

The Scottish-American Association, 1919–1923: A Study in Failure

Abstract: This article considers the history of the Scottish-American Association (SAA), an elite society founded in Edinburgh in 1919 in support of British-American friendship by Charles Saroléa, a Belgian diplomat and Professor of French at Edinburgh University.

While the 1890s and 1900s had witnessed a rapprochement between the UK and the USA, a variety of tensions immediately after the First World War threatened to undermine the relationship between the two countries. These tensions were aggravated by anti-British sentiment in what has traditionally been regarded as an isolationist US. With the wider diplomatic context in mind, this article will consider the ways in which the SAA envisioned an international relationship between Scotland and the US that was both distinct from, and a contributor to, the relationship between the UK and the US. As such, this article will interpret the SAA's planned aims and activities – which included public lectures and teaching American history in schools – as acts of unofficial public diplomacy.

While the SAA provides evidence of a Scottish voice on the international stage, this article argues that the organisation's failure to last more than four years is indicative of the inherent difficulties in trying to make this voice heard. The history of the SAA can be mapped onto the years of economic turmoil from 1921 and indicates both that the Association was a response to elite fears about the threat of Bolshevism and that its goal of a distinct Scottish contribution to Anglo-American relations was undermined by Scotland's cultural status.

The success of the SAA was also compromised by the personal foibles of Professor Saroléa. Not only were its Belgian founder's motivations for becoming involved in UK-US relations ambiguous, but the SAA's short existence is demonstrative of the irrelevance of Scottish culture in the era of inter-war 'cultural internationalism.'

Introduction

This is an article about failure. It is about the failure of a specific organisation – the Scottish-American Association (SAA), founded in 1919 but inactive by 1923 – to achieve its objectives, and the failure of the cultural tropes of the Scottish middle classes to find relevance or exert influence in post-First World War international society. The SAA was an unofficial organisation seeking to influence Anglo-American diplomatic relations through fostering cultural and intellectual linkages between Scotland and the United States by conducting what would now be termed public diplomacy activities, including educational programmes. Its failures are therefore instructive about both Scottish society in the immediate post-war years and the cultural underpinnings of the UK-US relationship. Crucially, this was the era of ‘cultural internationalism’ when, especially after the turmoil of the Great War, elite-led international actors increasingly felt that cultural relations between peoples were a means through which to secure future peace. In this way, the 1920s witnessed the beginnings of an ‘international society’ characterised by the efforts of organisations like the Pilgrims Society and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to compensate for difficult state-state relations. The SAA was another such elite-led non-state actor, whose membership included the principals of each of Scotland’s four universities; the Lord Provost of Edinburgh; the chairman of Rangers Football Club, Sir John Ure Primrose; the editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, Sir Robert Bruce; the American Consul in Edinburgh; and the industrialist and former government Director of Munitions in Scotland, William Weir.¹ In an age of anxiety when fears about social unrest exercised the minds of Europe’s and North America’s

¹ J. Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2013); N. J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge, 2008), p. xv; A. Iriye, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America, 1913–1945, Volume 3* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 110–18; D. Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 3, p. 183, and p. 211; S. Bowman, *The Pilgrims Society and Public Diplomacy, 1895–1945* (Edinburgh, 2018); Edinburgh University Centre for Research Collections (hereafter EUCRC), Charles Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘List of Names’, n.d., and Charles Saroléa to William Weir, 20 November 1919.

middle and upper classes, the SAA's founders were drawn towards the cause of British-American cooperation in the hope that it would provide a bulwark against destabilising influences in both Britain and the US.²

This article presents the SAA both as a manifestation of inter-war anxiety about cultural, social, and economic dislocation and as a casualty of that dislocation. It charts the history of the SAA and analyses in more detail the reasons for the organisation's lack of success. The central argument here is that the root of the SAA's demise lay in a set of contradictions. Just as social and economic tensions provided the reasons for the SAA's rise and fall, so too did its relationship to cultural and racist concepts like Anglo-Saxonism play a dual role in ensuring that the Association had only a short history. Though the inter-war years were indeed characterised by cultural internationalism, it did not necessarily follow that the SAA's version of this cultural internationalism would succeed. This was especially true of any attempted connection with the US: as Andrew Hook has observed, American interest in Scottish culture, together with any clear understanding of a distinct Scottish identity, peaked in the eighteenth century so that 'by the 1920s...any general awareness of Scottish culture had more or less disappeared from the American consciousness.'³ More widely, Scottish culture (especially one particular elite-led conception of Scottish culture, as this article will argue) and Scotland's place in the world were fundamentally compromised come the inter-war years. This 'relative cultural failure', as Michael Fry has termed it, had already started in the years before the First World War, but the years after the conflict only continued the downward trend in Scottish self-confidence. Scottish political activists (including socialists like James Maxton and John Maclean) might sign the 'Petition National de l'Ecosse pour

² C. J. Nottingham, 'Recasting Bourgeois Britain?: The British State in the Years Which Followed the First World War', *International Review of Social History*, 31, 3 (1986), pp. 227–47.

³ Andrew Hook, *From Goosecreek to Gandercleugh: Studies in Scottish-American Literary and Cultural History* (East Linton, 1999), p. 3.

obtenir sa Representation au Congress de la Paix' calling for Scottish representation at the Paris peace conference, but the need for such a petition in the first place, and its failure, only served to underline Scotland's peripheral place on the international stage. This cultural failure was concomitant with wider economic failures: after the short years of economic growth between 1919 and 1920 Scotland would experience recession and massive levels of out-migration peaking in 1923.⁴ In light of Scotland's post-war malaise, and matching the short duration of the economic boom, the SAA for all its internationalist ambition was doomed to irrelevance by 1923, when it disappears from the historical record.

The contradictions at the heart of Scottish society which served both to motivate and to undermine the work of the SAA were indicative of Scotland experiencing a heightened sense of its global clout alongside a simultaneous crisis in confidence. This much is shown by contemporaneous debates about Scottish devolution. Scottish home rule legislation in the UK Parliament had been derailed by the outbreak of the First World War and failed to achieve any further progress when the subject was debated again in the House of Commons in 1920. Speaking in favour of devolution, William Graham, MP for Edinburgh Central, described Scotland in 1920 as 'failing' and that Scots had been 'denied systematically the free expression of our individual and national genius.' It was argued that the outcome of this would 'fall with greater effect not merely upon Scotland but also on that very large part of the world, including England, over which we have the honour to preside.'⁵ It was with such a belief in the need for a unique Scottish contribution on the global stage that the SAA was founded, just as the organisation's failures were characteristic of the wider Scottish failures

⁴ M. Fry, *A New Race of Men: Scotland, 1815–1914* (Edinburgh, 2013), p. 395; R. J. Finlay, 'National Identity in Crisis: Politicians, Intellectuals and the "End of Scotland", 1920–1939', *History*, 79, 256 (1994), pp. 242–59; T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700–2007* (London, 2006), p. 266; M. Harper and N. J. Evans, 'Socio-economic dislocation and Inter-war Emigration to Canada and the United States: A Scottish Snapshot', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, 4 (2006), pp. 529–52.

⁵ HANSARD, Vol. 127, cc2005-83. 'Government of Scotland Bill', House of Commons Debate, 16 April 1920.

alluded to by Graham. Writing in 1929, the SAA's founder, the University of Edinburgh's Professor Charles Saroléa, argued that the 'story of modern Scotland is not a story of progress, rather is it one of retrogression.' In Saroléa's view, Scottish culture and influence – despite Scots having done more for the British Empire 'than any other section of the English-speaking people' – had suffered from having been 'merged and absorbed in the Empire' and that the country could 'serve the Empire much more efficiently if it were a self-contained and self-governing unity.'⁶ The SAA was an articulation of this notion and was an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to bring Scottish influence to bear on the international issues of the day. This article therefore addresses the paradox of a Scotland that has, in the words of Catriona Macdonald, 'always existed within a global nexus in which her partnership with her southern neighbour has been qualified by independent...relationships with other nations' but which nevertheless struggled to force its way onto the Anglo-American agenda.⁷

I.

The SAA was constituted in Edinburgh in July 1919, the month after the Treaty of Versailles had been agreed. A 'representative gathering of Edinburgh citizens' met under the chairmanship of Professor William Paterson, then Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, at 3 Royal Terrace to discuss the formation of the organisation.⁸ Those present included the University of Edinburgh's Chair of Logic and Metaphysics, Professor

⁶ *The Scotsman*, 26 January 1929; Saroléa's remarks perhaps undermine John M. MacKenzie's argument (made in opposition to Linda Colley) that the Empire helped 'create a loop beyond the English' which 'enabled the sub-nationalisms of the United Kingdom to survive and flourish.' See MacKenzie, 'Empire and National Identities: The Case of Scotland', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 8 (1998), p. 230. Indeed, this article goes on to question another strand of MacKenzie's argument, namely that Scottish connections with Europe and with Empire offset English dominance. While this may have been true at certain points in the past, it was not in evidence in the years immediately after the First World War. As this article will argue, neither was a connection with the US enough to ensure a distinct Scottish international voice. As such, this article takes the middle ground between Colley and MacKenzie: there is evidence of an attempted engagement with a form of Scottish nationalism but this took place on the infertile ground of Anglo-American Britishness.

⁷ C. M. M. Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2009), p. 8.

⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to John W. Davis, 19 July 1919.

Kemp Smith (who had worked in the American Section of the British Government's Department of Information during the First World War, and who was formerly of Princeton University and the University of California); Rufus Fleming, the US Consul in Edinburgh; and Alex B. Davidson from the YMCA.⁹ By November 1919, John W. Davis, the US Ambassador to Britain, was travelling north from London to formally inaugurate the new society in a city which, according to the SAA's secretary and principal founder, Charles Saroléa, had 'long been proud of its uninterrupted connection' with Davis's predecessors. This was a 'connection so close that the Scottish people have almost come to believe that the American Ambassador is accredited to Holyrood as well as to the Court of St James.'¹⁰ The Belgian Saroléa – who had organised the SAA's initial meeting – was a professor at the University of Edinburgh and was also the Belgian consul in the Scottish capital. He had been in Scotland since 1894, when he was appointed head of Edinburgh University's new Department of French. He became a British citizen in 1912 and remained in Scotland until his death in 1953. Saroléa was deeply interested in international relations, a passion that he pursued as editor of the *Everyman* journal and through his considerable published output. He was a keen self-publicist and was part of Edinburgh's social elite.¹¹ Saroléa was the SAA's guiding light. The organisation very much reflected his world view and its failures were partly the result of his personal shortcomings and foibles. As his biographer has noted, Saroléa was a complex character: both a cosmopolitan and a racist. The British Government did not trust him during the First World War and declined his request to go to the US in 1918 to conduct a propagandising lecture tour. The Foreign Office noted his republican tendencies

⁹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Minutes of meeting to discuss formation of the SAA, 18 July 1919, and Professor Kemp Smith to Saroléa, 23 November 1919; *The Scotsman*, 20 November 1919 and 3 April 1930 (for biographical details of Professor Kemp Smith).

¹⁰ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Davis, 19 July 1919.

¹¹ S. T. Johnson, "'A good European and a sincere racist.'" The life and work of Professor Charles Saroléa, 1870-1953' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Keele, 2001), pp. 50–2 and p. 65; G. Bowd, 'Scotland for Franco: Charles Saroléa v. The Red Duchess,' *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 31, 2 (2011), pp. 195–6.

and expressed concern about some published work in which he had criticised British foreign policy.¹² Saroléa was, in truth, a committed anti-German, an outlook characterised in part by his distaste for Lutheranism, which he believed lay behind ‘Prussian militarism.’ Yet he was also an opponent of democracy and of socialism, an outlook that contributed to him becoming a Nazi sympathiser in the 1930s.

Saroléa’s complex history begs questions about what drew him to the cause of Scottish-American friendship in the first place. As a devout Catholic living in a Presbyterian country, his involvement in the SAA was clearly not motivated by religious affinity with Scotland, Britain or the US. Instead, his desire to take a distinctly Scottish approach to Anglo-American relations was an expression of his belief in the importance of small nations to European peace; a belief also manifest in his support for Czech, Slovak, and Polish nationalisms. Indeed, some years after founding the SAA Saroléa commented that ‘the evidence of history’ demonstrated that ‘small States have played a much more conspicuous part than the most powerful Empire.’ Paradoxically, he also had a great affinity for Imperial Russia, which he had regarded as a bastion of Christianity. This uneasy relationship between the nationalism of small countries and a simultaneous attraction to a larger, more powerful state was evident in his approach to the SAA in 1919. He believed that Scottish national identity could support the foreign policy of the British state, which, along with the US, he regarded as a safeguard against the Bolshevism that had replaced Tsarist Russia in the course of the events of 1917 and which he believed threatened to undermine Christian civilisation.¹³

¹² Johnson, ‘Charles Saroléa,’ p. 11 and p. 150–3; The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), Foreign Office Papers, FO395223, War Office Précis 271348, April 1918.

¹³ *The Scotsman*, 26 January 1929; Johnson, “‘Playing the Pharisee’? Charles Saroléa, Czechoslovakia and Road to Munich, 1915–1939’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 82, 2 (2004), pp. 296–7 and p. 305.

The meeting in July 1919 resulted in the creation of the SAA and established Edinburgh as the base for its operations. Having been appointed as organising secretary for the new group, Saroléa was thereafter able to lay out his vision for the SAA. In addition to forming branches throughout Scotland, Saroléa sought to ‘emulate the Franco-Scottish Society, with its branches in Edinburgh and Paris’ and hoped to establish a branch of the SAA in New York. He also had in mind the ‘Canadian and American precedent of a Luncheon Club,’ which he perceived as ‘a very important social and political force in the Canadian Dominion.’¹⁴ Saroléa may also have been inspired by the plethora of associations formed around the start of the twentieth century with designs on British-American friendship, including the Anglo-American League (founded in London in 1898), the Pilgrims Society (founded in London and New York across 1902 and 1903, and which had a membership including prestigious names like James Bryce, Andrew Carnegie, and J.P. Morgan), and the English-Speaking Union (the ESU was founded in 1918 by the journalist, businessman, imperialist, and socialite Evelyn Wrench).¹⁵ The membership of the SAA was smaller than these other organisations: it numbered approximately 190 paid-up subscribers who had paid an annual fee of ten shillings and was limited to ‘Citizens of Scotland and of the United States,’ including women.¹⁶ The stipulation that the SAA’s members should include ‘citizens of Scotland’ is a notable one, implying that the SAA regarded Scotland as a distinct political unit. Indeed, there was a link between the SAA and Scottish nationalist politics: the members of the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) had in July 1920 hoped that the launch of a planned Aberdeen branch of the SAA would take place at one of their meetings, during which Saroléa would lecture on

¹⁴ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to William Paterson, 19 July 1919; Saroléa was a member of the Franco-Scottish Society, see *The Scotsman*, 21 January 1911.

¹⁵ Bowman, *The Pilgrims*, passim; M. Wynne-Parker, *Bridge Over Troubled Water: An Insight into the English-Speaking Union and its influence in South Asia* (London, 1989), p. 103; It is notable that the Anglo-American League’s Scottish members debated whether to change the organisation’s name to the ‘British-American League’. See *The Scotsman*, 13 October 1898.

¹⁶ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘Draft Constitution of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d., and ‘List of Names and Addresses’, n.d.; British Library of Political and Economic Science (hereafter BLPES), Harry Brittain Papers, Box 5 ‘The Pilgrims List of Members and Bye-Laws, 1909’.

‘Home Rule for Scotland and the League of Nations.’¹⁷ The SAA also had links with ethnic Scottish associations. The St Andrews Society of Hong Kong, for example, paid a subscription to the SAA. It is worth noting, however, that the SAA was not itself an ethnic organisation and that it did not fulfil quite the same ‘sociability’ function. Neither was it an organisation that directly engaged with the question of home rule. It was, however, founded at a time when Scotland’s economic and constitutional status was coming under renewed scrutiny. As Saroléa noted in a 1923 letter presenting the rationale for his distinctly Scottish-American club, ‘the Scots are more than ever touchy in their consciousness and more than ever like to manage things their own way.’¹⁸ As a result, the SAA hoped to make a practical Scottish contribution to Anglo-American diplomacy. The ideological underpinnings for this are examined in greater detail later.

The SAA set out to become an active participant in civil society and its approach built upon a heritage of associationalism as a vehicle for political action, which in this case took the form of what would now be termed public and cultural diplomacy.¹⁹ This much is shown by its programme of planned activities. For example, the SAA hoped to foster Scottish-American connections through the holding of ‘periodical meetings at which the feelings of goodwill between the two countries may be developed’; ‘lectures by distinguished speakers’; ‘the interchange of students, or teachers and preachers’; ‘hospitality to visitors’, and by

¹⁷ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Jean Lambie to Saroléa, 26 February 1920.

¹⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 67, Saroléa to H.S. Perris, 20 June 1923.

¹⁹ Associational culture can act as an ‘identifiable carrier of ideals’. See T. Buelmann, A. Hinson, and G. Morton, ‘Introduction: Diaspora, Associations and Scottish Identity’, in Buelmann, Hinson, and Morton (eds), *Ties of Blood, Kin and Country: Scottish Associational Culture in the Diaspora* (Ontario, 2009), p. 7; C. Lawrence argues, meanwhile, that obligation was ‘derived from a sense of civic virtue’ and, in that sense, the associationalism of early-twentieth century Scottish elites – like that of the SAA – was similar to the civic activism of the Edinburgh literati of the Enlightenment era. See Lawrence, *Rockefeller Money, the Laboratory and Medicine in Edinburgh, 1919–1930* (Rochester, NY, 2005), p. 104; Georgian Edinburgh was notable for its large number of clubs and societies. See Buelmann, Hinson, and Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh, 2013), p. 118; R. J. Morris, ‘Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1750–1850: An Analysis’, *Historical Journal*, 26, 1 (1983), pp. 95–118; Buelmann, *Clubbing Together: Ethnicity, Civility and Formal Sociability in the Scottish Diaspora to 1930* (Liverpool, 2014), p. 14.

encouraging ‘the pursuit of political, historical and economic studies.’²⁰ To address what Saroléa called the ‘scandalous neglect and ignorance of American History on our side of the water,’²¹ the SAA intended to promote the ‘systematic study of American literature, of American history and geography, and of American politics and economics,’ and also campaigned for the endowment of chairs of American history and literature in the Scottish universities.²² In conjunction with Glasgow and Edinburgh universities, and the Scottish Geographical Society, Saroléa also attempted to organise classes in American history for the wider public.²³ Likewise, the SAA’s founders believed that the ‘introduction of American History as part of the curriculum of our schools would do more for British-American friendship than a thousand eloquent after-dinner speeches.’²⁴ By its own admission, the SAA sought to ‘spread information’ and to ‘further social intercourse’ during what it regarded as a ‘critical moment’ in British-American relations.²⁵ Its plans for working in schools were informed by the notion that ‘the education of public opinion ought to begin at the earliest age’ and that the SAA would only succeed if it managed ‘to reach the plastic minds of the young.’ Saroléa’s hope was to deliver ‘a continuous propaganda of enlightenment and international education.’²⁶

The SAA’s approaches were not simply motivated by academic interest: the Association envisioned playing a pro-active role in oiling the wheels of international relations. While the SAA came to an ignominious and barely-noticed end in 1923, its approach to, and interest in, international relations was by no means unusual. This was the era of cultural

²⁰ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘Draft Constitution of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.

²¹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to John Warwick, 28 November 1919.

²² EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Circular from Saroléa to publishers in the US, 24 December 1919.

²³ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Warwick, 28 November 1919.

²⁴ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘The Aims of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.

²⁵ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘Establishment of the Glasgow Branch of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.

²⁶ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘The Aims of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.; File 67, Saroléa to Anson Phelps Stokes, Secretary of the University of Yale, 29 March 1920.

internationalism, when a variety of non-state, semi-official or outright private organisations – the Pilgrims Society and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to name two – sought to influence international relations by means of public diplomacy. The SAA had come into existence at a particularly important time in the history of the Anglo-American relationship and looked to initiate a form of Scottish-inflected UK-US cultural diplomacy. Though the previous twenty years had indeed seen improved relations between Britain and the US, developments in the 1920s meant that the ‘special relationship’ was still some way off. The years immediately after the First World War witnessed a series of disputes and misunderstandings between the two countries, including in relation to naval disarmament and the US’s insistence that the British repay the £850 million loaned to them by American financiers during the First World War.²⁷ The SAA was itself very aware of the latter situation and knew that it would need to ‘reckon with the relations between a creditor people and a debtor people which always must be very delicate.’²⁸ These diplomatic disagreements interconnected with a variety of important domestic considerations in the US, including the rise in nativist sentiment which, in addition to contributing to a ‘Red Scare’ across 1919 and 1920 and concomitant intolerance towards socialists, immigrants, and African Americans, had aggravated the old American nationalist dislike for Britain. The policies of Warren Harding – Woodrow Wilson’s successor as US President – appeared to confirm this wider trend, particularly through his ‘America First’ agenda of economic protectionism and immigration control. Harding had come into the presidency in 1921 promising the American people a return to what he regarded as a more traditional and circumscribed foreign policy compared to the international interventionism of Wilson. Congress had voted against the Treaty of Versailles finally in March 1920 after President Wilson had refused to bow to the

²⁷ H. Temperley, *Britain and America since Independence* (Basingstoke, 2002), 115–20; H. G. Nicholas, *The United States and Britain* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 82–3; R. C. Self, *Britain, America and the War Debt Controversy: the economic diplomacy of an unspecial relationship* (London, 2006).

²⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘The Aims of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.

demands of isolationist Republicans but it took until 1921 for Harding's administration to completely rule out US involvement in the League of Nations.²⁹

The SAA, however, had been founded before Harding's presidency and before Congress finally voted against the US's membership of the League of Nations. During the war, Saroléa had outlined his own ideas for a 'European Congress' along the lines of the League of Nations and later became president of the Edinburgh University League of Nations Society. He also favoured Woodrow Wilson's previously stated desire for a 'righteous peace' between the belligerents, fearing that punishment of Germany would only result in further conflict. It was, then, a disappointment to Saroléa that the US did not join the League.³⁰ Yet the SAA's written aims, a document which evidently bears the hand of Saroléa – and evidently written in 1920 after Congress had voted against the Treaty of Versailles – outlines the organisation's contention that an ignorance of US politics amongst the British press and political classes had contributed to America's isolationism. Writing about the British 'attitude to America during the Versailles conference', the author of the SAA's aims noted a number of failings mostly on the part of the British:

...we have to reckon on the American side with the profound dissatisfaction universally felt across the water with the Peace Treaty. We have to reckon with the time honoured sacred traditions of the Monroe Doctrine...we are paying the full penalty for those miscalculations caused by our ignorance...[The] United States has temporarily withdrawn from all participation in our European

²⁹ Robert K. Murray, *The Harding Era: Warren G. Harding and His Administration* (Minneapolis, 1969), p. 134 and pp. 265–6; M. E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920–1941* (New York, 1992), pp. 3–11; P. O. Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace after World War I: America, Britain and the Stabilisation of Europe, 1919–1932* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 66; Z. Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 41–2; Bowman, *The Pilgrims*, p. 157.

³⁰ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Davis, 19 July 1919; Johnson, 'Charles Saroléa', pp. 250–4; Nicholas, *The US and Britain*, p. 72.

entanglements. The American people refuse to see our difficulties even as we failed to see theirs. The League of Nations is in jeopardy even before it is called into existence: because of that withdrawal of American co-operation and because of that estrangement, our entire international relations, our trade, our currency, are reduced to a state of chaos.³¹

It was for these reasons that the SAA wanted to help secure the ‘glorious prize’ of ‘British-American friendship.’³² While the SAA was probably placing too much blame on Britain for the US’s isolationism, some American opponents of the League had expressed concerns that membership would entangle the US with imperial European powers, including Britain. Similarly, some Irish-Americans had criticised the Treaty of Versailles for not giving Ireland its independence. Popular American suspicion of British imperialism was also manifest in attitudes towards Egyptian independence.³³ Another contributor to American anti-Britishness was a growing awareness of the economic rivalry between the two countries, primarily centred on the fears of the American oil industry that Britain was monopolising access to oil in Persia through the Anglo-Persian agreement of 1919.³⁴

³¹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘The Aims of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.

³² Ibid.

³³ G. C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York, 2008), pp. 429–35; Senator James Reed believed that League membership would tie the US to a ‘British-dominated superstate’. See B. Rhodes, ‘The Image of Britain in the United States, 1919-1929: A Contentious Relative and Rival’, in B. J. C. McKercher (ed.) *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (London, 1991), pp. 191–2; J. E. Moser, *Twisting the Lion’s Tail: Anglophobia in the United States, 1921–48* (London, 1999), pp. 17–20 and pp. 26–9.

³⁴ D. A. Richards, ‘America Conquers Britain: Anglo-American Conflict in the Popular Media during the 1920s’, *Journal of American Culture*, 3, 1 (Spring 1980), p. 96; There was also a concern about the effect of migration from the UK to the US. The 1920s witnessed official attempts to encourage migration from Scotland to other parts of the British Empire, but migration to the US – which was regarded as a competitor to the Empire – was criticised. See Cameron, ‘Scotland’s Global Impact’, *Northern Scotland*, 1 (2010), p. 8; M. Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900–1920* (London, 1976); D. Ewalt, ‘The Fight for Oil: Britain in Persia, 1919’, *History Today*, 31, 9 (1981), pp. 11–16.

With the aims of the association established and the Edinburgh branch taking shape across the second half of 1919, Saroléa had sought to expand the SAA throughout the country. Amidst a great outpouring of correspondence to civic leaders, businessmen and academics, and to each of the US consuls in Scotland, Saroléa outlined plans for an interconnected national organisation with branches in Scotland's three other cities – Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee – and in some towns, including Stirling, Paisley and Hawick.³⁵ With the SAA's draft constitution setting out the objective of establishing branches in 'various centres in Scotland, in England and in the United States,' this was already a circumscribed undertaking.³⁶ Nevertheless, Saroléa attached great hopes to the Glasgow branch. From the beginning, Saroléa thought that 'Glasgow will be the moving spirit and will give us driving force.' The well-known Clydeside industrialist William Weir had been appointed the SAA's national president, while the principal of the University of Glasgow, Sir Donald MacAlister, was one of the vice-presidents.³⁷ Saroléa regarded the city as having greater internationalist credentials and more natural connections with the US than did Edinburgh, particularly through the city's historical trading links with the Americas.³⁸ Indeed, Glasgow had been described by Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New-York Tribune*, as 'more American than any city I have seen in Europe. Half of Pittsburgh spliced on to half of Philadelphia would make a city like Glasgow.'³⁹ As Bernard Aspinwall has written, moreover, the 'Scottish contribution to America was funnelled through Glasgow, which exported educational,

³⁵ EUCRC, File 175, Saroléa Papers, David B. Morris (Stirling) to Saroléa, 28 October 1919, James John Muir (Paisley) to Saroléa, 27 October 1919, Robert Gordon (Hawick) to Saroléa, 28 October 1919.

³⁶ EUCRC, File 175, Saroléa Papers, 'Draft Constitution of the Scottish-American Association', n.d.

³⁷ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Sir John Samuel, 17 November 1919, and Saroléa to Weir, 15 November 1919; A. J. Crilly, 'MacAlister, Sir Donald, first baronet (1854–1934)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter ODNB), www.oxforddnb.com, accessed 20 May 2013; *The Scotsman*, 16 January 1934.

³⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Sir Donald MacAlister, 22 November 1919.

³⁹ Horace Greeley quoted in B. Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia: Glasgow and the United States, 1820–1920* (Aberdeen, 1984), p. xi.

entrepreneurial and engineering expertise within an ethical and religious framework which was peculiarly Scottish.’⁴⁰

With such a high stock placed in the fortunes of the Glasgow SAA, Saroléa took a keen interest in the development of the branch and was in constant communication with the branch’s organiser, Reverend H. S. McClelland, minister at Trinity Church, on Claremont Street. The first meeting of the Glasgow branch was held in the Christian Institute on Bothwell Street on 26 February 1920. Four months after the official launch of the SAA, this meeting had not come soon enough for Saroléa. He felt he had ‘been prevented from doing anything in Edinburgh because Glasgow did not move.’⁴¹ A month later, Saroléa complained that the Glasgow branch existed only ‘on paper.’⁴² There then ensued a bitter war of words between Saroléa and McClelland, with the latter taking exception to the former’s ‘somewhat exaggerated statements’, unsuitably writing that he had ‘never heard of the society’ before November 1919. There is little doubting that Saroléa was a self-important man, with his biographer noting that he ‘perceived and presented himself as Britain’s leading Belgian.’⁴³ His anxiety that the Glasgow branch should become a success had meant that the expansion of the SAA was hampered and bogged down by personal squabbles. The situation was made worse by his inability to delegate, which meant not only that he was unable to work constructively with colleagues, but also that when he was not in Scotland – for example in the summer of 1920, when he was in Brazil as a political advisor to the visiting king of Belgium – the work of the SAA was not progressed.⁴⁴ In any event, and perhaps more importantly than

⁴⁰ Ibid., p xii.

⁴¹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘Scottish American Association, Proposed Formation of Glasgow Branch’, H. S. McClelland, 25 February 1920, and Saroléa to McClelland, 6 February 1920; *Glasgow Herald*, 27 February 1920.

⁴² EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to McClelland, 22 March 1920.

⁴³ Johnson, ‘Charles Saroléa’, p. 52.

⁴⁴ Johnson, ‘Charles Saroléa’, p. 150; EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Mrs Benjamin McGuinness, 15 July 1920.

interpersonal relations, Saroléa's perception of Glasgow's centrality to the organisation may have been misplaced. Hinting at some of the reasons for the difficulties the SAA faced in finding relevance in inter-war Scottish society, the American Consul in Glasgow wrote to Saroléa in October 1919 advising that there was 'no list of Scottish Americans on file in this office; in fact, there are apparently very few in this district.'⁴⁵

In spite of its problems, the SAA certainly made every effort to make its presence felt. For example, Saroléa wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* highlighting the founding of the Association and enclosing a 'protest against the neglect of American History in British Universities.'⁴⁶ The SAA also contacted various US government departments – including the Bureau of Immigration, the Bureau of Education, and the Commissioner for Labor Statistics – asking for copies of official reports.⁴⁷ Along with the history books which Saroléa had had recommended to him by a number of American publishers, these reports were intended to form part of a 'library of American history, geography, politics and economics, which we hope will eventually have branches in the various centres of Scotland.'⁴⁸ Like many of the SAA's intentions, however, the plan to establish a network of libraries in Scotland appears to have been a failure. The SAA was also unsuccessful in endowing chairs in American history at Scottish universities.⁴⁹ This stood in contrast to the English and US-based Anglo-American

⁴⁵ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, George Chamberlin, American Consul in Glasgow, to Saroléa, 30 October 1919.

⁴⁶ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to the Editor of the *New York Times*, 21 November 1919.

⁴⁷ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to the Bureau of Immigration, the Bureau of Education, and the Commissioner for Labor Statistics, 1 May 1920 and 21 May 1920.

⁴⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Longman's, Green & Co., G. P. Putnam's Sons Ltd, Harper & Bros., D. Appleton & Co., The Macmillan Co., American Book Co., Charles Scribner's Sons, (all of New York); The Ginn Co., The Educational Publishing Co., (both of Boston); Messrs' Lippincott (Philadelphia); Rand, McNally & Co. (Chicago), 24 December 1919.

⁴⁹ In the circular to the American publishers Saroléa had also written that a chair of American history had been 'endowed only a few days ago' but later correspondence from 1924 indicates that this was not the case: 'Three years ago I very nearly succeeded in getting a Chair of American History established in a Scottish University, of which I would have been the first occupant'. See EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 67, Saroléa to Otto Kahn, 1 October 1924.

Society and the Sulgrave Institute's foundation of the Sir George Watson Chair of American History, Literature and Institutions in 1919, which continues today with an annual lecture. Nevertheless, Saroléa was involved in organising the visit to Edinburgh by the Watson Chair for 1923, the President of Columbia University Nicholas Murray Butler. Butler stayed with Saroléa while in Edinburgh and delivered a lecture as part of his Sir George Watson Chair speaking tour of the UK, which also included visits to Glasgow University and St Andrews University. In the aftermath of Butler's visit the Anglo-American Society floated the idea of merging with the SAA (something that the English-Speaking Union had previously suggested), though Saroléa rejected this. In truth, this was the last time the SAA appears in the historical record in connection with a high-profile public event. By this point, Saroléa was acknowledging that the SAA was just one of a plethora of international societies operating in Scotland. According to its founder, it was amongst the 'last to be formed and suffered in consequence.'⁵⁰

Another disappointment for the SAA was its inability to attract funding, a failing which included the rejection of a grant application made to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1920.⁵¹ Money was a real issue for the SAA, with Saroléa writing to Edinburgh's Lord Provost in July 1920 – in an effort to access monies held by the city council on behalf of the American Welcome Club, an organisation that had catered for visiting US service personnel during the war – that the society was 'badly crippled for initial funds.' The SAA's need for financial backing meant that Saroléa had sought to ensure that businessmen were particularly well represented in the SAA's membership.⁵² Notable

⁵⁰ *The Scotsman*, 5 December 1919; *The Times*, 28 June 1921; EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 67, Perris to Saroléa, 19 June 1923 and Saroléa to Perris, 20 June 1923, and 'Watson Chair Lectures for 1923' pamphlet; File 175, Saroléa to Evelyn Wrench, 22 March 1920.

⁵¹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Harry S. Harkell to Saroléa, 4 February 1920.

⁵² EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Lord Provost Chessier, 20 July 1920, and Saroléa to Paterson, 19 July 1919; for information on the American Welcome Club, see *The Scotsman*, 30 August 1918.

businessmen in the SAA included Sir John Cargill, who was chairman of the Burmah Oil Company, and Dr George Harrison of the Edinburgh tailors Harrison and Son.⁵³ Though he was disappointed that more businessmen had not attended the SAA's inaugural meeting in Edinburgh in November 1919, Saroléa's fundraising efforts bore fruit when William Weir 'agreed to defray all initial expenses' incurred by the association. Indeed, Weir had previously agreed to fund the publication of the proceedings of the first meeting.⁵⁴ Yet, by April 1921, Saroléa was rather ignominiously required to approach the ESU and its associate, the British Council on the Interchange of Preachers, to ask if they would be willing to allow him to go to the US on a publicity tour on behalf of both the SAA and the ESU, as the SAA could not afford to send him on its own account.⁵⁵

It is obvious, then, that the SAA was not destined to fulfil the expectations of its founder. While there is no specific evidence of any firm attempts to start branches in England or the US as planned there is ample correspondence relating to failed attempts within Scotland.⁵⁶ For example, the town clerk in Stirling in October 1919 – when the town was in the midst of a council election campaign – doubted the organisation's relevance, stating that he did not feel 'there would be a sufficient number of people in Stirling interested in the Scottish American Association to justify a meeting being held here.'⁵⁷ Likewise Saroléa was informed by officials at the university in St Andrews that 'very few people' in that town had any 'direct appreciation with the United States.'⁵⁸ Meantime, the provost of Paisley felt that a branch

⁵³ T. A. B. Corley, 'Cargill, Sir John Traill, first baronet (1867–1954)', *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com, accessed 21 May 2013; *The Scotsman*, 11 July 1922.

⁵⁴ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Charles D. Munro, 20 November 1919 and Saroléa to J. Maxtone Graham, 1 May 1920; Glasgow University Archive Services (hereafter GUAS), William Weir Papers, DC96/1/16, Weir's private secretary to Saroléa, 21 November 1919.

⁵⁵ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Mr Macfadyen, 28 April 1921, and Macfadyen to Saroléa, 2 May 1921.

⁵⁶ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, 'Draft Constitution of the Scottish-American Association', n.d.

⁵⁷ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Morris to Saroléa, 28 October 1919; *Stirling Observer*, 4 November 1919.

⁵⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Andrew Bennett, Secretary to the Principal of St Andrews University to Saroléa, n.d.

there would 'be unnecessary...as we are so near Glasgow, where a branch is sure to be formed.'⁵⁹ Attempts to establish a branch in Aberdeen had been abandoned by March 1920 due to a lack of interest, while efforts in Dundee were similarly unsuccessful.⁶⁰ Like Glasgow, Dundee had strong commercial connections with the US: the US was the single-largest importer of the jute products upon which Dundee's industrial economy was based at the start of the twentieth century. Dundonian businessmen also invested in the US, for example through a number of locally-based investment trusts, including the Northern American Trust Ltd and the Scottish-American Trust Companies Ltd.⁶¹ Consequently, the US Consulate's list of possible SAA members included the names of businessmen like J. Ernest Cox, who was chairman of Jute Industries Ltd and one of the principal men behind many of Dundee's American investment trusts, and James Cunningham of the Constable jute works.⁶² No doubt with these trade links in mind, the US Consulate in Dundee was keen to support the work of the SAA. In November 1919, Saroléa received from the Consulate a list of the names of almost fifty men in the city whom the Consul had 'reason to believe would be especially interested' in the SAA.⁶³ Reflecting the SAA's educational aims, many of these were university professors. In addition, the Vice-Consul, William Poindexter, promised to send copies of the association's literature to his brother Miles, who was a US Senator, and to James Hamilton Lewis, a former Senator. The Poindexters were of 'Scottish extraction' and William was sure that Miles was 'in a position to help keep alive the traditions of Scotland, and I believe he will do it.'⁶⁴ In truth, Miles Poindexter may not have been the best person to

⁵⁹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Town Clerk, Paisley, to Saroléa, 27 October 1919.

⁶⁰ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Lambie, 5 March 1920.

⁶¹ J. Tomlinson, 'The Deglobalisation of Dundee, c.1900-2000', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 29, 2 (2009), p. 126 and pp. 129–130; Thanks to Iain Flett, archivist at Dundee City Archive and Record Centre, for additional information about Dundee's links with the US; See also Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2002), p. 270.

⁶² EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Johnson to Saroléa, 9 June 1920; *Dundee Courier*, 14 June 1947 and 16 February 1922.

⁶³ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, H. A. Johnson to Saroléa, 8 November 1919.

⁶⁴ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, William Poindexter to Saroléa, 9 June 1920.

promote the work of the SAA on the other side of the Atlantic. The Senator from Washington State – described by one US newspaper as ‘one of the most stalwart upholders of true Americanism’ – was a deeply conservative isolationist Republican and his opposition to US involvement in the League of Nations was precisely the sort of viewpoint that Saroléa was hoping the SAA would help overcome.⁶⁵ Though his views were very much in line with the anti-Bolshevist imperative behind the SAA, Poindexter’s isolationism jarred with the SAA’s internationalism. Outlining his hopes to seek nomination as a Republican candidate for the presidency and underlining his opposition to the League of Nations, Poindexter said in 1920 that ‘foreign controversies’ were of ‘remote concern to us.’⁶⁶ If William Poindexter did indeed carry out his promise to send SAA literature to his brother then the SAA could at least claim it had attempted to influence opinion amongst senior figures in the US Senate; in the case of Miles Poindexter, however, this attempt was doomed to fail. The point here is that the American isolationism the SAA had sought to challenge in the first place undermined the possibility of the organisation establishing itself in the US. Indeed, such American isolationism resulted in a period of relative inactivity in the years immediately after the First World War for the New York branch of the Pilgrims Society, which struggled to encourage some of its existing members to continue to attend club functions. If the work of the well-established and prestigious Pilgrims was frustrated by the prevailing mood in the US then the new and much smaller SAA was always going to find it difficult to gain a foothold on that side of the Atlantic.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Joshua E. Kastenberg, ‘War Time Hysteria, 1917: Senator Miles Poindexter, “American-ness” and the Strange Case of Colonel Carl Reichmann’, *War and Society*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2018), pp. 147–165; *The Cordova Daily Times*, 29 January 1920.

⁶⁶ *Dearborn Independent*, 1 May 1920.

⁶⁷ Bowman, *The Pilgrims*, p. 167.

II.

All things considered, it was a disappointing start for the SAA. The reasons for this lay not simply in personal squabbles in Glasgow or in unfavourable local conditions in other Scottish towns and cities. More important were the prevailing international circumstances – personified by Miles Poindexter but with Scottish manifestations too – and by the incoherence of Scottish cultural diplomacy in such circumstances. According to its constitution, the SAA’s objective was to ‘promote mutual understanding and sympathy between the two countries’, though it is striking that it is not always clear whether the two countries in question were Scotland and the US or Britain and the US. This has implications for understanding the admittedly amorphous framework with which the SAA approached both UK-US relations and Scotland’s role within that relationship. This framework necessarily incorporated elements of Anglo-Saxonism, the quasi-racist theory which posited that the supposed primacy of English-speaking civilisation was rooted in the characteristics of good government, liberty, and the rule of law believed to have been inherited from the historical pre-Norman Conquest Saxons. The US was understood to have shared in this legacy with the British and it was with this sentiment that the ‘great rapprochement’ between the two countries had occurred at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this context, Anglo-Saxonism was not simply a theoretical construction of perceived racial comity: it also reflected real-world considerations, including fears about migration, and the belief that British-American friendship – and imperialism – would help ensure world peace and secure global trade and commerce.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ C. Reid, ‘American Internationalism: Peace Advocacy and International Relations, 1895–1916’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Boston College, 2005), p. 2 and pp. 44–6; D. Bell, ‘The Project for a New Anglo Century: race, space, and global order’, in P. Katzenstein (ed.), *Anglo-America and its Discontents: Civilizational Identities beyond West and East* (New York, 2012), p. 36; While the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is typically regarded as the heyday of this particular form of Anglo-Saxonism, this article agrees with the view that it (and the essentially racialised notion of the ‘English-speaking peoples’) continued to hold transatlantic currency well into the twentieth century, and certainly in 1919. See S. Vucetic, ‘The Fulton Address as Racial Discourse’, in A. Dobson and S. Marsh (eds), *Churchill and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (London,

For the SAA in 1919, as indeed for some Scottish thinkers in the nineteenth century when these racist ideas were first debated, a distinct Scottishness was compatible with Anglo-Saxonism. Colin Kidd has explored this in more depth and explains that nineteenth-century Teutonic theories sustained a Lowland Scottish identity distinct from Celtic Highland identity. In this conception, Lowland Scots believed they shared more in common with the English than with Northern Scots. This simultaneously undermined Scottish ethnic and political nationalism and served to bring Scotland and England closer together as partners in union and in empire. This in turn provides the context for the SAA's flexible use of language when describing the 'two countries' it was seeking to work between. While it was underpinned by ostensibly English cultural myths, Anglo-Saxonism provided a suitably internationalist framework – both transatlantic and trans-British – for a Lowland-based Scottish-American organisation.⁶⁹ The SAA utilised Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric, with the document outlining the association's aims making clear that it regarded the people of Britain and the US as 'the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race.'⁷⁰ Similarly, the SAA cultivated links with the English-based British-American associations like the Pilgrims Society and the American Luncheon Club, whose contact details they were given by the American Embassy in London in October 1919.⁷¹ The SAA was also occasionally in touch with the Anglo-American Society, which advocated teaching school children about the 'free institutions of

2017), pp. 96–115; E. Chabal, 'The rise of the Anglo-Saxon: French perceptions of the Anglo-American world in the long twentieth century', *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 31, 1 (2013), pp. 24–46.

⁶⁹ R. J. C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Malden, 2008), pp. 30–31; C. Kidd, 'Teutonic Ethnology and Scottish Nationalist Inhibition, 1780–1880', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 74, 197 (April 1995), pp. 45–68; Aspinwall, 'The Scottish Religious Identity in the Atlantic World, 1880–1914', in S. Mews (ed.), *Religion and National Identity: Papers Read at the Nineteenth Summer Meeting and the Twentieth Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford, 1982), pp 505–18.

⁷⁰ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, 'The Aims of the Scottish-American Association', n.d.

⁷¹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Secretary to the Ambassador to Saroléa, 29 October 1919, Saroléa to the American Chamber of Commerce in London, the Society of American Women in London, the American Luncheon Club in London, the Pilgrims of Great Britain, the American Club, the American University Union in Europe, the Anglo-American Society, the Manchester American Association, and the English-Speaking Union, 14 November 1919.

the English-speaking world' ahead of the celebrations of the tercentenary in 1920 of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers.⁷² The SAA wanted to participate in this intrinsically English celebration, with Saroléa suggesting that a school holiday and a series of educational lectures might be appropriate.⁷³ As such, Anglo-Saxonism helped the SAA balance its Scottish nationalism with its British unionism. The prevailing concept of Scottish home rule – both amongst the SHRA (with which the SAA had links) and the later Scottish National Party (which Saroléa does not appear to have joined, though he became more explicitly Scottish nationalist in the 1930s) – stopped someway short of complete independence from the rest of the UK. Instead, many Scottish nationalists favoured Scotland remaining a part of the British Commonwealth and envisioned that the imperial parliament at Westminster would retain control of British-wide foreign policy. In this context, Anglo-Saxonism ensured that Scotland's pro-union and generally pro-empire social elites, notably people like William Weir, were not put off by the SAA's otherwise nationalistic appearance. This was important partly because of the relationship between Scottish radical socialists like John Maclean and the pan-Celticism of Scottish nationalists like Ruaraidh Erskine, a connection made more alarming by the recent and live issues of land reform in the Scottish Highlands and Ireland, not to mention the contemporaneous Irish War of Independence. In a way, then, Anglo-Saxonism provided an internationalist vehicle for what has been termed 'unionist nationalism.'⁷⁴

⁷² Sulgrave Manor Trust Archive, (hereafter SMTA), Sulgrave Mss., Box 2, *The Sulgrave Review*, No. 3.

⁷³ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Davis, 10 November 1919, Saroléa to MacAlister, 22 November 1919, Saroléa to Perris, 21 November 1920.

⁷⁴ Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830–1860* (East Linton, 1999); A. MacKenzie, "'Public-spirited men': Unionist Nationalism in Inter-War Scotland", *The Scottish Historical Review*, 96, 242 (April 2017), pp. 87–109; J. Hunter, 'The Gaelic Connection: The Highlands, Ireland and Nationalism, 1873–1922', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 54, 158, Part 2 (October 1975), pp. 178–204; Finlay, "'For or Against?": Scottish Nationalists and the British Empire, 1919–39', *The Scottish Historical Review* 71, 191/192 (April–October 1992), pp. 184–206; Finlay, 'The Inter-War Crisis: The Failure of Extremism', in Devine and J. Wormald (eds), *The Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford, 2012), p. 582; Buelmann, *Clubbing Together*, pp. 220–21; Finlay, *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party, 1918–1945* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 1–5 and pp. 11–19; Devine, *Scottish Nation*, p. 308 and p. 325; E. Cameron, 'The Politics of Union in an Age of Unionism', in Devine (ed.) *Scotland and the Union, 1707–2007*

Anglo-Saxonism provided a ‘safe’ vehicle for the SAA’s Scottishness, which might otherwise have been associated with the alliance between Scottish nationalism and socialism. With this context in mind, the SAA’s invocation of Anglo-Saxonism – though it would ultimately prove problematic – is instructive about both the organisation and the concept on a number of other counts. While Anglo-Saxonism was ostensibly an anathema to a Belgian lecturer in French, it accommodated Saroléa’s conception of an association centred on small-nation identity rooted within a larger (British) state which, in alliance with the US, would provide the necessary international protection against Bolshevik Russia. Saroléa had also been interested in the debates about race in the 1890s, when he published his views on the relative superiority of the Anglo-Saxon British over the French. This comparison was informed by his distaste for the implementation of universal male suffrage in France and was less sharply drawn once Britain similarly increased the scope of parliamentary democracy after the First World War.⁷⁵ While the 1918 Representation of the People Act shook Saroléa’s commitment to ‘Anglo-Saxon’ institutions, the increased franchise also played into his fears about mass politics and would only have served to confirm his belief in the need for some form of bulwark against international Bolshevism. For now, Scottish-influenced British-American cooperation seemed the best such defence. Writing in March 1920, Saroléa explained that Britain and America’s ‘growing estrangement’ was a ‘menace to civilisation and to peace’ and that he was ‘determined to counteract the activities of the mischief makers.’⁷⁶ This had meant there was an urgency about the decision to found the SAA, also

(Edinburgh, 2008), p. 132; I. G. C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1831–1924* (Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 241–2; Hutchison, ‘Anglo-Scottish Political Relations in the Nineteenth Century, c.1815–1914’, in T. C. Smout (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603 to 1900: Proceedings of the British Academy*, 127 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 247–266.

⁷⁵ Johnson, ‘Charles Saroléa,’ pp. 44–6 and pp. 157–60.

⁷⁶ EUCRC, File 67, Saroléa Papers, Saroléa to Anson Phelps Stokes, Secretary of the University of Yale, 29 March 1920.

reflected in a draft circular to potential members ahead of the inaugural meeting in July 1919, which commented that ‘sinister and powerful disruptive forces are at work which tend to alienate’ Britain and the US from each other. These forces were identified as coming from among the ‘fifteen German-Americans and the ten million Irish-Americans’, some of whom ‘are at this very hour striving with all their might to foment misunderstanding and strife.’⁷⁷ This statement was demonstrative of part of Saroléa’s approach to the SAA and his motivation for establishing the organisation in the first place: a fear of the masses (foreign and lower class) and a desire for a transatlantic solution expressed in Anglo-Saxonist language.

In large part, then, the SAA was indicative of a Scottish elite response to middle class anxieties about the uncertainties of the post-First World War years. A perception of social crisis – both at home and abroad – was a motivating factor in the association’s founding in 1919. The high levels of industrial unrest in the post-war years, often interpreted as evidence of the dangers of subversive foreign and immigrant influences, was the main spectre haunting the middle classes in Scotland and the US. The US Red Scare in 1919 and 1920 was a manifestation of paranoia and hysteria about international Bolshevism and was most potently felt following the general strike in Seattle in February 1919. The authorities (echoing the sentiment of the SAA’s circular) responded by targeting known radical immigrants, who faced possible deportation. Similar fears about Bolshevism were aroused in the UK, perhaps most famously following the Forty Hours Strike and the ‘Battle of George Square’ in Glasgow in January 1919. Indeed, some Scottish home rulers argued for devolution as a protection against what Sir Donald Maclean, Asquithian Liberal MP for Peebles and

⁷⁷ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘Proposed Scottish-American Club in Scotland, W. P. Paterson, C. H. Saroléa’, n.d.

Southern, described during the 1920 House of Commons debate on the Government of Scotland Bill as the ‘anarchist spirit.’ It was this line of thinking with which Saroléa was most closely aligned.⁷⁸ The SAA’s founder would go on to become involved in the National Citizens’ Union, one of a plethora of reactionary middle-class societies active in the early-1920s ostensibly aiming to promote cooperation between the different classes but which were really more about propagandising against socialism. All of these issues coalesced into, and informed the work of, the SAA. It was for that reason that Sir Alfred Ewing, SAA member and Principal of Edinburgh University, felt Britain and the US had to work together to defeat ‘the dragon of miscalled Socialism.’⁷⁹

Importantly, however, the reasons for the SAA’s founding also undermined its wider appeal and reduced the likelihood of the organisation succeeding. Its message had little resonance on the international stage but it was also irrelevant to the lived experience of many Scots in the difficult years following the First World War. Despite emerging from them, the SAA’s work was largely irrelevant to the economic and political challenges facing Scottish society at the time. Though Scotland and Britain experienced a post-war economic boom in 1919 and 1920, the industrial unrest of these years was demonstrative of a society in great flux. 1921 and 1922 then witnessed an economic collapse, hitting Scottish industries such as Clydeside shipbuilding, heavy engineering and Dundee jute hard. UK-wide unemployment increased in this period and Scotland, along with Northern Ireland and the North of England, was one of

⁷⁸ HANSARD, Vol. 127, cc2005-83, ‘Government of Scotland Bill’, House of Commons Debate, 16 April 1920; P. Williamson, ‘MacLean, Sir Donald (1864–1932)’, *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com, accessed 26 January 2018; R. Overly, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919–1939* (London, 2010); T. J. Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare: the Lusk Committee and New York’s crusade against radicalism, 1919–1923* (New York, 2003), pp. 1–9; Murray, *Red Scare: A Study of National Hysteria, 1919–1920* (New York, 1955), pp. 57–66; Adam J. Hodges, ‘Understanding a National and Global Red Scare/Red Summer Through the Local Invention of Solidarities’, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 18, 1 (2019), pp. 81–98.

⁷⁹ *The Scotsman*, 4 March 1924, and 20 November 1919; C. Wrigley, ‘The state and the challenge of labour in Britain, 1917–20’, in Wrigley (ed.), *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe, 1917–1920* (London, 1993), pp. 280–3; Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 21–3.

the worst affected areas. The *Glasgow Herald* described 1921 as a ‘depressing year’ in which the ‘whole economic machine has broken down’ and, echoing the wider disillusionment felt during the inter-war years, lamented that the recent downturn had ‘only served to emphasise the heavy price that war exacts.’ Another Glasgow newspaper, the *Evening Times*, frequently ran headlines in response to the latest unemployment statistics and, in August 1921, bluntly reported ‘The Cost of Living: Prices Up and Wages Down.’ With competition from American shipyards part of the reason for a reduction in orders to Scottish shipyards, Scottish-American friendship on the middle-class SAA’s terms would have seemed to some like a niche pursuit.⁸⁰ In any event, and as has been seen, Saroléa’s own conception of democracy left little room for the needs of the masses. This did not necessarily have to result in the SAA’s failure (the world is littered with extant exclusive elite societies, including the Pilgrims Society mentioned earlier) except that the Association had also envisaged a programme of widespread public engagement and education.

III.

It is clear that the SAA was formed in response to the political, social, and cultural preoccupations of the Scottish bourgeoisie and also as a vehicle for Charles Saroléa’s particular brand of small nation, anti-Bolshevist internationalism. Ironically, social and economic distress would ultimately play a role in ensuring the organisation’s irrelevance and failure by 1923, but it would do so alongside the contradictions at the heart of Anglo-Saxonism. As such, the SAA’s offer of Scottish-American cultural diplomacy was a difficult sell because of confusion over what precisely Scotland and Scottish culture meant in the context of Anglo-American relations.

⁸⁰ Bruce Lenman, *An Economic History of Modern Scotland* (London, 1977), pp. 212–13; Harvie, *No Gods*, passim; C. L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars, 1918–1940* (London, 1968), pp. 125–6; *Glasgow Herald*, 30 December 1921; *Evening Times*, 17 August 1921.

In the SAA's view, Scotland was 'pre-eminently fitted to play her own part' in helping to improve British-American relations currently strained by the war debt question and by the US's refusal to join the League of Nations. The SAA described Scotland's 'contribution to the building of the American Commonwealth, from the days of Alexander Hamilton to the days of President Wilson.'⁸¹ Moreover, the SAA identified unique 'affinities between the Scottish and the American mentality':

The Scotchman is not likely to adopt towards his American cousins that attitude of superiority and patronising aloofness which has sometimes characterised the English attitude. And he will help to save many difficult diplomatic situations by a timely use of the Scottish gift of humour. It will therefore not appear an extravagant claim that the Scottish American Association as representing the people of Scotland, may eventually be called upon to serve as the intermediary, conciliator and peacebuilder between the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race.⁸²

The idea that Scotland could serve as a 'conciliator' between Britain and the US speaks to the belief that the SAA – by virtue of being Scottish – could circumnavigate some of the tensions inherent in the British-American relationship. This suggests that the SAA believed that American anti-Britishness was largely anti-English in nature. The idea that the English were at the root of British-American discord was not new to the SAA. For example, American preferences for the Scots over the English were occasionally expressed in nineteenth-century

⁸¹ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, 'The Aims of the Scottish-American Association', n.d.

⁸² Ibid.

travel writing. Some visitors to Scotland in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s would comment on the warmer welcomes they received there compared to England. These Americans felt that they shared a connection with the Scots – and Glaswegians in particular – because of the perception that they were together less reserved than the English.⁸³ There is also evidence that Scots were regarded more favourably than the English during the American Civil War. At the beginning of the conflict, the British consul in New York noted that Britons in the US could, without experiencing negative reactions, describe themselves as ‘Scots, Irish or Welsh but not British or English.’⁸⁴ Whether such admittedly anecdotal evidence stands up to scrutiny is perhaps open to debate. It is also (and importantly) not always easy to discern in American sources whether ‘England’ and ‘Britain’ are distinguished from one another, but it is nevertheless true that Charles Saroléa and the SAA regarded themselves well placed to assist British-American relations by virtue of not being English. It was for these reasons that Saroléa told James Beck, a senior Republican and former US assistant attorney general, that ‘Scotland is running the British Empire and that if you want to have America and Great Britain good friends, the friendship must first be consolidated in Edinburgh.’⁸⁵

The SAA’s understanding of the importance of the Scottish-American connection was emphasised at its first major event. Immediately after the association’s initial meeting in July 1919, Saroléa had contacted the US embassy in London to invite Ambassador Davis to

⁸³ Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, pp. 10–14.

⁸⁴ D. T. Gleeson, ‘Proving Their Loyalty to the Republic: English Immigrants and the American Civil War’, in Gleeson and S. Lewis (eds), *The Civil War As Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia, 2014), p. 102; Writing about American attitudes to Scottish literature in the pre-Civil War period, Alexander Murdoch similarly argues that ‘what made Scottish poetry and prose particularly evocative to an American readership was that it was written by British people who were not English. Scots remained British subjects, unlike Americans, but they had created, and were still creating, a literature that was not English, even if it used the English language’. See Murdoch, *Scotland and America, c.1600–c.1800* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 156; Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, ‘Review Article: The Inestimable Advantage of Not Being English: Lord Lothian American Ambassadorship 1939–1940’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, 63, 175, Part 1: Scotland and America: Studies Illustrative of the Scots in the United States and Canada (April 1984), pp. 105–110.

⁸⁵ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to James Beck, 16 July 1920.

Edinburgh. Davis was a prominent Democrat and went on to become his party's candidate for the 1924 presidential election. He served as US ambassador to the UK from 1918 until 1921 and was increasingly aware of the tensions that existed between the two countries; he wrote in his journal at the start of 1920 that the British 'press is daily more critical and caustic and the feeling of the general public is unmistakable.' In particular, he pointed to British unhappiness over the dollar-sterling exchange rate; the US's reticence over the Treaty of Versailles; reports in the press of intemperate comments by American officials regarding the US having 'won the war' and the likelihood that the US could find itself in conflict with Britain as much as with Germany; prohibition; and American sympathy for Irish republicanism.⁸⁶ Davis would, therefore, have seen the potential public relations benefit of accepting the SAA's request. Indeed, Davis's predecessor as ambassador, Walter Hines Page, had previously expressed his belief in the utility of an organisation like the SAA. Speaking in 1917 after being made a freeman of the city, Page said that he believed that an Edinburgh-based society should be established 'to promote and maintain intimate and cordial acquaintance with the people of the United States.'⁸⁷

With the contemporary Anglo-American tensions in mind, Davis agreed to visit Edinburgh in November 1919 and arrangements were made in conjunction with the city council for what was regarded as an important civic occasion.⁸⁸ Davis arrived in Edinburgh on 19 November via the University of Glasgow, where he had been awarded an honorary degree. The reception to welcome him to Edinburgh, and to officially launch the SAA, was held in the

⁸⁶ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Saroléa to Davis, 19 July 1919; W. H. Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer: The Life of John W. Davis* (Oxford, 1973), p. 149; John Davis, 11 February 1920, in J. Davis and D. A. Fleming (eds), *The Ambassadorial Diary of John W. Davis: The Court of St. James's, 1918–1921* (Morgantown, 1993), p. 238.

⁸⁷ *The Scotsman*, 3 November 1917.

⁸⁸ EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, John Harrison to Saroléa, 31 October 1919; Davis referenced Page's words when he spoke to the SAA. See *The Scotsman*, 20 November 1919.

Freemasons' Hall on George Street and was presided over by the city's Lord Provost. Representatives of the SAA, including Saroléa and Paterson, joined the Lord Provost and Davis 'on the platform', though the Ambassador later noted in his diary that the audience, numbering around 300, 'was not as large as I expected.' Saroléa had in October written to the Wilsonian Democrat Davis asking if he would deliver a speech about the US and the League of Nations but the Ambassador did not feel comfortable speaking publicly about the subject whilst the treaty was still going through the ratification process in Congress. Indeed, the day he arrived in Edinburgh had been a momentous one in the ongoing debate about US membership of the League of Nations. With unfortunate timing for the SAA given the centrality of the League question in UK-US relations, it was the day Wilson had his supporters join with 'irreconcilable' Republican opponents of the League to defeat the chairman of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee Henry Cabot Lodge's revised version of the Covenant of the League of Nations.⁸⁹ In the end, Davis focused his address on cultural connections between Scotland and the US. Commending the SAA for seeking to improve British-American relations by means of education, he commented that such a method 'was truly in accordance with Scottish traditions.'⁹⁰ This was a theme that he had already touched upon in Glasgow, where he had said that he was aware of the view 'both north and south of the Tweed, that a dip of Scottish blood and a dose of Scottish education was not an impediment to success.' He had then told his Glaswegian audience that 'there had been no crisis in the life of the American people that did not find a Scotsman to the fore,' referring to

⁸⁹ *The Scotsman*, 20 November 1919; EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, Davis to Saroléa, 22 October 1919; Saroléa hosted a dinner for Davis on the night of 19 November, at which the Ambassador was 'asked to explain the action of the Senate on the Treaty.' Davis, who was alarmed at the Senate's decision, tried to explain to his Scottish hosts the 'American repugnance to European complications.' See Davis, 19 November 1919, *The Ambassadorial Diary of John W. Davis*, p. 186; Tennant S. McWilliams, 'John W. Davis and Southern Wilsonianism', *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 63, 3 (1988), www.vqronline.org/essay/john-w-davis-and-southern-wilsonianism, accessed 6 May 2019; George Egerton, 'Britain and the "Great Betrayal": Anglo-American Relations and the Struggle for United States Ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919–1920', *The Historical Journal*, 21, 4 (1978), p. 897

⁹⁰ *The Scotsman*, 20 November 1919.

Alexander Hamilton, James Wilson, Andrew Jackson, Ulysses Grant, William McKinley, and Woodrow Wilson.⁹¹ In preparation for his visit to Scotland, Davis had read a copy of a lecture delivered by Whitelaw Reid – US ambassador in London between 1905 and 1912 – to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution in November 1911 entitled ‘The Scot in America and the Ulster Scot.’⁹² Like Reid, much of what Davis said was platitudinous, but he was channelling the Scottish perception of the nation’s unparalleled devotion to public education, a perception that remained firmly in place in the early-twentieth century.⁹³ With Davis contending that America shared Scotland’s commitment to education, this also spoke to eighteenth-century Scottish contributions to the development of education in the US. Such contributions included John Witherspoon’s presidency at the College of New Jersey (Princeton University) – which Davis referenced in his speech to the SAA and which Reid mentioned in 1911 – and have typically been associated with the diffusion of Common Sense philosophy and the concept of the ‘democratic intellect’, through which egalitarian education provision was regarded as an aid to democracy.⁹⁴ For Whitelaw Reid, the Robert Burns song ‘A Mans a Man’ was ‘really our Declaration and Constitution “writ large.”’⁹⁵ Such remarks were probably the result of drunk men looking at thistles: as figures from the Scottish literary renaissance of the 1920s would likely recognise, US ambassadors like Reid and Davis were deliberately tapping into pre-existing notions of Scotto-Americana based on cultural tropes

⁹¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 19 November 1919.

⁹² Davis, 15 November 1919, *The Ambassadorial Diary of John W. Davis*, p. 183; Whitelaw Reid, *The Scot in America and the Ulster Scot: Being the Substance of Addresses before the Edinburgh Institution, 1st November 1911, and the Presbyterian Historical Society, Belfast, 28th March 1912* (London, 1912).

⁹³ Devine, *Scottish Nation*, pp. 389–90.

⁹⁴ Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, pp. 43–85; Devine, *Scotland’s Empire, 1600–1815* (London, 2004), p. 172 and p. 176; G. Hassan, ‘What are Modern Scotland’s Three Defining Stories?’, *Scottish Review*, 3 December 2012; A Scottish-American connection also existed via the transmission of the ideas of Enlightenment figures Adam Ferguson and John Millar, and – according to Garry Wills – the influence of Francis Hutcheson on Thomas Jefferson’s draft of the Declaration of Independence. See G. Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence* (London, 1980); Ideological connections between Scotland and the US extended into the realm of nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century attitudes to poverty. See J. Smyth, ‘Thomas Chalmers, the “Godly Commonwealth” and contemporary welfare reform in Britain and the USA’, *The Historical Journal*, 57, 3 (September 2014), pp. 845–68.

⁹⁵ Reid, *The Scot in America*, p. 67.

that particularly resonated with Edinburgh's elites. These Scottish myths of democracy and egalitarianism (including the idea of the 'lad o' pairts', with its similarities with the American Dream) were more imagined than real, but were totems of identification for the autonomous unionist-nationalist civil society from which the SAA – with its membership of university professors, churchmen and businessmen (McCrone's 'incipient "nationalists"') – had emerged.⁹⁶

Importantly, the deployment of such myths also demonstrates that American understanding of the Scottish-American connection in the early-twentieth century remained stuck in the eighteenth century.⁹⁷ This may not have mattered for writers and listeners of after dinner speeches but it would prove difficult for such ideas to have much currency beyond that relatively narrow constituency. While Saroléa may have been correct in thinking that American nationalists had little time for the English it would equally appear that not enough of the right people in the US shared Saroléa's or the SAA's understanding of the separation between England and Britain. While the conflation of England with Britain remains an intellectual tick in much of the historiography of the Anglo-American relationship it was also part of the outlook of the American foreign policy-making establishment that came of age between the end of the First World War and the Second World War (including John W. Davis), characterised by an Atlanticist East Coast-based set whose experience and knowledge

⁹⁶ Lawrence, *Rockefeller Money*, pp. 104–5; David McCrone, 'We're a' Jock Tamson's Bairns: Social Class in Twentieth-Century Scotland', in Devine and Finlay (eds), *Scotland in the 20th Century* (Edinburgh, 1996), pp. 114–15; As McCrone argues, these Scottish myths serve both radical and conservative functions. Myths of egalitarianism can either motivate efforts towards social and economic change in order to promote equality or they can support the belief that equality of opportunity already exists and, as a result, change is not required. See McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London, 1992), pp. 88–105; See also McCrone, 'Towards a Principled Society: Scottish Elites in the Twentieth Century', in A. Dickson and J. H. Treble (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, Vol. III, 1914–1990* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 195; On the literary renaissance Finlay has argued that while 'some such as Hugh MacDiarmid posited a completely alternative vision of Scottish identity, most clung to a failing vision of national identity which had its roots in the imperial past.' This article makes a similar argument. See Finlay, 'The rise and fall of popular imperialism in Scotland, 1850-1950', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 113, 1 (1997), p. 20.

⁹⁷ Hook, *From Goosecreek to Gandercleugh*, p. 3.

of Britain was underpinned by the ideology of Anglo-Saxonism and by personal connections with upper-class England and London. Indeed, this was forged in part by metropolitan clubs and societies, including the Pilgrims Society, and against which the Edinburgh-based SAA was at a geographical, circumstantial, and ideological disadvantage.⁹⁸ Despite Saroléa's remarks to James Beck, Scotland was neither running the British Empire nor was perceived by others as doing so. In fact, Scotland decreasingly saw itself as occupying such a prominent position; Richard Finlay has traced the collapse of popular imperialism to the years immediately after the First World War, pointing by way of explanation to the more pressing economic and social concerns of the newly-enfranchised working classes.⁹⁹

Scotland's position in international society and its contribution to Anglo-American relations were therefore difficult to discern. As such, the SAA was in a double bind: some Americans, like Miles Poindexter, were isolationists whilst those who were not were not especially interested in Scotland. Neither grouping would have helped the SAA ensure the relevancy of its cultural message. While Scotland could indeed find a place at the English-speaking top table, this did not mean that it was clear to the wider world, or more particularly to the main players in Anglo-American relations, what Scotland had to offer that was different to England. Given that the SAA's self-professed selling point was that it was not English then the problem becomes clear. As such, the SAA was trapped by the 'relative cultural failure' that Saroléa himself had recognised existed in Scotland and which in part characterised the tumultuous domestic circumstances from which the Association had emerged. So when Ambassador Davis said at the SAA's inaugural meeting in November 1919 that Britain and

⁹⁸ Priscilla Roberts, 'The First World War and the emergence of American Atlanticism, 1914–20', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 5, 3 (1994), pp. 569–619; Bowman, *The Pilgrims*, pp. 10–11; Don MacRaild, Sylvia Ellis, and Stephen Bowman, 'Interdependence Day and Magna Charta: James Hamilton's Public Diplomacy in the Anglo-World, 1907–1940s', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2014), pp. 140–62.

⁹⁹ Finlay, 'The rise and fall of popular imperialism', p. 19.

the US were joined in ‘moral unity’, particularly through the ‘Anglo-Saxon, or the Anglo-Celtic, conception of liberty’ he was inadvertently revealing the shaky foundations of the SAA’s Scotto-American cultural message.¹⁰⁰ Davis argued that British-American liberty – defined as ‘freedom of the person, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and sanctity of private property’ – was protected by the English Magna Charta and the American Bill of Rights. Despite speaking to the Scottish-American Association, the ‘common history’, ‘common literature’ and ‘common tradition’ which Davis identified were essentially English and American commonalities. As Benjamin Strong – governor of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and another of the East Coast Anglophile foreign-policy elite – wrote in 1916, demonstrating somewhat the intellectual *mélange* in which the SAA had worked itself into: ‘English institutions were a British inheritance of the people of the United States.’¹⁰¹ The term ‘Celtic’, meanwhile, had itself been partially assimilated into Anglo-Saxonism, with the Celt – or the Anglo-Celt – having been transmogrified into an Aryan figure during the latter portion of the nineteenth century, ironically partly through the work of Gaelic revivalists who sought to challenge the chauvinism of Lowland Anglo-Saxonism. Though Anglo-Saxonism had been part of the framework under which the SAA had operated, it was a framework that nevertheless undermined any coherent sense of Scottishness and ultimately obscured the relevance of Scotland to the UK-US relationship. As a result, it proved difficult for the SAA to make a unique or lasting contribution to inter-war international society.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *The Scotsman*, 20 November 1919.

¹⁰¹ *The Scotsman*, 20 November 1919; EUCRC, Saroléa Papers, File 175, ‘The Aims of the Scottish-American Association’, n.d.; R. Langlands, ‘Britishness or Englishness: The historical problem of national identity in Britain’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 5, 1 (1999), pp. 53–69; Strong quoted in Roberts, ‘American Atlanticism’, p. 576.

¹⁰² Fry, *A New Race of Men*, pp. 212–15; this is related to the notion that a Highland versus Lowland divide historically undermined the growth of political nationalism in Scotland.

Conclusion

If the terminology of the formal ‘Anglo’-American relationship disenfranchises Scotland then it is at least partly because of the historical failure of Scotland’s elites to make a convincing argument for the country’s relevance on the transatlantic stage. In the case of the SAA this failure was partly a result of Saroléa’s changeable interest in the expressed aims of the Association. He was not interested in Scottish-American or British-American friendship for its own sake but instead regarded it as a bulwark against international Bolshevism. It might be postulated that the SAA’s short existence reflected a realisation that increasingly difficult UK-US relations during the 1920s meant that cooperation between the two countries was a decreasingly feasible defence against destabilising influences at home and abroad. For Saroléa this development occurred alongside his growing belief, evident from at least 1922, that Nazism – paradoxically alongside a strong Bohemia – was Europe’s best defence against Soviet Russia.¹⁰³

The SAA and Saroléa’s Scottish cultural internationalism was clearly built on shaky foundations. Saroléa would himself become deeply disillusioned by what he regarded as Scotland’s cultural decay, but not before attempting to make a transatlantic version of that culture the basis for the SAA’s work. In some ways he and the SAA were inversions of the Scottish literary renaissance of the 1920s. While Scotland’s cultural and social shortcomings motivated the prodigious literary output of writers like Hugh MacDiarmid and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, some of the same motivations drew Saroléa to a Scottish-American cultural relationship founded on essentially middle class ‘kailyard’ tropes. In some ways, the SAA was providing the wrong answers to the right questions. However, Scottish international influence in this period was achieved not by the attempts by some of Edinburgh’s middle

¹⁰³ Johnson, “‘Playing the Pharisee’?”, pp. 307–11.

classes at diplomatic influence but instead by the thousands of Scots leaving the country (in many cases for the United States) in part because of the economic dislocation and social discord that had driven Saroléa to seek British-American protection from the threat of international Bolshevism in the first place.¹⁰⁴

The irrelevance of the SAA in this context was underlined by its engagement with Anglo-Saxonist ideas. If Anglo-Saxonism helped prevent the formation of a unified Scottish national identity in the nineteenth century as some writers have argued, then it also meant that it was difficult for the SAA to make a useful and relevant Scottish contribution on the international stage, even if it partly provided the rationale for such a contribution. The SAA and its vision for a coherent and appealing inter-war Scottish-American cultural connection, to apply the words of Andrew Hook, ‘disappeared in the cracks between Englishness and Britishness.’¹⁰⁵ In the final analysis, then, the failure of the SAA was caused by a mixture of Anglo-American indifference to Scottish cultural solutions, by its founders’ intellectual and organisational shortcomings, and by the ultimate irrelevance of the organisation’s particular vision of Scottish culture to the economic, political, and social challenges faced by most Scots.

¹⁰⁴ Harper and Evans, ‘Socio-Economic Dislocation’, p. 544.

¹⁰⁵ Hook, *From Goosecreek to Gandercleugh*, p. 3.