

BEYOND
APPEASEMENT

INTERPRETING INTERWAR PEACE
MOVEMENTS IN WORLD POLITICS

CECELIA LYNCH

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*Mythological Narratives
and Critical Interpretation*

Great Britain and the United States in the interwar period witnessed the most polemical and complex peace movement activity in history. Conventional interpretations of this activity have framed debates in history, international relations, and international security studies. These interpretations, however, are misleading. They have limited our historical understanding of the role, influence, and meaning of interwar peace movements. They have also constrained theories about the role of social movements in world politics.

In contrast to conventional interpretations, I argue that interwar peace movements in Britain and the United States contested traditional security norms and legitimized significant norms that underlay global international organization and, ultimately, the construction of the United Nations. The importance of this activity has been masked, however, by the prevailing narratives of the interwar period, which blame peace movements for appeasement in Britain and isolationism in the United States and ignore social agency in the founding of the United Nations. The power of these dominant narratives, in turn, has reinforced theoretical tendencies that label social agency as "idealist" as opposed to "realist," implying that it is dangerous, simplistically liberal, or unworthy of serious consideration.

Scholarship and conventional wisdom provide contradictory answers to the question about the role and meaning of interwar peace movements, a stance that leads to a double paradox. First, popular and academic discourse blames peace movements for interwar failures, yet scholars argue

that the primary causes of specific policies, including arms limitation and appeasement, were rooted in the biases of individual leaders, economic or security requirements, or structural constraints—factors that do not involve social agency. Second, dominant narratives of the construction of the United Nations ignore the role of social movements, yet the very existence of norms underpinning global international organization—universal participation, equality of status, the promotion of peace, economic and social welfare, individual and group rights—makes little sense when divorced from the agency of social movements. The absence of social movements from these narratives is all the more puzzling since a considerable body of research accords nongovernmental organizations a significant role in promoting these norms in contemporary international organization.¹

Incomplete narratives of the influence of social movements are responsible for these paradoxes. The first paradox is based on a narrative that assigns peace movements significant influence—but only for negative normative and policy effects. The second overlooks the role of social agency in building global international institutions and leads us to disregard the similarities between social movements in the past and in the present. Resolving the inconsistencies in both paradoxes requires historical research that is more balanced and narratives that are more complete.

I thus maintain a critical stance toward entrenched narratives in order to reconstruct interpretations that address the complexity of social movement agency. I argue that the most productive way to understand social movement agency in world politics is to clarify its *normative meaning*, that is, its role in legitimizing and delegitimizing norms of behavior in political practice. I analyze policy, therefore, but not as an end goal. Instead, tracing the role of peace movements in policy debates provides a means to situate both the movements and the debates within a broader normative and

¹ Paul Wapner, "Politics beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics," *World Politics* 47 (April 1995): 311–40; Audie Klotz, "Norms Reconstituting Interests: Global Racial Equality and U.S. Sanctions against South Africa," *International Organization* 49 (Summer 1995): 451–78; Kathryn Sikkink, "Human Rights, Principled Issue-Networks, and Sovereignty in Latin America," *International Organization* 47 (Summer 1993): 411–42; Roger A. Coate, Chadwick F. Alger, and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "The United Nations and Civil Society: Creative Partnerships for Sustainable Development," *Alternatives* 21 (January–March 1996): 93–122; Franke Wilmer, *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993); Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker, eds., *NGOs, The United Nations, & Global Governance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996); Ronnie D. Lipschutz and Ken Conca, eds., *The State and Social Power in Global Environmental Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); David P. Forsythe, *Humanitarian Politics: The International Committee of the Red Cross* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

social context. My analysis then explores the relationship among narratives, norms, and social agency.

PEACE MOVEMENTS AND NORMATIVE INFLUENCE

Criticisms of peace movements remain powerful. At the extreme, pundits and scholars accuse interwar peace movements of causing appeasement, isolationism—and hence promoting world war. This thesis is epitomized by Walter Lippmann, who stated unambiguously that “the preachment and practice of pacifists in Britain and America were a cause of the [second] World War. They were a cause of the failure to keep pace with the growth of German and Japanese armaments. They led to the policy of so-called appeasement.” Interpretations based on this thesis permeate both popular thinking and scholarship, and leaders in Britain and in the United States from the 1950s to the present post-Cold War era have called upon this interpretation to disparage peace movement dissent and legitimize interventionist policies. The appeasement bogey, for example, has been raised by Anthony Eden against critics of militarism and interventionism in Suez, by Ronald Reagan against European peace movement activists in the 1980s during the Freeze Campaign, and by George Bush against opponents of the Persian Gulf War.²

A second critique charges “utopians” with an unwise and ultimately futile attempt to institutionalize in the international realm moral principles designed for the domestic arena. Exemplified by E. H. Carr’s seminal work, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1929*, this claim is ultimately as powerful and damning as that of Lippmann. At one point himself an advocate of appeasement (although he skillfully lifts this argument from the revised 1946 edition of his book), Carr does not castigate peace movements for “causing” the policy, and only indirectly scolds them for preventing rearmament. His criticism is leveled at hegemonic ideology, embodied in self-serving faith in the League of Nations, international law, general disarmament, and compulsory arbitration. These peace movement proj-

² Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943), p. 53; Victor Rothwell, *Anthony Eden: A Political Biography, 1931–1957* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 212–13; Robert J. Beck, “Munich’s Lessons Reconsidered,” *International Security* 14 (Fall 1989): 161; John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), pp. 204–5; George Bush, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 1990, Book II (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 1108.

ects Carr considered at best naive and at worst morally corrupt vestiges of nineteenth-century liberalism.³

A third critique of interwar social forces focuses on the damage that “public diplomacy” could cause to diplomatic efficiency. For example, Gordon Craig and Alexander George address the “excessive preoccupation with the mood of the electorate” during the interwar period. They single out “diplomacy by conference,” a method that peace movements actively supported to make the treaty-building process more transparent to the public in the hopes of thwarting Bismarckian-style secrecy. For diplomatic historians, these methods “had the effect of changing the conduct and forms of diplomacy in ways that were not always conducive to efficiency.”⁴

All three critiques are variants of classical realism, which sees the interwar period as the prototype for how foreign policy ought not to be conducted. The field of international relations has ever since cast the complexities and paradoxes of the period into binary categories—realism versus utopianism or idealism; scientific man versus power politics; moral man versus immoral society—that typecast social agency and from which enduring lessons are to be drawn.⁵

Yet, when scholars move from castigating peace movements to explaining the outbreak of war, these mythological representations evaporate. Scholarship on the origins of specific interwar policies does not cite peace movement influence as the primary causal factor for any given economic or strategic decision of the period, concluding instead that individual decision making or structural factors were determinative. Early scholarship focused on Neville Chamberlain’s inexperience or collusion with the fascists or Franklin Roosevelt’s ambivalence about pushing the United States into a leadership role as causes of appeasement and isolationism. After the 1960s structural analyses targeting either economic or strategic constraints for interwar policies became dominant, coalescing into the “post-revisionist” corporatist school in history and the neorealist balance-of-power school in international relations. Each of these schools drew on themes in classical realism, but each also moved away from studying social

³ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939*, 2d ed. (1946; New York: Harper & Row, 1946), pp. 15–18, 62, 140, 178, 202–3. See also Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), pp. 83–87.

⁴ Gordon Craig and Alexander George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 60.

⁵ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*; John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Scribner, 1960).

movements. Neorealist analysis, in particular, ignored questions of social agency, intentionality, and normative meaning; consequently, the interwar period became a "gap" in balance-of-power politics. Scholarship emanating from the fiftieth anniversary of World War II, however, has revived debates on interwar tragedies and fiascos.⁶ Although contemporary debates do not focus on the role of peace movements or echo the vehemence of Lippmann's censures, vague references to the role of "pacifism," the "peace movement," or war-averse "domestic publics" as contributing factors to ill-fated policies remain common and illustrate the endurance of the earlier narratives.

The discrepancy between the negative reputation of interwar peace movements and the inconclusive evidence that they exerted direct policy influence is due to the difficulty of tracing peace movement activity to strategic or military decisions and to theoretical trends. Final policy proposals must pass through domestic elites and legislative institutions to be enacted, and documentary evidence of policy decisions comes from government archives and official papers that reflect socialization into the traditional diplomatic discourse of *realpolitik*. It is easy, therefore, to ignore social movements in favor of structural analysis, to focus on "domestic factors" that encompass only elites, or to adopt the attitude of government officials who dislike unofficial interference. Thus analysts of the "high politics" of peace and security either dismiss social forces, especially those that draw much of their strength from popular mobilization, or consider them to be *a priori* nefarious. They thus miss or gloss over, at considerable cost, the social and political ferment that contributes so strongly to debate. It is necessary, therefore, to reexamine both the classical realist critique and the neorealist denial of social agency.

⁶ For an overview, see William R. Rock, *Chamberlain and Roosevelt: British Foreign Policy and the United States, 1937-1940* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), esp. chap. 1; for a different view of Roosevelt, see Barbara Rearden Farnham, *Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis: A Study of Political Decision-Making* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). On corporatism, see Michael J. Hogan, "Corporatism," in Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Thomas J. McCormick, "Drift or Mastery? A Corporatist Synthesis for American Diplomatic History," *Reviews in American History* 10 (December 1982): 318-30. On neorealism, see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), and Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). On more recent scholarship, see Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement, and the Manipulation of the Press* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989); Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-1939* (New York: Pantheon, 1989). See also Beck, "Munich's Lessons Reconsidered"; J. L. Richardson, "New Perspectives on Appeasement: Some Implications for International Relations," *World Politics* 40 (April 1988): 289-316; and Anthony Adamthwaite, "War Origins Again," *Journal of Modern History* 56 (March 1984): 100-15.

At the same time, the charges leveled against peace movements are not merely that they "caused" bad policy, or in the worst case, war. Dominant narratives criticize interwar peace movements as much for daring to inject themselves into foreign policy debates, for the types of policies they attempted to enact, and for the underlying guides to action they promoted as for actual policy outcomes. These narratives charge peace movements with normative influence, where norms are seen as both pragmatic "guides to behavior" defined in terms of rights and obligations and as ethical principles.⁷

The critique of diplomatic inefficiency illustrated by Craig and George mildly criticizes social forces and does not accuse them of primary responsibility for failed decisions. It does, however, emphasize that inefficient policy results from demands for inclusion and transparency. It implies that demands to redefine who participates in security decisions disturb pragmatic norms of efficient diplomatic conduct, leading to confusion, misperception, and mistakes.

Lippmann's *realpolitik* critique castigates peace movements and mass publics much more severely for their inexperience and interference in security decisions, laying a solid foundation for postwar perceptions of the interwar period and judgments about social activism in foreign affairs. Students of public opinion have discredited Lippmann's thesis on mass publics, that is, that they are too volatile, irrational, unintelligent, and ineducable to play a constructive role in foreign policy decision making. But the damning censure of interwar peace movements' "preachment and practice" in preventing rearmament and promoting appeasement continues to resonate.⁸ Much of the power of this critique lies in its inherent criticism of movements not merely for "causing" a particular type of policy, but also for shifting the limits of acceptable behavior to norms that delegitimize preparations for the use of force. In this view, such norms prevent a state from developing the necessary means to realize its interests.

The final classical realist variant is the critique of liberalism embodied in Carr, whose interpretation of the interwar period is based on criticism

⁷ Stephen Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables," in *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 2; Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Terry Nardin and David Mapel, "Convergence and Divergence in International Ethics," in Nardin and Mapel, eds., *Traditions of International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 297-317.

⁸ Benjamin Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See n. 2; also F. S. Northedge, "The Adjustment of British Policy," in Northedge, ed., *The Foreign Policies of the Powers* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 171.

of liberal hegemony. He implicates peace groups in his trenchant critique of the "harmony of interests," the notion that what is good for the individual is good for the collectivity, even when the "individuals" who define the collective good happen to be those who are most powerful and prosperous. For Carr this false belief in harmony has two interrelated aspects: faith in the liberal doctrine of laissez-faire, and the belief that global peace could be attained through law, international institutions, and the force of reason, although he modified the latter part of the critique in his later work. He deftly blends his critique of liberal norms of morality with realpolitik counsel on the necessity of taking "power" into account in foreign policy decision making; thus both critical theorists and classical realists draw "lessons" from his work.⁹

Here again, much of the power of the critique lies in its normative dimensions. Carr, more clearly than others, zeroes in on the normative content of peace movement projects, and he disparages the specific norms of equality of status and universal participation on which peace group projects for global international organization were based. By creating the realist/utopian dichotomy, he opened debate about the relationship between ideology and power. Carr's peace groups are simplistically liberal, morally naive social agents who promote unworkable norms in world politics. "It may be not that men stupidly or wickedly failed to apply right principles, but that the principles themselves were false or inapplicable."¹⁰ For him peace groups ignore power realities at the same time as they act as unwitting agents of hegemonic interests.

These criticisms each presuppose some judgmental posture regarding "proper" norms of conduct by states, diplomats, and social agents, although they do not use that language. In so doing, they situate peace movement agency within narratives of the interwar experience that are constructed from particular interpretations of security requirements, power, and ideology. More often than not, these narratives are not analytically distinct; rather, ongoing criticisms of peace movement agency tend to combine one or more of them.

Yet each narrative also falls short, raising interpretive problems. The

⁹ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, especially pp. 41–62, *The Moral Foundations of World Order* (Denver, Colo.: Social Science Foundation, University of Denver, 1948), and *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942). Michael Joseph Smith, in *Realist Thought*, discusses the classical realist position on Carr; for critical theorists' appropriation of Carr see Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10 (1981): 127–31; Cox, with Timothy J. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 51; and Paul Howe, "The Utopian Realism of E. H. Carr," *Review of International Studies* 20 (July 1994): 277–97.

¹⁰ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, p. 40.

realpolitik judgment of peace movements' influence ties norms to appeasement, yet lacks concrete empirical support. The degree to which peace movements are blamed for these norms and policies indicates unacknowledged assumptions and preferences, resulting in analytical confusion. The diplomatic history critique rues overreliance on public participation during the interwar period, yet the demand for participation by nongovernmental organizations has become so institutionalized over time as to make such criticisms today seem like carping. At the very least, we should ask whether the problem might lie with the incapacity or unwillingness of diplomats to recast decision-making procedures to take into account very real public fears and social pressures, especially powerful in the aftermath of World War I. Finally, Carr's critique of liberalism treats social agents as monolithic in their ideological orientation. His work thus opens—and attempts to close—a debate about progressivism, radicalism, and socialism that intellectual historians and social theorists have found much more complex and treated with greater sophistication.¹¹ Taken together, these interpretations lead to a partial, misleading, and unsophisticated treatment of social agency, resulting in the overly simplistic dichotomization of political action into realist and idealist categories.

These interpretive lapses also fail to help us to understand why, if faith in the League of Nations and its goals of arbitration, disarmament, and economic and social welfare failed so miserably, states would bother to create a new global international organization in the form of the United Nations. Prevailing theories of the founding of the United Nations, like hypotheses about the origins of the universe, fall into either evolutionist or creationist camps. The evolutionist narrative assumes that global international organization, once it was articulated in the Enlightenment schemes of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre and Kant, developed according to an inexorable logic from seventeenth- through nineteenth-century international legal codes to twentieth-century institutions. The creationist school, in contrast, sees the United Nations as part and parcel of the post-World

¹¹ Frederick Charles Bartol, "Liberal Minds, State-Making Dreams: Politics and the Origins of Progressive Thought in Britain and the United States," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1995; James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); David Long, *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism: The International Theory of J. A. Hobson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); David Long and Peter Wilson, eds., *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Daniel Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10 (1982): 113-32; and Morton Keller, "Anglo-American Politics, 1900-1930, in Anglo-American Perspective: A Case Study in Comparative History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1982): 457-77.

War II "realist" restructuring of international politics into a reconstituted and pragmatic balance of great power interests.¹²

Yet there is nothing inherently inevitable about the evolution from legal theories to institutions, especially in times of cataclysmic wars. It is also unclear why states would want to "complicate their lives" by agreeing to construct and participate in costly forms of cooperation in a "multi-purpose, universal membership" international organization.¹³ Both the evolutionist and creationist narratives, I argue, lack an understanding of the social agents who articulated, promoted, and worked to legitimize global international organization. Twentieth-century innovations in the League and the United Nations are comprehensible only if we examine how social movements promoted and legitimized norms that constrained states' rights to wage war and that elucidated social and economic rights and responsibilities.

My alternative narrative captures social movements' constitutive, or enabling, role in building the United Nations. At issue is not promoting world government or furthering a spurious belief in global international organization to find a solution to the world's ills. Rather, we need to recognize that social groups fostered and exploited norms of behavior in world politics that differed in both form and substance from those that governed traditional diplomatic practice. The result, the legitimization of the League, the construction of the United Nations, and ongoing debates over the role of social movements in international life, represents a significant "move," in David Kennedy's words, in the course of international relations. However short the League and the United Nations fell of the lofty goals stated in the Covenant and Charter, respectively, each organization has represented in its era the primary recourse for social groups who have found the state unable or unwilling to provide security and peace, to address social inequities, and to respond to humanitarian crises. Global international organization embodies significant normative tensions and represents a "site of struggle between conservative and transformative forces."¹⁴ Both the construction of an alternative to the state and the underlying norm that stipulates that the international community, rather

¹² F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963); see also Chapter 5.

¹³ John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," *International Organization* 46 (Summer 1992): 583-84. I address Ruggie's explanation, U.S. geographic exceptionalism, in Chapter 7.

¹⁴ David Kennedy, "The Move to Institutions," *Cardozo Law Review* 8 (April 1987): 841-988; Robert W. Cox, "Multilateralism and World Order," *Review of International Studies* 18 (1992): 161-80.

than great powers, is responsible for maintaining peace emanate from the activities and goals of social movements.

AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING INTERWAR PEACE MOVEMENTS

An interpretive analysis of interwar peace movements addresses these shortcomings. Interpretivism is an approach whose roots are found in hermeneutics, history, philosophy, and jurisprudence, and that has branched out from early twentieth-century debates over the degree to which *Verstehen* (understanding) departs from explanation, to take a firm hold in the social sciences. Interpretivists stress the ways in which intentions and actions emanate from intersubjective understandings, are communicated by actors through discourse and narrative, and reproduce or change the meaning of established practices, rules, and norms. In contextualizing intersubjective understandings, discourse and narrative, and practices, rules, and norms, the interpretive task is "to make a confused meaning clearer."¹⁵ In other words, interpretivists attempt to provide a more complete understanding of the context and meaning of a particular text or set of actions than do alternative interpretations.¹⁶ A "better" interpretation gives coherence to the whole; however, it is not free to draw just any meaning from its subject. Rather, when confronted with specific empirical material, in the form of texts, actions, and/or practices, it must be refined and revised according to the material's content.¹⁷

Epistemologically, the focus of interpretivism on understanding and meaning differs from the emphasis of logical positivism on explanation through generalizable patterns or covering laws. Ontologically, given its concern with the meaning of intentional agency, interpretivism differs

¹⁵ Richard J. Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Political and Social Theory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976); Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, *Understanding and Social Inquiry* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977); Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Philosophical Papers 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 25; Craig Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

¹⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, edited and translated by John B. Thompson (1981; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Dallmayr & McCarthy, *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, p. 289; Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 2, p. 25.

¹⁷ Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer, Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Ronald Dworkin, "Law as Interpretation," *Critical Inquiry* 9 (September 1982): 179-200.

from both structural analysis and choice-theoretic modes of explanation, that ignore or overlook this understanding of social agency in favor of economic, strategic, or individualistic determinism.¹⁸ Although variants of interpretation, like positivism, abound, its adherents join in rejecting monocausal, ahistorical analysis that focuses on "brute facts" or objectively observable behavior. Thus most interpretivists admit some variation of the "hermeneutical circle," that is, that no single interpretation can provide *the* final, complete, or ultimate understanding of events.¹⁹ In other words, some interpretations are clearly better than others, good interpretations make sense in relating action to meaning, and strong empirical evidence is a necessary component of the interpretive task. Yet the adherence to contextuality, whether seen in terms of historical "layering" of translations of meaning for Gadamer or the incommensurability of different discourses for Taylor, means that analysts must also see their own narrations and understandings as situated in a matrix of historically conditioned concerns.²⁰ Interpretivists do not shy away from articulating well-developed, coherent understandings that improve on past explanations. Indeed, interpretivist research can aid in both "explaining" the role of particular agents in political outcomes and in "understanding" the meaning of such actions in their normative and historical contexts. But, mindful of the pitfalls of the hermeneutical circle, interpretivists stop short of declaring their findings universally applicable or finite.

Thus, interpretivists recognize that the way in which narratives, or "stories," about political events, are constructed is a critical theoretical enterprise, in that stories emphasize particular aspects of evidence for particular purposes. The critique of established narratives, therefore, is a significant component of their work. They are also concerned with the relationship between intentionality and behavior, how behavior is guided by pragmatic and ethical norms and conscious attempts to reproduce or change them. The intentions and beliefs of human agents are not merely subjective; they are, according to Bernstein, "*constitutive* of the actions,

¹⁸ The later writings of Wittgenstein provide early examples of this epistemological stance, clarified in the 1950s by Peter Winch. Wilhelm Dilthey represents an early, "psychologizing," version of interpretive ontology, although contemporary versions have moved away from concerns with the cognitive experience of the individual in favor of concern with intersubjective understandings of "social" agents. Dallmayr and McCarthy, *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, pp. 3-10, 137-40; Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁹ Winch and Taylor see no resolution, whereas Gadamer attempts to provide one. Winch, *Idea of a Social Science*; Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 2; Warnke, *Gadamer*.

²⁰ Dallmayr and McCarthy, *Understanding and Social Inquiry*; Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 2.

practices, and institutions that make up social and political life." This means that interpretivists are concerned with the meaning and possibilities of social agency.²¹

Aspects of interpretive methodology have taken hold in international relations. Diplomatic history is centrally concerned with the problem of interpreting archival evidence and the theoretical issues raised by differing interpretive approaches.²² Critical theory and postmodernism are concerned with both exposing the material and ideological power relationships underlying dominant discourses and narratives and exploring the relationship between identity and power.²³ As discussed later in this chapter, constructivism focuses on the critical role of rules and norms in providing intersubjective understandings that guide behavior.²⁴ And many feminist studies of international politics, despite their variants, contextualize dominant narratives and expose the contradictions in constructions of foundational concepts such as power and security.²⁵ In seeing interna-

²¹ Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 274–96; Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), pp. 37–70; Richard J. Bernstein, on Isaiah Berlin's critique of empirical theory, in Bernstein, *Restructuring*, p. 61; Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 2, p. 27; and Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 197–221.

²² See Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 1994); and Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, "Diplomatic History and International Relations Theory: Respecting Difference and Crossing Boundaries"; Jack S. Levy, "Too Important to Leave to the Other: History and Political Science in the Study of International Relations"; Stephen H. Haber, David M. Kennedy, and Stephen D. Krasner, "Brothers under the Skin: Diplomatic History and International Relations"; and Alexander L. George, "Knowledge for Statecraft: The Challenge for Political Science and History"—all in *International Security: Symposium: History and Theory* 22 (Summer 1997).

²³ Cox, *Approaches to World Order*; R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); David Campbell, *Writing Security, United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); James DerDerian, *On Diplomacy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996).

²⁴ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making, Rules and Ruled in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*; and Rey Koslowski and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization* 48 (Spring 1994): 215–48; Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992): 391–425; Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* (London: Routledge, 1998).

²⁵ V. Spike Peterson, ed., *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1992); J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

tional relations as gendered, feminist interpretations of international relations emphasize the necessity of highlighting, reinterpreting, and even critiquing the understandings, actions, and role in world politics of "hidden" or ignored social agents.²⁶

My preference for the interpretive approach is guided first and foremost by the empirical case at hand and the paradoxes it presents, and second, by the conviction that taking social agency seriously requires an interpretive stance toward intentionality. I therefore ground the problem of narrative construction in a critical case of social movement agency to develop a more sophisticated view of social movements as actors in international politics.

As argued, extant explanations of the role of interwar peace movements in international relations are embedded in variants of a "dominant narrative" of the interwar experience. Some variants attempt to explain the onset of World War II; others stop at the policies of appeasement and isolationism or neutrality; yet others view the interwar period as a "gap" in the normal conduct of foreign affairs. But each weaves the role of social forces, most often from the point of view of diplomatic sources, into a "plot" that contains normative lessons, or guides, for the conduct of foreign policy. These lessons emanate from the way in which concepts such as power, realism, idealism, diplomatic efficiency, security requirements, and the harmony of interests, hold intersubjectively understood meaning in foreign policy and security discourse. The resulting explanations of events point to concepts validated within this discourse to provide support for a given interpretation of events.²⁷ The dominant narratives "work," even when they lack sufficient empirical evidence, to the degree that their conceptual foundations call upon or validate norms that are deemed intersubjectively legitimate.

Narrative explanations of events thus have normative implications that we must discover and expose. In the case of interwar peace movements, social movement agency has most frequently been understood through the

²⁶ Not every feminist work focuses on all of these aspects, of course. *Ibid.* See also Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), and *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora Press, 1988); and, for an overview, Craig N. Murphy, "Gender in International Relations," *International Organization* 50 (Summer 1996): 513-38.

²⁷ This points to the notion of "conceptual narrative" articulated by Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 37-99.

prism of *realpolitik* and traditional diplomatic practice. I use an interpretive approach to exit from the traditional security discourse and provide a more coherent understanding of social movement agency than the dominant narratives allow. A more coherent interpretation requires a critical stance toward established ways of thinking. It also requires examining both peace group archives and the diplomatic records of governments and international organizations.

An interpretivist focus on the constitutive nature of rules, norms, and meaning also opens the way to understanding social movements' long-term role in constituting the United Nations. In international relations the study of norms provides a contrast to materialist and individualist theorizing to provide an understanding of the social fabric of international life. Norms are not merely regulative or constraining of behavior, but also enabling, or constitutive of particular practices and institutions. According to Kratochwil, norms are thus "the means which allow people to pursue goals, share meanings, communicate with each other, criticize assertions, and justify action." The study of norms in international relations falls under the rubric of "constructivism," which relies on interpretive insights to understand why actors make particular claims or choose certain behaviors over others. These reasons may appeal to generalized principles (ethical or pragmatic), rules of behavior, or shared understandings of self-interest, but they are in effect "guides" to behavior that are understood by those to whom the appeal is made. Research has shown that the institutionalization of particular norms, such as those on racial equality, human rights, or humanitarian intervention, can result in significant changes in state interests and in international practice.²⁸

Yet constructivists in international relations vary in their adherence to or break away from foundationalism, positivism, and relativism and in whether they believe constructivism belongs inside or outside the modernist tradition.²⁹ I locate the constructivist enterprise—the questions driving it and its essential assumptions regarding the social construction of

²⁸ Onuf, *World of Our Making*; Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*; Wendt, "Anarchy"; Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*; Finnemore, *National Interests*; and Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

²⁹ Compare Katzenstein, ed., *Culture of National Security*, to Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); see also Onuf, *World of Our Making*; Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Affairs* 3 (Fall 1997): 319–63; Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994), 384–96; Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*; and Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," *European Journal of International Relations* 2 (1996): 275–318.

reality—firmly within the interpretivist camp. My use of interpretation rules out either a positivist or a relativist analysis of interwar social movements. Rather, it supports an approach to political and social phenomena that relates each to the other and is, according to Bernstein, “empirical, interpretative, and critical.”³⁰ Thus, following interpretivists such as Ricoeur, I am more concerned with transcending the modernist versus post-structuralist debate than with taking a rigid position in regards to it. In other words, I am more concerned with analyzing how normative understandings give meaning to intentions, behavior, and events than with resolving the debate over whether foundational principles or methods can be “true” or universally applicable.³¹ I thus draw on the long tradition of interpretivist social science to highlight the relationship between narratives, norms, and social agency in world politics.

Emphasizing this relationship requires taking social agency seriously. Both Giddens’s notion of structuration in sociology and the constructivist interpretation of the “agent–structure” debate in international relations theory have opened the door to social agency by insisting that structures and institutions are not immutable, but instead are socially constructed sets of practices that are reproduced by agents who act knowledgeably and reflexively in the political sphere. Actors can act meaningfully only in a social context, based on mutual understandings and interpretations of events.³² Yet they may behave in intentional ways, through claims, demands, and actions that *either* reproduce *or* challenge established rules and practices.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that both structurationism in sociology and constructivism in international relations show an awareness of the question of how to interpret social agency, each has thus far relegated the issue to the background. In contrast, I bring social agency to the forefront by informing the analysis of norms with the interpretivist’s insight that intentional behavior holds meaning. Neither norms nor narrative interpretations arise in a vacuum, but constantly must be articulated, promoted, and legitimized—that is, reproduced or changed—by social agents. In-

³⁰ Bernstein, *Restructuring*, p. xiv.

³¹ Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, pp. 66–67; see also Calhoun’s defense of a “middle path” between defenders of difference and universalism, in *Critical Social Theory*, pp. xi–xii.

³² Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, repr. 1990); *The Constitution of Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990); in international relations theory, see Alexander Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 41, 3 (Summer 1987), 335–70; David Dessler, “What’s at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?” *International Organization* 43, 3 (Summer 1989): 441–73.

It is not my purpose, however, to exempt peace movements (or any other agent) from all responsibility for interwar fiascos. Tactical choices can lead to normative problems. For example, although I find it incorrect to blame the British peace movement for appeasement and misleading to equate neutrality with isolationism in the United States, I criticize certain U.S. peace groups for aligning themselves tactically with elements of the far right in the late 1930s and for adopting slogans such as "Keep America out of War." These choices muddled the normative goals of the movement and helped to legitimize the identification of "internationalism" with militarism and U.S. national interests after World War II. Developing a more sophisticated view of social movements, therefore, means seeing them as constant, intentional actors on the world scene and recognizing the complexity of their interactions with other types of agents, existing sets of practices, and norms.

In critiquing dominant narratives of the influence of peace movements, I present several interrelated alternative narratives of interwar peace movements' role in delegitimizing traditional security norms in Great Britain and the United States and in legitimizing norms underlying the formation of the United Nations. Chapter 1 begins this process by contextualizing interwar peace movement agency and developing an interpretive approach to the study of social movements. The second chapter explores the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ebb and flow of peace movements in Britain and the United States, analyzing their varied ideological composition and the way in which their normative project interacted with socioeconomic and political practices and concerns. Chapters 3 and 4 evaluate the British peace movement during the interwar period from the early 1920s through the controversies over Abyssinia, Munich, and war in the late 1930s. They highlight the fact that Britain could not achieve all of its conflicting goals, raising questions on what positions were "realistic," and they present an alternative narrative of British peace movement influence that breaks down its utopian moniker. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the U.S. peace movement in the same time period and provide an alternative interpretation of activity from the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922 through the neutrality debates of 1935-1941. The U.S. movement attempted to keep the debate over the content of internationalism from veering toward a uniquely military approach. Although it ultimately lost this battle, its understanding of the relationship between equality, justice, and peace would influence the future development of global international organization. Chapter 7 explores the ways in which the constitutive norms of equality of status, humanitarianism, and universal participation promoted by peace movements influenced the construction and legitimization of the United Nations. The conclusion ex-

plores three primary implications: first, seeing social movement participation as a constant in world politics, particularly in the legitimization and delegitimization of norms; second, understanding the problem of narrative construction and the need for critical reinterpretation of dominant narratives; and third, freeing theoretical inquiry from the remaining discursive power of the realist/idealist dichotomy. These conclusions open the way to a more thorough, yet critical, understanding of the continuing significance of social movements in world politics.