

## The Birth of the United Nations: call for papers

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The Amsab-ISH workshop 'The Birth of the United Nations. Continuities and Discontinuities in a Global Organization' will be held on the 11th and the 12th of October 2013. Participants are invited to submit papers by the 15th of March 2013.

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The Amsab-ISH workshop 'The Birth of the United Nations. Continuities and Discontinuities in a Global Organization' in Ghent (Belgium) aims to investigate more closely how the dissolution of the League of Nations took place and how the United Nations and a range of specialized UN agencies were devised during and shortly after the Second World War. Although it is a well-known fact that representatives of governments assembled in the city of San Francisco to establish the UN in 1945, it is hard to comprehend how exactly the new system came into existence. The question arises as to whether it was a feasible idea. While action taken by the League of Nations, its predecessor, proved to be successful in some areas (e.g. with regard to specific economic and social policies), the League failed at its core mission, the preservation of world peace. Nevertheless, during the later war years the Allied nation-states devised, discussed and established a new global organization, with specialized bodies and agencies. It eventually evolved into what might be considered an improved version of the League of Nations.

The workshop will seek to identify the leading protagonists. Who were they? Did the US assert its newly won hegemony, thereby disregarding the interests of the United Kingdom, the former hegemonic power? Or did a larger group of major powers push for a new international system? And if so, why did these powers call for strategic restraint and an institutional approach to post-war international politics? What role did smaller states play? And what about the colonies and the dependent territories? What role did Latin American and Central and Eastern European countries play in this process? And to what extent were governments involved? Or did world leaders (Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin) devise the UN? Which governing bodies – existing or new ones – played a key role in shaping UN institutions? And to what extent did experts, diplomats and generals play a role? Did civil society (citizens, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, women's organizations) participate in the process? Why did the UN establish a series of specialized agencies, such as the FAO, the ICAO, the UNRRA and the WHO? And how did existing international organizations such as the ILO and others become UN agencies? What role did regional groupings of countries play? Which major ideas about international relations, security, economic and social developments were accepted and which were rejected? Which ideological assumptions underpinned the concept of a new global organization? How innovative were William Beveridge's ideas about rebuilding Britain after the war? Did a new understanding of international law emerge? Which opportunities were grasped and which were not? Did younger generations play a role in shaping the post-war international system? Or were they to implement it? Did the Allied leaders espouse the idea of restoring the League of Nations, the Concert of Europe or the Hague Conferences? Or did they want to establish a new global organization? And how was the machinery of diplomacy of the 'founding fathers' working?

We would welcome papers exploring these topics. Attendance at the workshop is limited to a maximum of 20 participants, of whom 9 paper-givers, who will also serve as a discussant for other papers. Two keynote speakers will be invited as well as some experts. We welcome in particular paper-givers dealing with Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and political ideas as part of the historical process.

Paper proposals should include a title and a summary of the paper. Please also submit a CV, showing your expertise in the field. Proposals should be submitted to the organizers by mail (UNconf@amsab.be) by 15 March 2013.Â

Scientific Committee:

- Sandrine Kott, University of Geneva
- Geert Van Goethem, University of Ghent
- Bob Reinalda, Radboud University Nijmegen

Workshop venue: University of Ghent (Belgium)

Workshop organizer: Amsab-Institute of Social History

Participants whose papers are accepted for presentation and whose expenses are not reimbursed by their institution will have their travel and lodging expenses reimbursed equal to a certain amount.

The organizers will provide lunch on the 11th and 12th of October. The conference dinner will take place on the 11th of October.