloured word grouping of the topic word lists, as these are evidently important terms and subtopics within this broader topic.

By doing this, this chapter will argue that the Kellogg-Briand Pact was a way for the WILPF to legitimise the combining of their social justice and peace goals, as well as their feminist and pacifist ideals.¹⁷⁷ Although the WILPF recognised the flaws in the procedural application of the Pact, their ideals mirrored those of the Pact, making it a strategic diplomatic tool for them to use.

¹⁷⁴ Julie M. Bunck and Michael R. Fowlert, 'The Kellogg-Briand Pact: A Reappraisal,' *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law* 27, no. 2 (2019): 233.

¹⁷⁵ Bunck and Fowlert, 'The Kellogg-Briand Pact: A Reappraisal,' 232.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Limberg, 'In Relation to the Pact': Radical Pacifists and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928-1939,' *Peace & Change* 39, no. 3 (June 13, 2014): 396, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.12079>.

¹⁷⁷ Limberg, 'In Relation to the Pact': Radical Pacifists and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928-1939,' 398.

4.1. Kellogg-Briand Pact and Adherence to the Rule of Law

The Sixth Congress in Prague in 1929 was the first congress in which a clear discussion topic was stated at the beginning of the report. In this case, the subject for the congress was 'Renunciation of War —What Follows? How to make the Kellogg Pact a reality.'¹⁷⁸ This demonstrates the close connection between the WILPF and the Pact, already hinting at the fact that the WILPF saw the Pact as a crucial instrument in their advocacy. However, the WILPF's interest in this subject predates the signing of the Pact. This is evidenced by the specific resolutions regarding 'outlawry of war' already approved during the Second and Fourth Congress and extensive discussions on the topic during the Fifth Congress in 1926, two years before the Pact was signed.¹⁷⁹ During the Fifth Congress, the women explicitly stated that they wished that every nation should 'solemnly bind itself' to settle disputes by peaceful means in the future. They firmly stated that the first step for this would be through a general agreement such as the Geneva Protocol, achieved either through the LoN or through a separate treaty.¹⁸⁰ This also underscores the significance placed by WILPF on international law, echoing discussions from the previous chapter on the NIO and international customary law.

Interestingly, this diplomatic solution of arbitration is something where feminism and pacifism intersect. For instance, one woman argued that women are natural interpreters and excel at understanding each other due to their experience in managing and interpreting emotions in their private lives at home. By leveraging this emotional intelligence, women could appeal to men to tap into their 'good' and 'reasonable' to then facilitate diplomacy and arbitration. 'We Women,' she argued, taking on a homogenous and essentialist perspective, 'have the duty to point out the danger of war which lies in all these military preparations. A people trained to be pugnacious wants war. Reasons for war are easy to find.'¹⁸¹ This framing not only positions women in direct opposition to male militaristic tendencies, the 'pugnacious people', but also reflects a broader critique of patriarchal structures within international relations, highlighting the organisation's unique gendered perspective on peace advocacy. This underscores how traditional patriarchal values, which often glorify military capabilities

¹⁷⁸ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 9.

¹⁷⁹ 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 2nd Congress Zurich, Switzerland 1919,' 16. ; 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 4th Congress Washington USA May 1 – 7, 1924,' 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 60.

¹⁸¹ *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 65 and 110.

and aggression, are challenged by an alternative framework that elevates cooperation and emotional intelligence as key components of effective diplomacy.

After this Fifth Congress and a year before the Sixth Congress, the Kellogg Pact was signed, almost precisely encapsulating the vision of the WILPF. The interest, or even celebration, seen in the discourse surrounding the pact during the Sixth Congress aligns with Zeiner's observation that the Pact resonated deeply with members of peace movements, representing a moral vision applied to foreign policy.¹⁸² This can clearly be recognised in the speech given by Laura Morgan during the Sixth Congress.¹⁸³ She expresses awareness of the limitations of the pact, primarily regarding its practical and legal implications.¹⁸⁴ However, in general, she is quite optimistic about the Pact, describing it as a 'fresh start'.¹⁸⁵ She states the Pact should not exclusively be seen as a lawmaking treaty; instead, it should be regarded as a fundamental declaration of purpose, which in the future may change the course of events and influence international law and relations.¹⁸⁶ She highlights its practical achievements, such as prompting the United States, previously reluctant to join the LoN, to cooperate with other nations in fostering peace. Additionally, it addressed a critical loophole in the covenant that permitted war as a last resort under specific circumstances.¹⁸⁷ However, beyond these tangible outcomes, she emphasises a broader cultural shift: the acceptance of pacifism as a respectable ideology, placing the burden of explanation on militarists.¹⁸⁸

Moreover, given the WILPF's firm advocacy for this diplomatic approach during previous congresses, the WILPF even credited itself for the establishment of the Pact, stating that 'it is not claiming too much to say that the pact would never have become an accomplished fact if it had not been for the peace movement with public opinion behind it.'¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, this reliance on public opinion remained a focal point for the WILPF regarding the Pact. When asking themselves how to make the Pact effective, the women answer that this

¹⁸² Susan Zeiger, 'Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s,' *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 1 (September 1, 1990): 76, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/24.1.69>.

¹⁸³ Zeiger, 'Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s,' 76.

¹⁸⁴ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 47.

¹⁸⁵ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 50.

¹⁸⁶ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 49.

¹⁸⁷ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 46.

¹⁸⁸ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 49.

¹⁸⁹ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 50.

must be done not only through material disarmament but also through moral disarmament, in which the women could have a practical role.¹⁹⁰ The WILPF argued that 'the man on the street must not be allowed to forget that his government renounced war. It must be made a part of his everyday thinking. That is our job.'¹⁹¹

The primary approach to achieving this goal would involve educating 'people for peace,' which they had very practical pathways for, like organising discussions about its principles in high school curricula and putting an end to military training of youth.¹⁹² This educating aspect is particularly interesting, as it connects to the argument by Huckestein, who states that in the 1920s, it was not necessarily males that were associated with violence, but more the education of the males that was too focused on militaristic aspects. Therefore, teachers and mothers would be essential in shifting that education from pro-military towards education in favour of pacifism.¹⁹³

Morgan's speech, which is very representative of the WILPF's general sentiment towards the Pact, can clearly be connected to the arguments made by Zeiner.¹⁹⁴ She cites the analogy made by a WILPF member, who compares the Pact to the law against murder. Murder still takes place after it was outlawed, but there is now a common moral judgement against murderers, with an agreement that they should be punished. The same would then hold for outlawing war.¹⁹⁵ The Pact was then an opportunity for activists to instigate societal transformation. They could mobilise people for peace, creating an obstacle to war in the shape of a world conscience. For these suffragists specifically, Zeiner states that they saw a connection between the Pact and the right to vote; both were righteous, both were a tool that activists could use to create change in society.¹⁹⁶

According to Limberg, radical pacifist activists saw the Pact as such an iconic document that they used it to reshape the way they framed almost all their other causes.¹⁹⁷ The discourse around the Pact reveals that the women indeed integrated the pact into broader

¹⁹⁰ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 62.

¹⁹¹ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 50.

¹⁹² *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 50.

¹⁹³ Erika Huckestein, 'From Cradle to Grave: The Politics of Peace and Reproduction in the Anti-Fascist Campaigns of British Women's Organisations,' *Contemporary European History* 33, no. 1 (April 29, 2022): 57, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0960777322000157>.

¹⁹⁴ Zeiger, 'Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s.'

¹⁹⁵ Zeiger, 'Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s,' 77.

¹⁹⁶ Zeiger, 'Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s,' 77 and 90.

¹⁹⁷ Limberg, 'In Relation to the Pact': Radical Pacifists and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928-1939,' 396.

social justice objectives, perceiving it as a catalyst for advancing social equity. They argued that military resources could be redirected towards societal improvements, while international demilitarisation would also create a safer environment. In this sense, they stated that the Pact was 'the foundation upon which the security of the world community can be built up.'¹⁹⁸ Two in-depth examples of this will be discussed in the subsequent two sections.

Moreover, Limberg also states that women incorporated the pact 'more thoroughly into their projects compared to male or mixed-sex groups,' but he does not elaborate on the reason for this.¹⁹⁹ The discourse offers an explanation for this. For women specifically, the emphasis on advancing social justice through the pact was closely intertwined with promoting women's rights, as both were seen as mutually reinforcing goals.²⁰⁰ Moreover, by challenging the prevailing militaristic norms and patriarchal power dynamic of the time, the Pact became a pivotal symbol in their pursuit of equality and global peace. Similar to the WILPF's earlier gendered framing of arbitration, for them, the Pact marked a shift away from traditional militaristic security paradigms established by men, advocating instead for 'A new spirit in international affairs [that] seeks security through equality, faith, justice, and friendliness.'²⁰¹ This gendered perspective is crucial as it highlighted how women within the WILPF viewed the peace that could be achieved through the Pact as a framework for addressing broader inequalities perpetuated by militarism and patriarchy.

Finally, it is noteworthy that despite the Pact's iconic status for the WILPF, the discourse reveals that some women doubted its effectiveness. These doubts stemmed not only from practical implications but also from concerns that the Pact failed to address the root causes of war.²⁰² Even for such an idealistic organisation as the WILPF, the Pact was thus viewed by some as too utopian.

4.2. Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

One example of issues being reframed through the lens of the Pact is the WILPF's stance on chemical weapons. Words regarding this theme can also be clearly recognised in the topic word list of Topic 1 (Kellogg-Briand Pact).

¹⁹⁸ 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 6th Congress Prague 1929,' 1.

¹⁹⁹ Limberg, 'In Relation to the Pact': Radical Pacifists and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928-1939,' 398.

²⁰⁰ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 70-78.

²⁰¹ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 329.

²⁰² *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 78.

At first glance, the focus on Chemical and Biological Warfare (CBW) for the WILPF might seem illogical. If the overall aim of the WILPF was to achieve positive peace and abolish war, why then single out one kind of weapon to focus your efforts on?²⁰³ However, at the time, this focus made sense in relation to the signed Pact. Limberg states that with the signing of the Pact, peace activists now saw no reason for nations to continue with the very expensive and destructive military development and purchasing.²⁰⁴ Disarmament thus goes hand in hand with the renunciation of war. The focus on CBW compared to other armaments was also not random given this period of time, as it had gained wide political attention. This, thus, according to Bälmer, gave the WILPF ample opportunity to garner support for a ban on CBW, making it a very concrete way of making the Pact a reality.²⁰⁵

The arguments from the WILPF against CBW are made very clear during their discussions in the congresses. They are mainly centred around the increasingly destructive possibilities of CBW in the future. According to the WILPF, CBW was uncontrollable, caused cruel deaths, and served as a gateway to the development of even more lethal weapons.²⁰⁶ As a response to the argument that CBW could actually be more humane than traditional weapons, the WILPF had firmly stated that CBW would not spare the civilian population, nor was there any effective protection for citizens. Moreover, they stated CBW would disproportionately affect women and children, which also made this matter a specific feminist issue.²⁰⁷

Additionally, the WILPF states that despite all international treaties, no prohibition of poison gas was effective. This was mostly because of issues with enforcement mechanisms to monitor its abolition and difficulties agreeing on the actual level of danger from CBW.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, it is within the context of these international treaties, notably the Kellogg-Briand Pact, that the WILPF made efforts to establish a universal acceptance of the prohibition of such weapons as part of international law.

²⁰³ Brian Bälmer, 'Science Was Digging Its Own Grave': The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Campaign Against Chemical and Biological Warfare,' *The Nonproliferation Review* 27, no. 4–6 (September 1, 2020): 324, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2020.1838703>.

²⁰⁴ Limberg, 'In Relation to the Pact': Radical Pacifists and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928-1939,' 401.

²⁰⁵ Bälmer, 'Science Was Digging Its Own Grave': The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Campaign Against Chemical and Biological Warfare,' 327.

²⁰⁶ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 29.

²⁰⁷ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 30.

²⁰⁸ Christopher A. Warren, 'GAS, GAS, GAS! The Debate Over Chemical Warfare Between the World Wars,' accessed April 9, 2024, [https://shfg.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/FH%204%20\(2012\)%20Warren.pdf](https://shfg.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/FH%204%20(2012)%20Warren.pdf).

The WILPF tried to achieve this by framing the issue to the public in a way that connected it to the principles of the Pact. This way, they could influence public opinion, leading to a state of moral disarmament. They did this by, for instance, organising public conferences, where many scientists were asked to speak on the issue, inviting the press to spread information about CBW.²⁰⁹ This conference was very successful, according to the WILPF, as the topic became heavily discussed in the media, making it much harder for nations to develop CBW in secret.²¹⁰ The WILPF also drafted appeals to prominent scientists, urging them to condemn this unethical use of science publicly. As Bälmer stated, 'The voice of science became a proxy for the voice of WILPF.'²¹¹

Thus, as Limberg stated, the WILPF acted on this issue in a way that connected the Pact to broader social justice objectives. How this works in practice becomes evident throughout the discourse analysis, as it becomes apparent that the WILPF took on an educating role and informed public opinion, thus having a prominent role in organising opposition to the issue around CBW.²¹²

4.3. Economic Dimensions and the Renunciation of War

The interwar years were a tumultuous period in terms of the economic stability of countries, with geopolitical events like the Great Depression severely influencing this era. At the beginning of the Fifth Congress, the WILPF went by each country that was part of the League, naming the potential consequences that could cause war in the country. Given the period, it is thus no surprise that economic reasons were prominent in almost all of them. This economic dimension, also prominent in Topic 1 (Kellogg-Briand Pact), is again an example of how the Pact was seen as a catalyst for advancing social equity. This dimension is especially interesting because the economic part of global peacemaking was also part of the NIO, as discussed in the previous chapter. The recurrent focus on this topic not only underscores the WILPF's emphasis on non-political and non-militaristic aspects of peacemaking but also serves as a case study of how the Pact reshaped its approach to and framing of economic dimensions in peacemaking.

²⁰⁹ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 30.

²¹⁰ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 30-31.

²¹¹ Bälmer, 'Science Was Digging Its Own Grave': The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Campaign Against Chemical and Biological Warfare,' 340.

²¹² Bälmer, 'Science Was Digging Its Own Grave': The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Campaign Against Chemical and Biological Warfare,' 323.

The economic dimension was seen as both an important condition for and an aspect of realising the Pact, as well as being directly affected by the Pact. For the latter, the aspect of economic imperialism, as seen in the topic word list, is clearly discussed through the lens of the Kellogg Principles. With economic imperialism, the WILPF understood the policy of acquiring and exploiting underdeveloped countries for the economic benefit of the Western Countries.²¹³ According to the WILPF, this economic imperialism often went hand in hand with violence, either against the inhabitants or against other nations aiming to take control of the country.²¹⁴ This was also recognised by the NIO as a significant issue in the economic dimension. The NIO proposed addressing these problems through the creation of a transnational institution. In contrast, now, framed through the Kellogg Pact, the WILPF aimed to end the cycle of violence and exploitation through a normative shift in the international order, signalling a move towards a more peaceful and equitable global environment.²¹⁵ Moreover, the direct economic implications of the pact were also discussed thoroughly. By reallocating resources from military endeavours towards youth education and societal development, the pact aimed to move towards a world without war.²¹⁶

Additionally, economic considerations, particularly economic interdependence, were deemed crucial by the WILPF for the feasibility and effectiveness of the Pact. As articulated by one member of the WILPF: 'Peace is not enough. It must be based on economic justice.'²¹⁷ The WILPF emphasised consistently, like at the beginning of the Fifth Congress, that the perpetual economic struggle prevailing during times of nominal peace often led to physical war, making it imperative to address the underlying economic inequalities to achieve lasting peace and realise the Pact. To this end, the WILPF established a permanent commission on economic questions to address the root causes of war and promote positive peace, thus combining their social justice and peace goals. Furthermore, the organisation, once again, took on an educational role, advocating for schools to educate youth about the consequences of war, specifically including its economic costs.²¹⁸

²¹³ *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926*, 86–87.

²¹⁴ Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, 'Imperial Internationalisms' in the 1920s: The Shaping of Colonial Affairs at the League of Nations,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History/Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48, no. 5 (September 2, 2020): 876, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2020.1816620>.

²¹⁵ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 56–57.

²¹⁶ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 57.

²¹⁷ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 27.

²¹⁸ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 36.

On a final note, regarding the economic dimension, it is interesting to see that there is some heterogeneity apparent in the discourse regarding the best way to establish this. Specifically, some members of the WILPF expressed viewpoints seemingly aligned with communist ideologies, advocating against the 'individualistic, competitive society' and for a cooperative commonwealth and the dismantling of monopolies in order to achieve an equitable society.²¹⁹ This is interesting as it may reflect the broader socio-political context of the time, with intersecting movements and alliances shaping the discourse and actions of peace activists. Beyond the Kellogg Pact itself, other international collaborations, whether directly influenced by the Pact or not, played a role in shaping the perspectives within the WILPF. For instance, the presence of a communist perspective among some members of the WILPF, such as Gabrielle Duchêne or Emily Greene Balch, who are also prominent names in the topic word lists, might be attributed to their connections with more communist organisations like the CMF.²²⁰

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter analysed the WILPF's objectives, development, and positioning in specific regard to the Kellogg-Briand Pact and its ideals. While the WILPF showed awareness of the practical limitations of the Pact, it strategically used it as a way to frame and legitimise its pacifist ideals. To add to the historiography around this topic, this chapter analysed the way the WILPF applied this to some of its practical objectives, like CBW. What becomes clear is that the WILPF took on the role of norm influencers, which is consistent with the way Lynch described interwar peace movements in historiography.²²¹ It becomes apparent from this analysis that the WILPF regarded public opinion as a significant force in shaping global order, one that transcended the traditional influence of political leaders and states. This perspective aligns with their gendered approach to policymaking, which is evident in their thorough adoption of the Pact's principles. By using the Pact to move beyond traditional power dynamics centred around militaristic power, the WILPF aimed to create a peaceful order rooted in equality and social justice instead.

As can be seen in Figures I and II, the Kellogg Pact lost its prominence in the congresses after the Fifth and Sixth ones. This decline can likely be attributed to the

²¹⁹ *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Prague, August 24th to 28th, 1929*, 123.

²²⁰ Calver, *Anti-Fascism, Gender, and International Communism: The Comité Mondial Des Femmes Contre La Guerre Et Le Fascisme, 1934 - 1941*, 25–26.

²²¹ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative.'; Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics.'

impending doom of WWII and the outbreak of numerous conflicts worldwide, which underscored the failure of the Pact's principles and rendered its utopian vision increasingly out of reach. However, the Pact's impact as a policy tool on the WILPF remained revolutionary for the interwar years.

Chapter 5. Neutrality in the Face of Fascism: WILPF's Direct Response to International Conflicts

Topic 4	<p>Chrystal Macmillan - United States - Fascism - Peace Treaty - Fascist-Franco-German -Mother - International Committee - pacifists - Wage - Dr. Aletta Jacobs - Rosa Genoni - Bloodshed - Gabrielle Duchêne - Mothers</p>	Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism
Topic 5	<p>Neutrality - Aviation - Refugees - Spanish - Fascism - Spain - Aircraft - Czechoslovakia - Labor - Civil Aviation - Aggressor - Germany - Republics - Sovereignty - Prestige</p>	Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War

During the Ninth Congress in Luhačovice, against a background of growing fascism and nationalism, the women of the WILPF found themselves at a critical turning point. On the one hand, they acknowledged that their peace efforts had not yielded the desired success yet.²²² However, they also expressed hopefulness, as they believed there was still time to prevent the looming war.²²³ Simultaneously, as tensions rose internationally, so did they internally within the WILPF. These tensions were mostly related to the perceived importance and feasibility of neutrality and non-intervention. Central to this question was the dilemma of deciding whether it was ever justifiable to (military)intervene in conflicts, with the aim of proactively shielding nations from entanglement in international military engagements.

During these later years of the interwar periods, the WILPF had to translate their ideological beliefs into practical solutions more extensively than ever before, intertwining their negative and positive peace goals.²²⁴ These years highlight how the WILPF positioned itself in the face of more direct and dire threats against peace. This chapter will look at this period and argue that the WILPF, presenting a united front, stressed the urgent need for complete disarmament as the only way for countries to remain neutral and out of conflict. This echoed the consistent goal pursued in earlier congresses, particularly highlighted during the Seventh Congress, which was aptly themed with a clear warning: 'World Disarmament or

²²² *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 9.

²²³ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 9.

²²⁴ Marie Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' in *The Routledge History of Human Rights*, ed. Jean Quateart and Lora Wildenthal, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2019), 114-115.

World Disaster.²²⁵ Moreover, it is argued that, for the WILPF, disarmament was a prerequisite for their feminist goals.

This chapter will predominantly focus on Topic 5 (Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War), which peaked notably during the Ninth Congress in 1937. It will also keep in mind the omnipresent Topic 4 (Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism), which reflects the WILPF's broader peace advocacy. These topics are combined into one chapter since they both reflect the WILPF's response to fascism, with Topic 5 more narrowly focusing on one specific aspect of it.

The chapter begins by exploring how the WILPF aimed to remain neutral and combat fascism through disarmament, especially during the urgent disarmament concerns of the late 1930s. By doing this, this chapter argues that the WILPF, in collaboration with other supranational organisations, took the lead in prioritising disarmament and peace efforts.²²⁶ These efforts involved participation in various collaborative groups, including the World Disarmament Conference (WDC) and the International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament (ICG). When these failed and several fascist crises emerged, the WILPF underwent an internal split. This chapter will zoom in on one of those crises, the Spanish Civil War, which emerged as a significant theme within Topic 5, to examine how neutrality was now perceived. Some scholars see the Spanish Civil War as one of the defining events of the interwar period for activists across various ideological spectrums, and it will thus exemplify the WILPF's positioning during concrete crises.²²⁷

Finally, the chapter will shortly examine how these specific initiatives to avert fascism and promote neutrality all connect to the WILPF's feminist and maternalist sides. Through this exploration, this chapter argues that despite its internal disagreements and setbacks on the global level, the WILPF presented a united, strictly pacifist front while always interconnecting its peace and disarmament aims with its feminist goals.

Disarmament Initiatives against Fascism and Aggressors

In the late interwar years, in response to escalating global tensions, peace movements united in unprecedented collaboration, emphasising disarmament as a cornerstone principle in their pursuit of peace. In these latter years of the interwar period, there was a surge in aggressors

²²⁵ *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Grenoble, May 15th to 19th, 1932*, 5.

²²⁶ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 115.

²²⁷ Calver, *Anti-Fascism, Gender, and International Communism: The Comité Mondial Des Femmes Contre La Guerre Et Le Fascisme, 1934 - 1941*, 91.

and fascist regimes. As recognised in the red terms in Topic 5 in Table II, the WILPF responded directly to these rising global tensions. While anti-fascist ideals were always present during the interwar years, as recognised in Topic 4 (Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism), it now became almost the sole topic of conversation, as recognised in Figures I and II with the significant increase of prominence of topic 5 (Maintaining Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War). In response to this heightened tension in the global order, it becomes clear through the discourse of the WILPF that they thought 'cooperation and concentration' of their efforts towards disarmament were vital.²²⁸ The best way to do this was, according to the WILPF, to forge common ground within its organisation and between other peace movements, as they could all agree on the fact that 'fascism means war.'²²⁹ This reinforces the claim of Hyman that during this period, peace movements saw no other option than to set aside ideological differences and began to collaborate intensively, recognising the urgency of their shared goal: peace.²³⁰

The sense of urgency thus led to unprecedented collaboration among peace organisations. This international collaboration was remarkable in itself, according to Sandell, given this was a time period marked by heightened nationalism *vis-a-vis* internationalism.²³¹ These groups joined forces to present petitions and appeals to the LoN and various international conferences.²³² Notably, WILPF and allied pacifist movements, like the No More War Movement, formed the ICG.²³³ Interestingly, this initiative can be seen as a continuation of the principles laid out in the Kellogg-Briand Pact and around CBW, as discussed in the previous chapter, as it was partly an initiative resulting from the conference of experts at Frankfurt. Recognising the impossibility of humanising or constraining modern warfare, the conference underscored the necessity of launching a global campaign for total and universal disarmament.²³⁴

According to Garner, the ICG's objective was to forge unity among diverse peace forces, including communists, churches, and pacifists, in opposition to militarists,

²²⁸ *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Grenoble, May 15th to 19th, 1932*, 19.

²²⁹ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 123.

²³⁰ Harriet Hyman Alonso, 'Suffragists for Peace during the Interwar Years, 1919–1941,' *Peace and Change/Peace & Change* 14, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 256, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0130.1989.tb00127.x>.

²³¹ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 114.

²³² Alonso, 'Suffragists for Peace During the Interwar Years, 1919–1941,' 253.

²³³ Plesch and Miletic, 'The Relationship Between Humanitarian Disarmament and General and Complete Disarmament,' 208.

²³⁴ Plesch and Miletic, 'The Relationship Between Humanitarian Disarmament and General and Complete Disarmament,' 205.

governments, and profiteers, advocating for a cohesive disarmament policy.²³⁵ The WDC of the early 1930s emerged as a focal point for the ICG and WILPF's disarmament efforts. The ICG, in collaboration with women's organisations across 56 countries and with other organisations representing Catholic women and young people, were able to present millions of signatures of women and men from around the world to the WDC.²³⁶ Focusing primarily on disarmament efforts may suggest that the WILPF was shifting toward a more negative peace strategy. However, the discourse surrounding the WDC underscores why the WILPF regarded the event and the campaigns to collect signatures as more than that. It highlights that their advocacy extended beyond disarmament to encompass a broader effort to change the general sentiment around armament and peace, to then mobilise public opinion. They asserted that the WDC 'took on the character of a true campaign' in order to achieve 'certain effects on public opinion.'²³⁷ They focused on shaping public opinion and gathering signatures through educational initiatives and summer schools, encapsulated in their statement: 'The great task of our league is that of the education of opinion in all countries.'²³⁸ This confirms Lynch's assertion that peace movements tried to actively disseminate and promote a normative framework emphasising peaceful conflict resolution and disarmament.²³⁹

However, despite their efforts, negotiations at the conference collapsed in October 1933.²⁴⁰ Plesch and Miletic state that this collapse was because the WILPF recognised the futility of the conference without the participation of Germany.²⁴¹ According to the primary sources, the WILPF identified two additional factors contributing to the failure. Firstly, they noted that the disarmament conference was effectively controlled by the interests of arms merchants and manufacturers who vehemently opposed any disarmament measures.²⁴²

²³⁵ Garner, '4 Global Visions: The Women's Disarmament Committee (1931–1939) and the International Politics of Disarmament in the 1930s,' 147.

²³⁶ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 108.

²³⁷ *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Grenoble, May 15th to 19th, 1932*, 19.

²³⁸ *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Grenoble, May 15th to 19th, 1932*, 15.

²³⁹ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative.'; Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics.'

²⁴⁰ Plesch and Miletic, 'The Relationship Between Humanitarian Disarmament and General and Complete Disarmament,' 208.

²⁴¹ Plesch and Miletic, 'The Relationship Between Humanitarian Disarmament and General and Complete Disarmament,' 208.

²⁴² *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Eighth International Congress, Volkshaus, Zurich, September 3-8, 1934, Minutes of Proceedings*, 6.

Secondly, they highlighted that governments hindered their efforts by indoctrinating children with militarist education, thereby complicating their task of promoting normative change.²⁴³

The collapse of the WDC marked a profound setback for WILPF and the broader peace movement. As the conference fell apart amidst a backdrop of declining support for internationalism and increasing divisions among peace groups, the unity between and within peace groups was jeopardised. Without a central coordinating body like the WDC, the ability to synchronise efforts to address armament became increasingly challenging.²⁴⁴

Spanish Civil War and Neutrality

Amidst the WDC's decline and its challenges to transnational collaboration among peace movements, the late 1930s posed challenging circumstances for the WILPF. During these difficult times, the Spanish Civil War presented a crucial trial for the WILPF. This war was fought between 1936 and 1939 between the left-leaning Republicans and the right-leaning nationalists and fascists. The WILPF saw the struggle between those advocating for democracy and those seeking to preserve their privileges in Spain as the core issue.²⁴⁵ This civil war was particularly interesting, as it exemplified the general situation of the last years of the interwar period: the escalating tensions in Europe during the 1930s, the rise of fascist regimes, and re-armament. For this reason, the Spanish Civil War was a defining test for peace organisations at that time, as it posed the question of whether to actively support one side over the other, which would mean going against the principles of non-intervention and neutrality.²⁴⁶ Interestingly, the prominence of Topic 5 (Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War) during the last congress, as evidenced in Figures I and II, is thus not due to the significance of neutrality as an objective itself but rather because the discussions around neutrality made it particularly notable, which underscores the added value of applying qualitative analysis to the topic model results.

Disarmament had always been closely linked with neutrality, as both sought to prevent conflicts and promote peace by avoiding military aggression and alliances.²⁴⁷ During

²⁴³ *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Eighth International Congress, Volkshaus, Zurich, September 3-8, 1934, Minutes of Proceedings*, 6-7.

²⁴⁴ Plesch and Miletic, 'The Relationship Between Humanitarian Disarmament and General and Complete Disarmament,' 208.

²⁴⁵ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 88.

²⁴⁶ Caitriona Beaumont, 'Women's Organisations, Active Citizenship, and the Peace Movement: New Perspectives on Female Activism in Britain, 1918-1939,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 31, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 712, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2020.1842063>.

²⁴⁷ Alonso, 'Suffragists for Peace During the Interwar Years, 1919-1941,' 253.

the WDC, the WILPF specifically advocated for total disarmament, advocating for the complete elimination of all weapons without distinguishing between their 'offensive and defensive character.'²⁴⁸ However, amidst discussions surrounding the Spanish War, the distinction between disarmament (which allows some military capability) and total disarmament (the complete elimination of all weapons) became a point of significant debate. For some peace organisations, like the LNU, the Spanish War softened their stance, and they supported the Spanish Government's right to import arms for defence.²⁴⁹ The WILPF, however, remained steadfast in its advocacy for neutrality and total disarmament, at least publicly. Its resolutions in 1934 continued to call for 'complete impartiality' and stated they should remain strictly pacifists.²⁵⁰ For the Spanish War specifically, the WILPF stated that weapons supplied to any actor in the conflict, including the defensive side, would only increase the suffering of the innocent.²⁵¹ For this reason, its resolutions for Spain stated that 'the foreign troops be withdrawn from Spain', thus supporting strict non-intervention and neutrality.²⁵²

However, within the WILPF's discourse, internal disagreements on the topic of neutrality and non-intervention appear more frequently. Some women, mirroring Lipmann's general critique against peace movements at the time, argued that policies like arms embargoes could be circumvented and ultimately benefit invading regimes.²⁵³ Strict non-intervention and neutrality policies would then lead to policies of appeasement and isolationism, which would inadvertently benefit fascist powers.²⁵⁴

Consequently, some members then instead called for stronger sanctions like trade boycotts or even allowing armament for the anti-fascist sides, while others believed that WILPF should continue its pacifist stance. This led to criticism from both sides, with some members accusing the WILPF of not being pacifist enough and others thinking it was too

²⁴⁸ *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Grenoble, May 15th to 19th, 1932*, 23.

²⁴⁹ Donald S. Birn, 'The League of Nations Union and Collective Security,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 1974): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947400900305>.

²⁵⁰ 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 8th Congress Zurich, Switzerland September 3 – 8, 1934,' 1–2.

²⁵¹ *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Grenoble, May 15th to 19th, 1932*, 15.

²⁵² *WILPF RESOLUTIONS 9th Congress Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia Julz 27- 31, 1937*, 1.

²⁵³ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 126-127. ; Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic.* ; Catia C. Confortini, 'Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF),' in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2020, 3, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11795-5_103-1.

²⁵⁴ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 128.

pacifist.²⁵⁵ These disagreements explain why Alonso noticed a sharp decline in membership during the 1930s.²⁵⁶

Interestingly, despite ongoing discussions, most congress reports still maintain a facade of unity. The Eighth Congress breaks this pattern, as the less-edited minutes of proceedings reveal internal disagreements, such as an extensive discussion on whether passive resistance should still be implemented.²⁵⁷ This reinforces Sandell's claim that there was a tendency to minimise disagreements in more official and widespread records. This stems from WILPF's recognition of the significance of their documents, as they serve as a means for asserting their voice and considerable influence over their own historical narrative.²⁵⁸

Overall, the Spanish Civil War convinced a lot of activists that strictly pacifist measurements were too little too late, which, according to Ceadel, made the 'illusion of non-military sanctions' collapse.²⁵⁹ While peace movements had previously found common ground and were able to collaborate when it came to disarmament, the discourse now hints at a polarising trend within the WILPF, where activists started to polarise either towards pacifism or away from it.²⁶⁰

Maternalist Pacifism, Disarmament, and Social Justice

Despite internal disagreements and global tensions, the WILPF kept embracing their foundation of feminist pacifism, characterised by the activism of women in the suffrage movement, who oppose militarism. According to Beaumont, for many women's peace organisations, this peace advocacy was rooted in maternalist pacifism.²⁶¹ This viewpoint posited women's natural inclination towards peace as a counterbalance to men's proclivity for militarism. The prominence of words like 'mother' and 'mothers' in the topic word list of Topic 4 (Peace Advocacy and Rise of Fascism) discourse evidenced that the WILPF itself also leaned into this maternalist perspective.

²⁵⁵ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 105.

²⁵⁶ Alonso, 'Suffragists for Peace During the Interwar Years, 1919–1941,' 259.

²⁵⁷ *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Eighth International Congress, Volkshaus, Zurich, September 3-8, 1934, Minutes of Proceedings*, 15–17.

²⁵⁸ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 105.

²⁵⁹ Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith*, 151.

²⁶⁰ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 128-129.

²⁶¹ Beaumont, 'Women's Organisations, Active Citizenship, and the Peace Movement: New Perspectives on Female Activism in Britain, 1918-1939,' 699.

According to Huckestein, the Spanish War specifically prompted organisations like the Women's Co-operative Guild to embrace this perspective, largely due to widespread awareness of the victimisation of children. These groups urged other women, as mothers, to speak out against the fascist bombings and harm inflicted on children.²⁶² The congress transcripts reveal that this argument can be extended to the WILPF, as they consistently state that this rise of fascism makes 'every humane and especially every mother's heart trembles under the apprehension of a coming war.'²⁶³

Moreover, Sandell observes that in the late interwar years, despite shared feminist pacifist goals, women's peace movements started to vary more in their approaches. Some now prioritised negative peace over women's rights, while others pursued both simultaneously.²⁶⁴ Sandell states that the WILPF maintained its dedication to achieving gender equality alongside peace.²⁶⁵ The discourse analysis reveals the precise way the WILPF did this. Firstly, the WILPF thus strategically embraced a maternalist perspective that integrated maternal concerns into broader feminist pacifist objectives. By emphasising peace as crucial for protecting children and families, the WILPF underscored the humanitarian imperatives of their activism. This maternalist perspective has been discussed in the historiography, where it also acknowledged the risks of this essentialist perspective. While the prominence of the words 'mother' and 'mothers' might hint towards the WILPF leaning into this rhetoric, the discourse reveals it did not fully embrace this maternalist claim as its primary identity. This can be evidenced by the second way the WILPF maintained its dedication to achieving gender equality alongside peace.

During the Ninth Congress in 1937, there were no direct mentions of resolutions that specifically addressed women's rights—such as suffrage or access to education. On the other hand, a significant proportion of resolutions from the Second Congress in 1919 were exclusively dedicated to these issues.²⁶⁶ Over the years, there was a shift from a direct to an indirect approach toward women's rights, with a gradual emphasis on these rights becoming more integrated into broader goals during the later interwar period.

²⁶² Huckestein, 'From Cradle to Grave: The Politics of Peace and Reproduction in the Anti-Fascist Campaigns of British Women's Organisations,' 62.

²⁶³ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 93.

²⁶⁴ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 116.

²⁶⁵ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 116.

²⁶⁶ 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 2nd Congress Zurich, Switzerland 1919.' ; 'WILPF RESOLUTIONS 9th Congress Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia Julz 27- 31, 1937.'

In the later interwar years, women's rights were thus intertwined with the WILPF's advocacy, highlighting that pacifism held more profound significance for the WILPF than mere maternalism.

This can be illustrated by the themes discussed in this chapter. With its advocacy for disarmament, the WILPF aimed to challenge power dynamics and foster a more equitable and peaceful world. They believed that disarmament had to be achieved before other social reforms could be implemented.²⁶⁷ Moreover, the interconnectedness of feminism and disarmament shed light on the intrinsic link between gender inequality and militarism. This intersection arises from the acknowledgement that women bear disproportionate burdens during conflicts, often becoming victims of violence, which the WILPF also specifically applied to the Spanish War.²⁶⁸ Thus, disarmament is, for the WILPF, already a tangible form of social reform and justice, deeply intertwined with broader societal concerns and thus related to positive peace as well as negative peace.

Other initiatives, such as the internationalisation of civil aviation to prevent its exploitation for military purposes and a commitment to addressing the plight of refugees, came out of the topic model as well and are connected to women's issues as they represent necessary prerequisites for advancing broader social reforms aimed at improving women's daily lives.²⁶⁹

Thus, the WILPF's commitment to maintaining peace was not merely motivated by abstract essentialist ideals but grounded in a pragmatic understanding of its instrumental value for advancing broader social reform objectives. The WILPF perceived preventing another war from breaking out as a crucial prerequisite for maintaining their efforts to advocate for social reforms that would enhance women's daily lives.²⁷⁰ Thus, more than just advocating for peace for the sake of peace, peace was instead a necessary first step for their other more suffragist goals. This acknowledgement reinforces Beaumont's claim that for the WILPF, 'all progress in social reform depends on the maintenance of peace.'²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Sandell, 'United in Their Quest for Peace?: Transnational Women Activists Between the World Wars,' 105.

²⁶⁸ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*, 93.

²⁶⁹ *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhačovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937.*

²⁷⁰ Beaumont, 'Women's Organisations, Active Citizenship, and the Peace Movement: New Perspectives on Female Activism in Britain, 1918-1939,' 711.

²⁷¹ Beaumont, 'Women's Organisations, Active Citizenship, and the Peace Movement: New Perspectives on Female Activism in Britain, 1918-1939,' 711-12.

Conclusion

The last years of the interwar period were evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of the WILPF and other peace movements. The WILPF was able to set up a widespread collaborative campaign for disarmament, which proved the dynamic nature of the organisation and its awareness of what pragmatic solutions were needed to respond to the geopolitical events happening at the time. However, actual fascist crises like the Spanish Civil War brought forward discussion around whether pacifism should be enacted regardless of circumstances, leading to policies of neutrality and non-intervention, or whether the rising fascist regimes of the time called for more drastic measures. In other words, this crisis underscored the tension between moral principles and pragmatic realities, revealing the nuanced approach required in navigating complex international crises. Despite these disagreements, the WILPF recognises the strength in presenting a cohesive message to the world. They understood that such cohesion was vital not only for influencing practical international treaties but also for effectively shaping public opinion and norms. Moreover, even during these years of adversity, the WILPF did not lose sight of its feminist, suffragist, and social reform goals.

6. Conclusions

This thesis conducted a quantitative analysis of topic modelling and a qualitative analysis of discourse analysis to examine what the prevalent themes of the WILPF during the interwar period were, and what this tells us about the WILPF's objectives, development, and positioning. The quantitative analysis discovered five topics: the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Transnationalism and the New International Order, Self-Determination and Humanitarianism, Peace Advocacy and the Rise of Fascism, and Neutrality and the Spanish Civil War. While these topics do not cover all of the WILPF's objectives, they are the ones that showed up as the most prominent themes in the topic model, which underscores their significance.

The qualitative chapters then examined these topics in more depth. Chapter 2 analysed how the WILPF saw self-determination as a critical aspect of their social justice goals and of sustainable peace. It highlighted how the WILPF adapted to the international order by critiquing the LoN when it fell short in achieving self-determination, leading to the WILPF's pursuit of an NIO that included self-determination within a broader framework of transnational cooperation. Chapter 3 discussed how the WILPF strategically used the Kellogg-Briand Pact to justify and frame their other objectives, leveraging this diplomatic opportunity to move beyond traditional militaristic norms and instead advocate for pacifist norms. Finally, Chapter 4 focused on the last interwar years, examining how the WILPF collaborated transnationally with other peace organisations in the face of rising fascism. However, increasing international tensions also caused internal conflicts within the WILPF, leading to discussions around the feasibility of neutrality.

By conducting the topic modelling analysis, this thesis was able to provide an objective examination of the WILPF. While topic modelling comes with limitations due to computational biases, this thesis was able to highlight specific topics that were not extensively discussed in studies before, such as the NIO and discussions surrounding CBW. More importantly, the unique contribution of this thesis lies in its in-depth exploration of these objectives, enabling it to establish links between topics and draw parallels. This analysis has led to the creation of a general framework that could be applied to other objectives as well as position the WILPF in the field of peace organisations.

An important aspect of this framework is that it is clear that the WILPF's objectives never exist in isolation; instead, they are intricately interconnected with each other and with the broader framework of the WILPF's goals. For instance, with advocating for disarmament

and self-determination, the WILPF sought to dismantle power imbalances and promote the rights of marginalised communities. Thus, they connected negative peace goals with economic and societal justice goals. It becomes evident that the WILPF's name underscores the intrinsic link between peace and freedom, as each pursued goal emphasises the intertwined nature of these ideals. Peace and freedom are symbiotic for the WILPF, and they recognised that advocating for peace creates the conditions for freedom (for nations and women) to thrive and vice versa. This interconnectedness underscores the importance the WILPF attributed to positive peace. More than just the absence of conflict, each of the objectives highlights how, for the WILPF, peace embodies a society characterised by equality and justice.

As for the development of the WILPF, it became evident that while its ideals were rooted in utopian aspirations, its changing priorities and approach to achieving these objectives through the interwar years were grounded in pragmatism. This pragmatism is visible in two different ways. Firstly, it is visible in the way WILPF was able to quickly respond to specific pressing geopolitical events, such as in the cases of Ireland and Spain, or with diplomatic tools like the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the ICG. These events influenced their decisions, prompting specific solutions and altering the direction of their overall peace advocacy. By confronting these realities, the WILPF gained valuable insights into more efficient pathways to peace. For example, their critique of the LoN's mandate system and the subsequent formulation of the NIO manifesto demonstrated a proactive approach to restructuring global governance in pursuit of self-determination and lasting peace. Secondly, pragmatism is visible in that despite the WILPF's almost utopian ideals, they had practical solutions to reach these goals. These solutions often had the primary goal of influencing public opinion on the topic and thereby mobilising the public. They did this, for instance, by writing letters, organising conferences, and creating educational opportunities for the public.

The objective perspective that topic modelling was able to add to the historiography is also a suggestion for further studies, as it could be studied even more extensively through other text analysis methods, such as sentiment analysis. This could track how emotions changed over time and per topic, and this could then highlight the impact of key historical events on the organisation's goals and strategies.

Moreover, by employing a case study approach in a similar way as Siegel and Calver have done, this thesis adds depth to the history of women's influence, countering narratives

that often overlook their contributions in favour of state and male actors.²⁷² Additionally, this thesis also analysed the way gender affects and is integrated into the WILPF's advocacy. While women's rights may not have emerged as one distinct topic in the topic modelling results, their significance is seen in every aspect of the WILPF's work. A gendered lens on the discourse reveals three distinct ways gender dynamics were evident. First, it becomes increasingly clear that feminism and pacifism are inherently connected to the WILPF. For instance, by aligning the Kellogg Pact with social justice goals and feminist goals, the struggle for peace and the struggle for women's rights are consistently framed as interconnected. Furthermore, through the Kellogg Pact, the NIO, and the WDC, they consistently challenged the male-dominated and militaristic political systems. This connection relates to the WILPF's concept of positive peace. A broader concept of peace than just the mere absence of war makes sense for a women's peace group since, for them, social justice in the shape of women's rights and gender equality was inseparable from sustainable peace. Secondly, the WILPF's consistent advocacy for transnational cooperation, as recognised by the NIO and the WDC, highlights their belief that global solidarity among women was essential for societal change. Moreover, it provided a means to operate outside traditional state-centric political and legal spheres. Finally, most evident during the Spanish Civil War but also in efforts to promote the Kellogg Pact, the WILPF employed maternalist or gendered rhetorics to garner support for their causes. While this might reflect an essentialist perspective, it strategically leveraged the perception of women as natural peacemakers to advance their goals.

This gendered look at some of the specific themes of the WILPF adds to the historiography of the WILPF and women in the interwar period in several ways. Firstly, this study adds additional support for Siegel's claim that the WILPF connected pacifism with feminism.²⁷³ Furthermore, it enriches other historiographical claims by, for instance, illustrating how the rise in internationalism, as discussed by Sharp and Stibbe, aligns with the WILPF's preference for transnationalism. Additionally, it shows that the WILPF itself utilised the prevalent maternalist sentiment of the time in their discussions, not just that it

²⁷² Calver, *Anti-Fascism, Gender, and International Communism: The Comité Mondial Des Femmes Contre La Guerre Et Le Fascisme, 1934 - 1941.* ; Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog.*

²⁷³ Siegel, *Vrede Op Onze Voorwaarden: De Wereldwijde Strijd Voor Vrouwenrechten Na de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, 21.

existed in the general public.²⁷⁴ Finally, the WILPF's broad and positive definition of peace challenges the historiographical claims by Lippman and Masland that portray women as strictly opposed to militaristic measures and focused solely on negative peace advocacy.²⁷⁵

Of course, the question remains how the significance of the WILPF during the interwar years should be interpreted. The simple conclusion would be that they had no significance, as WWII proved the WILPF was unable to succeed in reaching its primary objective: peace. However, this thesis would argue that this is an unfair assumption, mirroring Lynch's normative approach, which argues that the interwar peace movement should not automatically be considered a 'failed' movement.²⁷⁶ Amidst escalating international tensions, the WILPF emerged as one of the earliest platforms for women to engage in global activism and advocacy and exert influence by attempting to change militaristic norms.

While this thesis is limited in its examination of the actual influence of norms due to its specific sources, future studies could delve deeper into the WILPF's tangible impact on global norms. This could involve exploring changes in external perspectives of the WILPF over time, e.g. by conducting sentiment analysis on news articles about the WILPF. Nonetheless, this thesis remains significant as it sheds light on the strategies employed by the WILPF to exert influence and the areas they sought to influence. This influence suggests that its efforts attempted to play a pivotal role in challenging the legitimacy of aggressive warfare and the expansion of militarism internationally. Instead, they wanted to change norms toward the normalisation of pacifism and arbitration.

By promoting nonexclusive and transnational participation and rights in international decision-making processes, the WILPF fostered a more inclusive and democratic approach to global governance. The WILPF was instrumental in promoting the idea of women's participation in international diplomacy. Through its initiatives and mere existence, the organisation sought to challenge the exclusion of women from decision-making processes related to peace and security. Although full gender equality was not achieved, the WILPF's advocacy paved the way for increased recognition of women's contributions to peacebuilding and diplomacy. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the WILPF still exists today, which

²⁷⁴ Jo Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,' *Women's History Review* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 1993): 23–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029300200021>.

²⁷⁵ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic.*; Masland, "The 'Peace' Groups Join Battle."

²⁷⁶ Lynch, 'Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements Challenging Dominant Narrative'; Lynch, 'Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics.'

demonstrates its enduring relevance and commitment to promoting peace and gender equality.

The WILPF thus advocated for a comprehensive conception of peace and security that extended beyond the mere absence of conflict, emphasising the importance of women's rights, social justice and humanitarian goals. In doing so, the WILPF actively tried to influence public opinion and norms, and broaden the discourse surrounding peace by highlighting the interconnectedness between peace and freedom. This was all with the goal of participating in the global order at a crucial time in history despite their exclusion from official peace negotiations.

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