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EMPIRE and EUROPE:

A REASSESSMENT of BRITISH FOREIGN POLICIES 1919-1925

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

October 2017

I hereby declare that this thesis has not and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree:

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Empire and Europe: A Reassessment of British Foreign Policies 1919-1925

Summary

This thesis is a reassessment of British foreign policies from the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 until the Treaties of Locarno in 1925. It initially argues that much of the historiography of this period is unbalanced in its judgement of the different governments because it views them from a teleological perspective that fails to differentiate this period from the inter-war years as a whole. The problem with this approach is that the rise of Hitler and the causes of the Second World War became so dominant in such analyses that most issues within these years have only been judged within that wider context.

The thesis argues that an assessment of the foreign policies between 1919 and 1925 must take greater account of all the diplomatic, military and economic difficulties in the years after the Great War, and also recognise the degree of stability achieved by the end of 1925. The difficulties included the expansion of the British Empire as a result of Versailles, ongoing financial and economic problems including wartime debts, the complexities of the Irish negotiations, and the major European issues that had not been resolved at Versailles.

Britain was still a great power and its foreign policies are analysed both as an imperial power, including the newly acquired territories in the Middle East, and as a major European power. After an analysis of primary and secondary sources, it is argued that despite all the difficulties, and the seeds of long-term decline in imperial matters, British foreign policies contributed to greater stability in international affairs by the end of 1925. This is especially true of the achievements at Locarno in respect of Germany's western borders and in establishing Germany as an equal diplomatic partner. There were also no obvious new diplomatic hostages to fortune. Whether Britain and other powers could build on this greater stability after 1925 is a different issue, but that should not detract from recognition of the achievements during these six years.

Acknowledgements

In thanking my supervisors, I accept that it is unusual to have to thank five different supervisors, admittedly over seven years. I realise that the first three all moved on to 'greater things' but while thanking Eugene Michael, Saul Dubow, Paul Betts and Clive Webb, my very special thanks are to Stephen Burman who took over during my fourth year and was a great supervisor and gave me continual academic and personal support. My thanks also go to the staff at the libraries of both the University of Sussex and the National Archives at Kew for their professional help.

I must thank my wife Margaret for all her support and patience over the ten years I have been working on my M.A. and D. Phil. at Sussex, and our sons Jonathan and Andrew for their different computer and historical support. However, this thesis is dedicated to our beloved teenage grandchildren, Katie, James and Holly. Their great-grandfather, my father, was killed in Tunisia in November 1942 during the Second World War; this thesis is dedicated to the three of them, in the hope that the international diplomats of the 2020s and 2030s provide greater longer-term stability for them, and their generation, than the diplomats of the totality of the inter-war years provided for my parents and their generation.

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Introduction, Methodology and Historiography

*'This country has a double status. In the first place it is an integral part of Europe just as much as is France or Germany; secondly it is the centre and nucleus of a world-wide confederation, the other members of which are the Dominions.'*¹

Scope of the Thesis

This thesis is an attempt to reassess the conduct and success of British foreign policy between 1919 and 1925. It is an exercise that raises three preliminary tasks. The first is to justify why this period has been chosen; the second concerns the definition of success as the criterion against which to assess the conduct of policy, and the third is the methodological discussion about the ability of individuals, in this case, of politicians, diplomats or civil servants to affect the policy decisions. In this Introduction these three issues will be addressed in turn, followed by a discussion of the sources for this thesis, both primary and secondary. This will involve a review of the relevant literature and an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and suitability of these sources in relation to the objectives of the thesis. The Introduction concludes with an outline of the structure of the succeeding chapters of the thesis.

¹From the writings of James Headlam-Morley, academic historian and classicist, and a temporary member of the Foreign Office, including the Paris Conference. FO 371/11064/W1252/9/98, cited by Erik Goldstein in Michael L. Dockerill and Brian J. C. McKercher (eds.), *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890-1950* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p.121.

The Significance of the Years 1919 to 1925:

Historical research projects may be periodised in a variety of ways. The critical factor in determining periodisation is how it relates to the objectives of the research. To take one relevant example, the ‘inter-war years’ is a commonly used period in twentieth century historiography; it is typically defined in British history as the years from 1918 or 1919 to 1939 or 1940, and it has become a standard period for diplomatic, military, political and economic history. The problem with this definition is that histories of this period have taken as their primary objective an explanation of the causes and events which led to the rise of Hitler and the devastation of the Second World War. This objective has been so dominant in the historiography that the major events of the two decades tend to be analysed only insofar as they contribute to answering that research question, with the consequence that the understanding of this period has been approached in teleological fashion. This has led some aspects of these years to be overemphasised and others to be disregarded. Consequently, even though the inter-war years periodisation is suitable for the dominant research question, it has distorted the historiography of specific periods within the inter-war years. This becomes clear if we focus on 1919 to 1925 because doing so will generate alternative interpretations, such as that argued for in this thesis.

This thesis argues that the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 is an appropriate starting date for a reassessment of foreign policies in the 1920s. The Paris Peace Conference, and the resulting treaty signed at Versailles,² have been extensively researched and reassessed in the last twenty years, initially by a group of mainly American academics who published their results in 1998,³ and then by MacMillan in her comprehensive account published in 2001.⁴ The argument for taking Versailles as a starting point, is partly that it

² ‘Paris’, ‘Versailles’ and ‘Locarno’ are used as abbreviations where appropriate.

³ Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elizabeth Glaser (eds.), *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2001).

was such a significant event which set the diplomatic agenda for the following years and partly because it has been so thoroughly and recently researched.

In making the argument for the reassessment to end in 1925, there is no doubt that the Locarno Conference in October 1925 were seen as a diplomatic watershed at the time.⁵ The editorials in *The Times* immediately after the Locarno negotiations were headed 'Peace at Last'⁶ and 'Peace with Honour'⁷ with the former stating that 'it is a genuine treaty of peace...the destructive rivalries that for years had found expression in an appalling war, followed by an uncertain peace, are in process of being transformed into forces of intelligent co-operation in a common task. The war is over at last.' A writer to *The Times* letter column went further and asked, 'ought we not to have flags flying and bells ringing on December 1, when the Locarno Pact is signed? It seems to me as important that there should be a day of rejoicing, as that Armistice Day should be a day of memory.'⁸

There was a strong sentiment in parliament, but also in the press, that although there was further work to be done, it was Locarno rather than Versailles that marked the real end of the Great War.⁹ Young people attending one of the popular 'Locarno Ballrooms' later in the twentieth century, would be quite unaware that the name of their local dance hall linked back to the positive view of the 1925 Locarno Treaties. For example, one of the ballrooms was opened in 1926 in Glasgow, and according to the Glasgow city archives, it was clearly named after the town of Locarno in recognition of the achievements in 'making the frontiers of Western Europe permanent.'¹⁰

The contemporary positive reception given to Locarno, adds credence to the argument that the six years from Versailles to Locarno should be seen as a discrete period, one in which many of the consequences of the war and the peace treaties became more settled and the

⁵ The terms 'Britain' and 'British' are used rather than the 'United Kingdom' as was the custom at the time.

⁶ *The Times*, 17 October 1925.

⁷ *The Times*, 21 October 1925.

⁸ *The Times*, 20 November 1925, p.15, letter from Geoffrey Glyn.

⁹ The terms 'Great War' or just 'the war' are usually used, as they would have been by the politicians of the time, unless the term 'First World War' is quoted, or seems more appropriate in a longer-term context.

¹⁰ Glasgow city archives, D-CA 8/2930

ground was established for a new order that was quite distinct from the one that preceded it. However, more important than the contemporary views, this thesis will make the case based on historical analysis and will argue that by the end of 1925 the diplomats had made significant progress in resolving issues that were either not resolved by Versailles or were created by it, and had achieved a greater degree of stability, especially in Western Europe.

It is important to stress that the historiography of the inter-war years does not ignore British policy achievements in this period. Instead the argument here is that assessments of them have been judged for their contribution to the lead up to the Second World War, rather than being considered as significant in their own right. This applies, for example, to military history written by Roskill, Bond, Hyde, Kennedy, Barnett, Clayton, Howard, Gibbs and or McIntyre,¹¹ to diplomatic or imperial history by Doerr and Holland,¹² and to economic history by Drummond and Garside.¹³ Whilst these works offer insights into the period from 1919 to 1925, many of their arguments are related to the longer period, and they do not offer conclusions on the achievements as at 1925.

Conversely, some studies take periods more limited than the one employed in this thesis. Two studies covering the years 1918 to 1922 show some of the effects of choosing a different date. Jeffery examined the military issues in the empire including Ireland, India and the Middle East; his work is of specific interest in bringing out both the predominance of problems for the army after 1918, as opposed to the pre-war priority of naval matters, and for the comparison with the expenditure in the years immediately before 1914, but he chose

¹¹ Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars* (London: Collins, 1968); Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: OUP, 1980); H.M. Hyde, *British Air Policy between the Wars 1918-1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976); Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976); Correlli Barnett, *Britain and her Army 1509-1970* (London: Allen Lane, 1970); Anthony Clayton, *The British Empire as a Superpower 1919-1939* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1972); Norman Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, Volume I, *Rearmament Policy* (London: HMSO, 1976) and 'British Strategic Doctrine 1918-1939' in *The Theory and Practice of War*, Michael Howard (ed.) (London: Cassell, 1965); W. David McIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base 1919-1942* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

¹² Paul W. Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (Manchester: University Press, 1998); Robert Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance 1918-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

¹³ Ian M. Drummond, *British Economic Policy and the Empire 1919-1939* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972); W. R. Garside *British Unemployment 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

to end his study in 1922.¹⁴ Morgan's work covers the years of the Lloyd George peacetime government; from a foreign policy point of view he therefore covers all the difficulties from 1919 to 1922. By ending with the fall of the Lloyd George Government in October 1922 he emphasised the frustrations of the various earlier European conferences and the near disaster at Chanak, factors that appear less significant from the perspective of the wider timespan.¹⁵ Other historians of Europe have chosen alternative periods, such as the recent book by Gerwarth on the years 1919 to 1923. He has studied a quite different periodisation regarding the continuing fighting and violence, mainly in central and eastern Europe, in the five years after the armistice in November 1918, where his choice of those years is fully justified.¹⁶

There is modern research that analyses the period from Versailles to Locarno or close to it. The most substantial example is Kleine-Ahlbrandt, the sub-title of whose book is *France, Britain and the Enforcement of the Versailles Peace 1919-1925*.¹⁷ Although the book offers valuable insights, it does not take stock at the end of 1925, as the title implies. Further, although it covers the totality of European issues, it does not consider the imperial aspects of British foreign policy that are equally important in the assessment of the achievements of the period. A much older book by Orde appears to cover the same years, although the 1926 in her title expands to 1927 in two of the final chapters; like Kleine-Ahlbrandt she did not draw conclusions at the end of 1925, although her work is valuable for her contention that during this period foreign policies were generally not constrained by military capability.¹⁸ Goldstein's *The First World War Peace Settlements* does cover the specific years of 1919 to 1925, but this book is more of a textbook and also looked at Locarno from an international, rather than a British, point of view.¹⁹ The sub-title of Ferris's book, *The Evolution of British*

¹⁴ Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922* (Manchester: University Press, 1984).

¹⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

¹⁶ Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished : Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London : Allen Lane, 2016).

¹⁷ William Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt, *The Burden of Victory: France, Britain and the Enforcement of the Versailles Peace, 1919-1925* (London: University Press of America, 1995).

¹⁸ Anne Orde, *Great Britain and International Security 1920-1926* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978).

¹⁹ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements 1919-1925* (London: Pearson Longman, 2002).

Strategic Foreign Policy, 1919-1926 makes it appear relevant but this book is more concerned with financial and military policies rather than strategic foreign policies.²⁰

A number of recent secondary sources have recognised the problem with the inter-war periodisation. Grayson wrote that ‘often, scholars look at the 1920s to ascertain the causes of the problems of the next decade, thus failing either to understand the outlook of policy-makers at the time, or credit their achievements.’²¹ Gaynor Johnson argued:

Almost all of the work that has been published on the diplomacy of the inter-war period is tinged with a fatalistic quality and is concerned directly or indirectly with explaining the outbreak of the Second World War. The actions of Hitler continue to dominate the historiographical landscape of the inter-war period, with the diplomacy of the 1920s commanding much less attention from historians.²²

In summary, in the justification of the choice of the years of 1919 to 1925 for this thesis, there are many examples of the issues being subsumed within the overall consideration of the inter-war years. The example of Orde and the more recent example of Kleine-Ahlbrandt both demonstrate that even where historians have accepted the need to look at the period from 1919 to 1925 there is still a gap in the historiography in assessing the significance of these years, and this thesis attempts to fill that gap, by looking specifically at the achievements by the end of 1925. The next question that must be answered is how to measure the success or achievements of the governments.

²⁰ John Robert Ferris, *Men, Money, and Diplomacy: The Evolution of British Strategic Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989).

²¹ Richard S. Grayson *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe : British Foreign Policy, 1924-29* (London : Frank Cass, 1997) p.ix. There is a general dilemma as to whether to use the present or past tense in citing secondary sources, especially as a source can date from 1920 or 2016; I have followed advice and normally used the past tense.

²² Gaynor Johnson (ed.), *Locarno Revisited: European Diplomacy 1920-1929* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), p.1.

How to measure the Success of the Governments:

In assessing the ‘success’ or ‘achievements’ of the governments²³ of this period, it is necessary to consider what criteria should be used for this purpose. It is possible to employ criteria for the success of foreign policies that are not related to the conduct of diplomacy; it can, for example, be assessed in relation to economic history, to social history, or to cultural history. As Burke put it succinctly, ‘a cultural history of parliament would differ from a political history of the same institution.’²⁴ A thesis could examine the extent to which foreign policies contributed to increased trade and economic prosperity, or whether policies contributed to domestic harmony or social progress. It would also be possible, within the analysis of imperial policy, to assess the benefits, quantitative or qualitative, brought to the colonial countries.

While all these perspectives are valid, this thesis attempts to measure the achievements of foreign policies in relation to whether they dealt effectively with the foreign policy problems that the governments faced as a result of the Great War, the complicated peace negotiations in Paris, and the treaties that were then imposed on the defeated countries. Therefore, successful foreign policies are defined in terms of making progress in at least some of the problems created by, or left unsolved by Versailles, in particular in enhancing stability in Western Europe, in resolving or containing problems in the Britain’s broad imperial responsibilities, and in not leaving obvious ‘hostages to fortune’²⁵ for the governments to try to resolve after 1925. As the existing established global imperial power, Britain would be more concerned with stability than an expanding United States, or a country like Russia

²³ The six-and-a-half years from Versailles to Locarno are almost equally split between the Lloyd George peacetime government which lasted until October 1922, and the four governments in the next three years, under Bonar Law, Baldwin, MacDonald and the first year of the second Baldwin administration.

²⁴ Peter Burke *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge : Polity, 2004) p.3.

²⁵ The term ‘hostages to fortune’ may not be ideal, but it is intended to define an important concept, especially when arguing for a specific periodisation in history, of very difficult issues which are created by current governments, but then left for future governments to live with, or attempt to solve.

which had just been through revolution, or a country like Egypt seeking independence, but there was still a majority interest in stability amongst the major powers.

There are inevitable linkages between foreign and domestic policies. Foreign policies have domestic causes and consequences which can affect not only the political establishment, but also all sections of domestic life. This is perhaps most evident in times such as the Great War. Domestic issues also provide major constraints on foreign policies. This thesis explores three areas of possible domestic constraints on foreign policies during this period, namely the differences in policies between the main political parties, the economic constraints, and the military constraints which may themselves be direct consequence of the economic constraints.

The diplomatic problems of these years provided problems, challenges and opportunities for all or many of the countries involved, but the size and complexities of Britain's issues were especially significant because Britain was a major power before, during and after the Great War, in both imperial and European terms. The demise of the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires left only France as a comparable traditional empire, with the growing power of the United States as a new global power.

The extent of the diplomatic problems, can be seen in that there were more than twenty European conferences in these years about German reparations and related matters, including meetings of experts and meetings to prepare for those conferences, and most were unsuccessful or inconclusive until the London Conference in August 1924, which incorporated the terms of the Dawes Plan. The subsequent negotiations in September 1924, within the League of Nations²⁶ on the terms of the Geneva Protocol, proposed committing the countries both to a disarmament conference, and to a binding system of arbitration to settle disputes. MacDonald's commitment to the Protocol was not ratified by the incoming

²⁶ The 'League of Nations' is often referred to just as the 'League', and the 'Geneva Protocol' the 'Protocol'.

Baldwin government, and Austen Chamberlain as the new foreign secretary was responsible for the British efforts that led to the Locarno Agreements in October 1925.²⁷

It will be argued that, after all the problems discussed at Versailles, and the issues left unresolved, it was a considerable achievement six years later that Germany accepted detailed agreements on reparations and on its western borders, that France agreed to Germany being treated as an equal in the League, and that a very different long-term settlement had been agreed regarding Turkey and Greece, all at the same time that Britain was dealing with the centuries-old problem in Ireland, and many other difficult issues in her global empire.

Like any governments, the post-war governments had to deal with unpredictable one-off events such as the Amritsar massacre, and the subsequent parliamentary debate, but the most continuing non-domestic pressures were those Franco-German problems throughout these years, and the Irish problems up to the end of 1922. It is arguable whether the Irish problems should be designated as falling under a domestic or imperial heading. The Irish issues came back firmly on the cabinet agenda immediately after the war, and involved a large commitment of time and effort from different cabinet ministers, but especially from Lloyd George, and they were also related to other imperial developments, with Southern Ireland becoming a Dominion in 1922. There were therefore a wide range of continuing and other problems to test the governments' resolve and diplomatic skills.

In assessing the success or achievements of the governments' policies it is necessary to understand the background to these years, the problems left unresolved at Versailles, and then the progress made with and by the Treaty of Locarno which was finally signed in London in December 1925. The expression which captures the key issue better than the word 'success' or even 'achievements' is the degree to which the policies had led to a greater degree of 'stability' on key foreign policy issues by the end of 1925. For a nation such as Britain, as a fully stretched imperial power at this time, greater stability is a reasonable test of any re-assessment of achievements in foreign policies, and whether at least some of the

²⁷ Austen Chamberlain will normally be referred to as Chamberlain; any references to his father Joseph Chamberlain, or his half-brother Neville Chamberlain, will include their first names.

problems left unresolved at Versailles, had now been resolved, such as Germany's acceptance of its western borders. Stability may not, as stated above, be the priority for all nations in the same way, but it was vital for a long-established imperial power such as Britain.

It must also be established, especially after choosing the specific date of the signing of the Treaty of Locarno, that there were no hostages to fortune established during these years, and outstanding at the end of 1925. The term 'hostages to fortune' was apparently first used by Francis Bacon in 1612, with no relevance to history at all. However, it is a helpful concept for historians, and has been used very recently about the Iraq War and the Middle-East, with a definition along the lines of taking an action or making a statement that is risky because it could cause trouble later; it is particularly appropriate for a study such as this thesis which emphasises the importance of a specific timeline.

If the five governments of these years had established greater stability by the end of 1925, but had created hostages to fortune that undermined that stability in the medium or longer term, it would undermine the arguments in this thesis. There were such examples from the Great War, with long term effects, such as the 'Sykes-Picot Agreement' or the 'Balfour Declaration' or from Versailles such as the 'Polish Corridor' or perhaps the ignoring of the Kurdish claims for self-determination or independence. However, it will be argued that in relation to the years from 1925 to 1929, that there are no such obvious examples arising from the post-war years up to 1925. There were, for example, no insoluble hostages to fortune arising from the Washington Naval Agreement, from promises made or not made about self-determination or independence for Dominions or colonies, or from the Locarno treaties themselves regarding Western Europe.

The success, or achievements, of British foreign policy can be reasonably assessed against the progress made between the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, both in respect of the greater stability achieved and the absence of hostages to fortune being left for the following years. While other countries might have different interests in stability, however defined, Britain as a long-established global imperial power, had a great interest in stability and the resolution of existing problems.

The Role of the Individual in Foreign Policy

This thesis is therefore concerned with the success of the British foreign policies, and makes clear the role of individuals in making or influencing those policies. It is therefore important to consider at the outset the status of the individual in the making of history. Debate on the importance of the individual, as opposed to the impact of social structure, in determining the course of events is perennial within the social sciences. The critical concept in this context is that of agency, more precisely the extent of the agency of individuals in the conduct of human affairs. If major events in history were determined by structural factors in the international sphere, then a focus on individuals would have little explanatory force.

In an attempt to create an analytically useful distinction, sociologists Barker and Jane, echoing Marx's classic and more eloquently phrased formulation,²⁸ defined agency as the 'socially determined capability to act and make a difference' and structure as the 'recurrent organisation and patterned arrangements of human relationships.'²⁹ This distinction will be applied to the realm of foreign policy decisions in this thesis, which will therefore analyse the extent to which the capacity of the key politicians, statesmen, diplomats and civil servants to make choices, was constrained by 'recurrent patterned arrangements.'

Among contemporary theorists, the work of Anthony Giddens, the British sociologist, is widely considered to be most relevant on this subject. He uses his concept of structuration to argue that the way social systems reproduce themselves is rooted in both structure and agency, with primacy being given to neither. Giddens sees human beings as having the power to intervene, or to refrain from intervention, in different situations, and says that agency does

²⁸ Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1926) p.23. 'Men make their own history, but not just as they please. They do not choose the circumstances for themselves, but have to work upon circumstances as they find them, have to fashion the material handed down by the past. The legacy of the dead generations weighs like an alp upon the brains of the living.'

²⁹ Chris Barker and Emma Jane, *Cultural Studies : Theory and Practice* (London : Sage, 2016) p.632.

not refer to ‘the intention people have in doing things, but to their capability of doing those things in the first place.’ He develops his argument by stating that agency has to be related to power rather than to intentions, and that to be able to ‘act otherwise’ means ‘being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs.’³⁰ It was the politicians and statesmen, and to a lesser degree the senior civil servants and diplomats, whose positions in the social structure gave them power, rather than just the intentions, to introduce or modify or influence foreign policies. It was not the impressive personalities or intellects that were of key importance, but that the politicians occupied positions of power that enabled them to use those skills or attributes to make or modify foreign policies.

In practice, the analytical concepts are not applied literally to historical analysis, and a clear distinction between structure and agency is rarely argued. It is more usual to follow Giddens and refer to the inevitability of a mixture, with the focus, as here, being on exploring the pattern of interaction between these two forces. In the context of international history, as eminent a theorist as Bourdieu sought to transcend traditional arguments by stating that ‘his particular target is the commonly held assumption that it is necessary to take sides on the question of agency and structure.’³¹ In relation to the field of diplomatic history, Otte expresses the sense that the writing of history has moved beyond concern with the role of the state and the actors within it, and that this approach has been seen as ‘old-fashioned and lacking in the glamour associated with theory-driven deconstructions and reconstructions of identities and views of the ‘other’ in terms of ethnicity, gender or sexuality.’ However, he later came to a pragmatic conclusion on diplomatic history when he wrote that ‘Human agency holds the key to history,’ but stressed that ‘the lock, however, will turn only if the actions of individuals are placed against the realities behind diplomacy.’³² Specific to the years under discussion, in his study of foreign secretaries,³³ Hughes concluded after

³⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society : Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge : Polity Press, 1984), pp.9 and 14.

³¹ Peter Jackson, ‘Pierre Bourdieu, the cultural turn, and the practice of international history’ in *Review of International Studies* Volume 34/1 January 2008. p. 163.

³² T.G. Otte, ‘Diplomacy and Decision Making’ in Patrick Finney (ed.) *Palgrave Advances in International History* (London : Macmillan, 2005) pp.37 and 51.

³³ The use of capital or lower case is a problem for those writing diplomatic and political history, with the plethora of examples. As there are no absolute rules, this thesis follows the majority of historians, in putting

considering the balance of agency and structure, that his analysis ‘rest on the assumption that the foreign secretaries at least had the potential to be pivotal in influencing British foreign policy between the wars.’³⁴

In summary, while the problem of agency versus structure has been widely debated, the dominant response is to refuse to give primacy to either. In the field of diplomatic history, the primary justification for focusing on individuals, while not denying the role of social structure, is that these individuals occupy positions of power within the state. The policy choices they make take place within the ‘recurrent patterned arrangements’ of this six-year period, but these choices do make a material difference to the success or otherwise of British foreign policy. To illustrate this argument, it is appropriate at this point to highlight some themes in the thesis which demonstrate the interplay of structure and agency. The details of all the themes are described in the later chapters on imperial and European matters.

Concepts of the British Empire, and commitment to maintaining it, were a major theme of this period and there were clear common assumptions in the British political establishment, about the appropriateness, wisdom and virtues of the British Empire.³⁵ This was reinforced by the collapse of the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires in 1917 or 1918, and only challenged in the British political establishment by an occasional political maverick like Edwin Montagu. So, whether talking about the British Empire in relation to the Dominions, India or the colonies, the existence of recurrent patterned arrangements is clear. However, the empire evolved significantly in this period. The additional territories obtained within Versailles, particularly in the Middle-East, and the development and clarification of the status of the ‘White Dominions’ created new questions on which policy

job designations in lower case (unless referring to individual such as President Wilson) and departments of state and political parties with capitals. Usages that feel odd include the ‘viceroy of India,’ the ‘empress of India,’ ‘imperial and European policies’ and ‘Dominions and colonies’, but the main objective is to try to be consistent within the thesis.

³⁴ Michael Hughes *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World 1919-1939* (London : Routledge, 2005) p.6.

³⁵ A striking example of British imperialist attitudes a few years later was when the Conservative cabinet on 22 January 1929 had a lengthy discussion as to if it would be appropriate to operate a British ‘Monroe Doctrine’ in the Middle East and/or Persia. The fact that the cabinet could spend such time discussing this is the important point, not that no conclusion was reached.

choices had to be made. It is in these choices that the effect of individual statesmen or politicians on events becomes apparent.

In Western Europe, the clearest example of recurrent patterned arrangements in the decades after 1870, and in this period, was the rivalry, hostility and hatred between France and Germany, following the establishment of the new German State under Prussia and Bismarck. This hostility was at its height during the wars of 1870-1871 and 1914-1918, but not surprisingly continued in the years after each war, including continuing into the Paris Conference, the Treaty of Versailles and the six-year period under discussion. However, in this context the recurrent pattern was challenged and this enmity had to evolve in light of the upheavals produced by the Great War. The consequences of the war extended beyond the Franco-German rivalry and other parties had a vital interest in shaping the new context, in the interests of their own societies. Britain had a particular interest, not only because events on the continent had a large effect on British society, but also because its imperial great power status meant its interests were at stake anywhere in the world where the aftermath of the war created change. The situation was therefore one that required exceptional creativeness and involved choices for British statesmen on a wide and significant set of issues. This then is a case in which the weight of past generation did indeed weigh heavily on statesmen,³⁶ but they had to create a new pattern that could become a new recurrent arrangement, through the conference in Paris, through the events surrounding the Dawes Plan, and in the London Conference and the Locarno Conference. The role of the individuals in all these events and the significance of the decisions they reached is evident.³⁷

In looking at the theoretical analyses of foreign policy issues, a good description that is consistent with this thesis, was made by Brighi and Hill when they concluded that ‘foreign policy decisions should be seen primarily as heightened moments of commitment in a perpetual process of action, reaction, and further action at many different levels and involving a range of different actors, inside and outside the state, all of which need to be taken into

³⁶ Marx, *op cit*.

³⁷ While it is arguable whether the Irish Problem was a domestic or an imperial problem, there is no doubt there had been recurrent patterned arrangements, but these were broken by the changes orchestrated by Lloyd George and the Sinn Fein leaders, which resulted in a pragmatic negotiated peace at the end of 1921.

account.³⁸ Using this perspective, this thesis argues that key individual players in British foreign policy during these years affected recurrent patterned arrangements. Key individuals whose contributions will become clear in the central chapters included Lloyd George, Chamberlain, Churchill, Balfour and Crowe.

Lloyd George was the key British player during the three years after the armistice. While his individual contribution in Paris has been emphasised by many historians, most recently by MacMillan,³⁹ assessments of his contributions as prime minister after Paris are more mixed. One of his key contributions was to the negotiations about Irish independence with Sinn Féin. Other examples show that individual contributions do not have to be direct and/or successful, in order to be significant. Lloyd George clearly affected the Greco-Turkish events in a negative way, and in regard to the Washington Conference his influence was important, but as a passive supporter in London of Balfour's role in Washington, rather than as a participant.

Austen Chamberlain's contribution was in the twelve months he was foreign secretary leading up to the Locarno Conference. It was in the period that he, Briand and Stresemann accomplished the settlement in October 1925, which was the culmination of nine months of diplomatic negotiations since Stresemann's initiative in January. This was a more traditional diplomatic success with the full use of British ambassadors during the process, unlike the different diplomatic approaches employed in Paris, and in Washington which will be described in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Churchill appears at various points during these six years as secretary of state for war, as colonial secretary, and then as chancellor of the exchequer in the second Baldwin Government. His contributions were perhaps more pragmatic than his traditional image or reputation would suggest, but he certainly influenced policy as an individual in respect of attitudes to Russia, to imperial policy in the Middle-East, to the settlement in Ireland and

³⁸ Elisabetta Brighi and Christopher Hill *Implementation and Behaviour* in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield and Tim Dunne (eds.) *Foreign Policy : Theories / Actors / Cases* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.166.

³⁹ MacMillan *Peacemakers*.

then as chancellor of the exchequer, regarding both financial policies which were his responsibility, and foreign policies, which were not.

Balfour's significance lies in the fact that years after being prime minister, and having been foreign secretary for nearly three years from December 1916, he reappeared as an elder statesman to play major roles at the Washington Naval Conference, and then at the Imperial Conference in 1926, where he made a significant contribution to the definition of independence for the Dominions. Balfour's impact was arguably more significant than Curzon, who was foreign secretary for most of this period, although, this should not ignore Curzon's success at the protracted negotiations in Lausanne, where he finally achieved a lasting settlement between Turkey and Greece in June 1923.

The most influential civil servant during these years was Sir Eyre Crowe, who despite his German ancestry, first established his reputation in the Foreign Office in 1907, with a clear warning of the danger of Germany to the balance of power in Europe. After the war, Crowe was permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office from 1920 until his death in 1925. Chamberlain's appreciation of Crowe, in a private letter to his own sister is revealing when he said 'He was a great public servant, devoted to duty, delightful to work with, of immense knowledge & experience & proved judgement.'⁴⁰ Goldstein wondered what might have been achieved after 1925, if Crowe had not died prematurely in April 1925,⁴¹ and Neilson and Otte concluded in their study of permanent under-secretaries that at Versailles he 'provided the energetic impulse and the organisational efficiency in the British efforts at the conference.'⁴²

The example of such an influential civil servant like Crowe, raises the further question of recurrent patterned arrangements within the Foreign Office, or the wider civil service. Whilst thinking could be more constrained within in these areas than with politicians, there was still

⁴⁰ Austen Chamberlain, *The Austen Chamberlain Diary and Letters 1916-1937* Robert C. Self (ed.) (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.275. This citation is probably more objective than quoting from his daughter's biography Sybil Eyre Crowe, *Our Ablest Public Servant : Sir Eyre Crowe 1864-1925* (London : Merlin, 1993).

⁴¹ Erik Goldstein, *The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Locarno Pact 1924-1925* in Dockrill and McKercher (eds), *Diplomacy and World Power*. p.135.

⁴² Keith Neilson and T.G.Otte *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs 1854-1946* (London : Routledge, 2008). pp.170 and 175.

room for individual leadership and special support for the politicians. This again reinforces that the discussion of agency and structure is a necessary background analysis to this thesis, but the arguments are now progressed, in line with the majority of historians, on the basis that they should reflect the important contribution of statesmen and politicians in exercising their power in the making and influencing important foreign policy decisions.

The Use of Primary Source Material

This thesis does not bring forward previously unstudied primary sources. The primary, and also the secondary sources, referred to are mostly well-known, and the arguments made in this thesis are not based on newly discovered papers, but rather on an alternative interpretation of a wide range of existing sources relevant to these years. Of the primary sources, the most important are formal government documentation, especially the comprehensive *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919 to 1939*, a series that is central to research on this period.⁴³ The strength of the *Documents* is that historians of this period have themselves researched all the Foreign Office files and selected the key documents. While every document cited must be tested for its relevance to the issues discussed, it is reasonable to assume the professionalism of the choices of documents after the research that led to the twenty-seven volumes of the documents to cover these six years.

The commitment to the work on the *Documents* was announced in 1944 by Anthony Eden, the foreign secretary, and it was initially assumed that it would be produced concurrently for the two separate decades of the nineteen-twenties and the nineteen-thirties.⁴⁴ In the event, the starting point was defined as the signing of the Versailles Treaty, and then both decades

⁴³ *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (London HMSO):

First Series 27 volumes from 1919 to October 1925, published from 1947 to 1986.

Series 1A 7 volumes from October 1925 to 1929, published from 1966 to 1975.

Second Series 21 volumes from 1930 to early 1938, published from 1946 to 1984.

Third Series 9 volumes from early 1938 to Sept 1939, published from 1949 to 1955.

All quotations from *Documents* are from First Series, unless specific reference is made to another series.

⁴⁴ *Hansard*, Volume 398, 29 March 1944, column 1408.

were split, the 1920s in 1925 and the 1930s in 1938. The dates chosen are consistent with and reinforces both the starting and concluding dates of this research. The editor of the *Documents*, and presumably the researchers working through the detailed documents, subsequently justified the split in 1925 by emphasising the watershed of Locarno, and concluding that the best dividing point was the initialling of the Locarno Agreements on 16 October 1925.⁴⁵

The workings of the Cabinet are a second important source. Meetings did not have formal minutes before 1916. The *War Cabinet Minutes*, initiated by Lloyd George and Hankey in October 1916, and continued as the *Cabinet Minutes* from October 1919, provided formal accounts of cabinet decisions during these years.⁴⁶ The limitation of this source is that the minutes concentrated on the decisions made at the meetings, and normally did not list arguments made by individual cabinet members. However, the minutes of the cabinet sub-committees, such as the Committee on Imperial Defence, or the Eastern Committee, are more illuminating as they usually listed the arguments made by individual cabinet members.⁴⁷ Other government minutes such as those for the British Empire delegation in Paris or those of the various Imperial Conferences also recorded the detailed discussions, and the views of the different Dominions.⁴⁸

The proceedings of parliament were central to the domestic political process, and therefore the third major source is *Hansard*, which provides the full account of the proceedings of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Although it is important to analyse the nuances of formal ministerial statements, *Hansard* is particularly useful because it goes beyond those ministerial statements, and records the views of backbenchers which are more diverse and offer greater insight into the various currents of opinion that were extant in the

⁴⁵ M. E. Lambert in the preface to the First Series of *Documents*, volume 1.

⁴⁶ National Archives NA/CAB 23.

⁴⁷ The CID, sometimes referred to as the Standard Defence Sub-Committee, in files NA/CAB 2/3; the Eastern Committee in NA/CAB 27/24.

⁴⁸ The British Empire Delegation in NA/CAB 29/28; the Imperial Conferences in NA/CAB 32.

period. This is much more likely to capture the mood of the times, and the variety of popular opinion, than the sometimes bland character of government statements.⁴⁹

Newspapers and periodicals provide contemporary, even if often anonymous comment, of the events of the period. Although there were a wide range of newspapers, *The Times* and *The Economist* are especially important for this thesis because they had correspondents based in key foreign cities who had greater understanding of the views of that country and its government. The views of *The Economist's* Paris correspondent both during the war and in the subsequent years provide important balance in the analysis of Anglo-French relations.

While sources such as *Documents*, *Hansard* and *The Times* are regularly cited regarding these years, the major use in this thesis of *The Round Table*, available in London University, is more unusual. Within the wider political establishment, The Round Table and The New Europe were two academic-political interest groups, that had significant influence on thinking about international relations before, during and immediately after the war. The nature of the two groups was well described by Goldstein, who wrote that: 'The Round Table was primarily Unionist and Empire-centric, The New Europe liberal and Euro-centric. World War I brought about a convergence of the work of the two groups' and that 'each of these groups was by no means monolithic but rather a broad church, its members sharing some views and differing on others.'⁵⁰ A permanent achievement of these groups was the founding of Chatham House in 1920, which was to be granted a royal charter as the 'Royal Institution of International Affairs' in 1926.

Although coming from an imperial background, the quarterly publication of *The Round Table* is a good source of wider political and diplomatic thinking during these years and it was not afraid of being controversial. For example, in March 1918, in analysing a possible peace settlement, it was concerned for the large German speaking population in Alsace-Lorraine and argued that peace did 'not necessarily imply the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine as an

⁴⁹ The 'House of Commons' and 'House of Lords' may be abbreviated to 'Commons' and 'Lords.' All quotations from *Hansard* are from the Commons, unless the Lords are specified.

⁵⁰ Erik Goldstein, 'The Round Table and New Europe,' *The Round Table*, Number 346, April 1998, p.177.

entity to France.’⁵¹ This was not an easy, or popular, argument to make at any time, but especially when the war was far from over.

In addition to official and public sources already described, focus on individual politicians at various points in the arguments needs more specific primary sources related to individual politicians. These include the archived papers of Lloyd George in the Parliamentary Archives, of Austen Chamberlain at Birmingham University and Churchill’s at Churchill College, Cambridge; many of the most relevant of Churchill’s papers were collected together by Gilbert in the companion to his biography of Churchill.⁵² Less well known are the papers of Sir John Stavridi, at St. Anthony’s College, Oxford. There are also contemporary diaries or letters of participants such as Amery, D’Abernon, Nicolson, Riddell and Scott.⁵³

Finally, there are the autobiographies written by figures such as Amery, Cecil, Churchill and Lloyd George; these must be treated with caution, as they were often written some years after the events, when the authors priority was to justify their earlier political decisions, rather than to give the most impartial account of the events.⁵⁴ An example of the unreliability or inconsistency of political memoirs, can be seen in the two separate books by Cecil. In 1941 he wrote in a brief reference to Locarno, that ‘in all the Treaties, the position of the League was fully safeguarded. Indeed, they were not to come into force till Germany entered the League.’⁵⁵ However, in 1949 he wrote on the same subject that ‘indeed, the worst part of Locarno was that it diminished the authority and availability of the League’ although he added that ‘I did not think that at the time.’⁵⁶

⁵¹ *The Round Table*, Number 30, March 1918, p.244.

⁵² Martin Gilbert, *Winston S Churchill Companion Papers Volume IV 1917-1922 and Volume V 1922-1939* (London: Heinemann, 1977 and 1979).

⁵³ L. S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); Lord D’Abernon, *Ambassador of Peace: Pages from the Diary of Viscount D’Abernon* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929); Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London: Constable, 1933); George Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After 1918-1923* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933) and C. P. Scott, *The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott 1911-1928*, T Wilson (ed.) (London: Collins, 1970).

⁵⁴ L. S. Amery, *My Political Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1953); Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (London: Macmillan, 1929); and David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (London : Odhams, 1936) and *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938).

⁵⁵ Lord Robert Cecil, *A Great Experiment* (London : Jonathan Cape, 1941). p.167.

⁵⁶ Lord Robert Cecil, *All the Way* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1949). p.187.

Although many of the primary documents and quotations will be well known, and be consistent with the interpretations in other secondary sources, it is not assumed that they have always been correctly quoted or interpreted. For example, Curzon's much quoted Foreign Office document of 1921,⁵⁷ and the quotation from Chamberlain's speech to the Commons in 1924,⁵⁸ will be scrutinised in the analysis of relationships with France, to understand better the British attitudes to its major ally from the Great War. The Chamberlain speech is particularly important; Dutton, in emphasising Chamberlain's friendship with France, quoted him in the Commons in July 1924 saying that: 'we would make the maintenance of the Entente with France the cardinal object of our policy.'⁵⁹ However, a closer look at *Hansard* shows that Chamberlain, speaking from the opposition front bench regarding the meeting between the prime ministers of Britain and France actually spoke of three, rather than one, underlying principles for a future Conservative government: upholding the Treaty of Versailles, maintaining the entente with France and also if Germany accepted its obligations, to respect the integrity of Germany and to welcome her back into the international community of nations.⁶⁰ This demonstrates the importance of studying the full citation in the primary source.

Contemporary comments from politicians, and near contemporary memoirs, may lack objectivity, but may still be used with those reservations in mind. Moreover, the relevance of such sources is not just whether the arguments are correct; for example, there are a number of quotations in this thesis from the diaries of Lord D'Abernon.⁶¹ This does not assume that D'Abernon, the British Ambassador to Germany, was as influential as he suggests, or as some historians may have implied. Johnson's *The Berlin Embassy of Lord D'Abernon* is no doubt correct as to the limitations of D'Abernon's contribution to the diplomatic processes, and to his generally 'idiosyncratic' behaviour.⁶² Citations are however still appropriate because his contemporary comments and the introductions written in 1929 are relevant on

⁵⁷ *Documents*, Volume XVI, No.768, 28 December 1921, p.860.

⁵⁸ *Hansard*, Volume 176, 14 July 1924, column 109.

⁵⁹ David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain : Gentleman in Politics* (London : Ross Anderson, 1985). p.238.

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 176, 14 July 1924, columns 109. Jon Jacobson makes the same shortened quotation in *Locarno Diplomacy Germany and the West* (Princeton : University Press, 1972), p.16.

⁶¹ D'Abernon, *Ambassador of Peace*.

⁶² Gaynor Johnson, *The Berlin Embassy of Lord D'Abernon 1920-1926* (London: MacMillan, 2002).

the basis of how a perceptive diarist saw the issues, rather than on his contribution to the current problems.

This thesis therefore makes most use of formal government documents, but with careful analysis of correct citations. The overall breadth of primary sources available is helpful, and the *Round Table* provides a particularly distinctive source of contemporary political comments on both imperial and European issues.

The Use of Secondary Sources

Many of the secondary sources for the period from 1919 to 1925, especially in the diplomatic and military fields, were written during the 1970s, after the large number of primary sources cabinet and foreign office files from the 1920s reached the end of what was then a fifty-year restriction of access.⁶³ Although some of these works will still be quoted, the majority of the arguments from such research will have been subsumed within more recent books, especially that of MacMillan in 2001 regarding Versailles,⁶⁴ of Johnson and her colleagues in 2004 regarding the Locarno years,⁶⁵ of Steiner in 2005 regarding the broader European issues but including Locarno,⁶⁶ and of Darwin in 2009 on the British Empire.⁶⁷

These four books all make major contributions to an understanding of this period, but they do not provide a particular basis for the historiography of this thesis. MacMillan's comprehensive account illustrated the complexities of the problems that were solved, or not solved, in Paris, but essentially ends with the treaty signing at Versailles; Johnson and her

⁶³ The closed period was changed in principle from 50 years to 30 years in legislation in 1967, and was introduced gradually over some years.

⁶⁴ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*.

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Locarno Revisited*.

⁶⁶ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶⁷ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

colleagues, and like Jacobson before them, looked well beyond 1925 at the years after Locarno; Steiner in her magisterial work is unlikely to be bettered on her detailed analysis, but her work did not consider British responsibilities outside Europe, or within the British Isles in Ireland, and she in fact placed Locarno in the middle of a chapter rather than pausing for reflection at that date. Darwin did look at important links and context between imperial and European issues, but he had an imperial theme, and did not place an emphasis on 1925 or Locarno.

There is then no clear school of thought representing the arguments of this thesis, nor one making the contrary arguments. The failure of historians to look separately and objectively at the years from 1919 to 1925, has already been analysed above. The remaining relevant secondary sources will be reviewed here under three headings; the experience of historians in looking at the conflicting pressures of the British Empire and Europe; the many assessments over the years of the Locarno process and the Locarno Agreements; and, most importantly, the wider failure of many historians to appreciate both the relative stability that had been achieved by the end of 1925 and the difficulties that were faced by the different British governments,

(a) Empire and Europe

There was, and is, no doubt that Britain was still a Great Power immediately after the Great War, as exemplified by Lloyd George's role in Paris, and Britain's role in the various conferences in the 1920s. What is less clear is the balance between Britain's imperial responsibilities and how it saw its European responsibilities. Headlam-Morley's contemporary statement regarding Britain's 'double status' is quoted at the beginning of this thesis. Rothwell wrote about Britain's war aims that, 'with no ambitions on the continent of Europe save the overall one of preventing any one power from becoming dominant there, Britain has traditionally been able to pose as the honest broker, striving for such equitable political arrangements as would reduce the risk of disputes, involvement in which might

tempt one of the Great Powers to aim at European supremacy.’⁶⁸ In his appropriately titled ‘Reluctant Engagement’ - Salmon wrote that ‘the huge costs of the war, the political turbulence of central and eastern Europe and the threat of Bolshevism all served to strengthen an internal revulsion from European affairs,’ and that after the war ‘if British involvement in Europe was reluctant, this was because British interests were worldwide and not simply European, Britain was ambivalent towards continental Europe because real interests were at stake.’⁶⁹

Within the secondary sources, there is a significant question regarding the lack of evidence on the diplomatic priorities or conflicts between the British imperial and European policies. Many contemporary imperial historians, such as Hancock⁷⁰ or Mansergh,⁷¹ were more concerned with the constitutional developments between the British governments and the Dominions, which led to the *Balfour Report* at the Imperial Conference in 1926 and the *Statute of Westminster* in 1931.⁷² The date of 1925 and the Treaty of Locarno will, however, also be seen as a significant date in British imperial history, in that the events of 1926 and 1931 regarding the independence of the Dominions, essentially formalised a number of earlier developments, which culminated in the Dominions being excluded from the process leading to Locarno. Hancock emphasised that the Imperial Conference of 1926 recognised the principle of separate national responsibility,⁷³ and Mansergh wrote significantly about the link to Locarno:

Dominion inaction at Locarno later came to be regarded, and rightly regarded, as an historic landmark in the evolution of their external policies. The precedent established in 1925, was followed with remarkable consistency up to the

⁶⁸ H.V. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1971) p.285.

⁶⁹ Patrick Salmon, ‘Reluctant Engagement : Britain and Continental Europe 1890-1939’ *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Volume 8/3 November 1997 pp. 140 and 145.

⁷⁰ W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

Hancock was a colleague of Lionel Curtis, a key member of *The Round Table*, at All Souls College, Oxford.

⁷¹ N. Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs – Problems of External Policy 1931-39* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

⁷² The term ‘Dominion’ had been used for the ‘Dominion of Canada’ from 1867, and was adopted on a wider basis at the Colonial Conference in 1907, to refer to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Newfoundland and South Africa, but not India. The Irish Free State became a Dominion in 1922.

⁷³ Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, p.260.

outbreak of the Second World War. In 1939 none of the Dominions had any major treaty obligations in Europe or in Asia.⁷⁴

Of the more recent imperial historians, Darwin's *The Empire Project*, and especially the chapter on *Making Imperial Peace 1919-1926*, was a clear exposition of the history of the empire, and especially on the internal developments of the Dominions, but it also made the clearest linkages between the empire and Britain's responsibilities in Europe.⁷⁵ He did not put a particular emphasis on 1925, and kept 1926 as the end year for his relevant chapter which ties in with his imperial themes. He argued that '1914 was the watershed between the two ages of Empire. In the long nineteenth century after 1815, the British world-system had developed as if there were no danger of a general war in Europe or across the world,' and that after the extreme difficulties of the war and the immediate post-war years, wrote that after 1925, a 'new economic order took shape in Europe, underwritten by the flow of American investment. Franco-German reconciliation lifted the threat of a new European struggle.'⁷⁶ Although Darwin's work does not provide an overall imperial/European thesis, to support or criticise, it is nevertheless much closer than many other secondary sources to the thinking behind this research.

During the last ten years, there have been various one-volume histories of the British Empire, including Levine,⁷⁷ Porter,⁷⁸ Stockwell⁷⁹ as editor, and Thompson.⁸⁰ They are general accounts of the empire, which by their nature look at the longer-term imperial developments, and place no particular emphasis on the years up to 1925 or 1926, or the links to Europe. They contain references to the increase in the size of the empire in 1919, to the Amritsar massacre, to the growing nationalism in different parts of the empire, and to the developments in relationship with the Dominions. However, there are no references in these books to the

⁷⁴ Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, p.66.

⁷⁵ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp.359-417. Darwin's earlier work *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918-1922* (London: Macmillan, 1981) is a key secondary source in the section below on imperial responsibilities in the Middle East and India.

⁷⁶ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp.305 and 418.

⁷⁷ Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (London: Pearson Longman, 2007).

⁷⁸ Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1970* (London: Pearson Longman, 2004).

⁷⁹ Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

⁸⁰ Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005).

significance of the non-involvement of the Dominions in the Locarno process or to the Locarno agreements themselves. Despite the absence of links between imperial and European policies in such works, they retain some value as sources, because there are significant aspects of imperial policy which must be assessed as part of a broader analysis of foreign policy during these years.⁸¹

Gallagher and Robinson's analysis of the 'informal empire' is of special interest, in a study of how the political establishment perceived the empire during these years.⁸² Of the major multi-volume studies of imperial history, the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* is of some interest in expressing near-contemporary views on early twentieth century events, rather than in helping with the analysis of events, especially as most of its chapters end in 1919 or 1921.⁸³ The more recent *Oxford History of the British Empire* does not have a chapter directly on empire and Europe, with the nearest relevant chapter being Clayton's on *Deceptive Might: Imperial Defence and Security 1900-1968*; the separate volume on *Historiography* is also of limited value because it reflects the chapters of the main volumes.⁸⁴ Beloff's two volumes on the British Empire made the break between the volumes in 1921, rather than 1919 or 1926, with the deliberations of the Imperial Conference in the summer, and the settlement in Ireland at the end of that year, as central to his decision, but with no particular link to Europe.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) are major works of imperial history, but not as relevant to this thesis. In view of the importance of the Middle East, it was hoped that Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), which argued that western writers failed to understand the 'otherness' of Eastern, and particularly Middle Eastern, culture, customs and beliefs, would have been particularly relevant. However, although Said started from an analysis of a speech made by Balfour in June 1910, and has quotes from Curzon in the Lords in 1909, he made no reference to post-war politicians such as Lloyd George, Baldwin, MacDonald or Churchill. See also David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire 1850-1970* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

⁸² John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, Volume 6/1, 1953, pp1-15.

⁸³ J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, various volumes from 1929).

⁸⁴ Judith M. Brown and Louis Wm. Roger (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume IV Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Robin W. Winks (ed.), *Volume V Historiography*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset* (London: Macmillan, 1969 and 1989).

Although not many secondary sources look at both imperial and European issues, particularly for the years from 1919 to 1925, there are a wide range of secondary sources available within the separate areas of imperial and European history, that will be referred to in this thesis.

(b) Locarno

The Treaties of Locarno are so central to the re-assessment of the governments' foreign policies, that it is relevant to refer to the outline of the treaties in this chapter. The treaties, covered the following subjects:

- A treaty of mutual guarantee of the Franco-German and the Belgian-German frontiers, with Britain and Italy as guarantors;
- German-Belgian and German-French arbitration treaties;
- German-Czechoslovak and German-Polish arbitration treaties;
- Treaties of mutual assistance, in the event of German aggression, between France and Poland, and between France and Czechoslovakia.

Analysis of the historiography of Locarno overlaps with that of the overall achievements of foreign policy by 1925. It is, however, important to try to look at them separately, because although Locarno was integral to the achievements in 1925, the two issues are not synonymous, as Britain's wider responsibilities and achievements include developments near to home in Ireland, and those outside Europe throughout the empire. Within the historiography of Locarno, there are questions both about the processes involved and about the substance of the agreements. On the processes, Steiner wrote about a triumph for 'old diplomacy' and this emphasis on what may be seen as pre-war diplomacy was put more strongly by Cassels when he wrote, in *Locarno Revisited*, that:

The Treaty of Locarno was intended to be a surrogate for the aborted Geneva Protocol. But, as the historiographical consensus now recognizes with the benefit of hindsight, what was agreed at a Swiss lakeside resort on 16 October 1925 was nothing more or less than an old-fashioned compact among the major European powers, heirs of the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe. Substantive guarantees were severely limited by geography to the Rhine frontiers. The objectives of the signatories were all, in one way or another, self-

seeking, and often mutually contradictory. As an exercise in conventional power politics, nothing could be further from the universalistic, idealistic Geneva Protocol.⁸⁶

Bell was also critical of the Locarno diplomacy when he wrote:

Most serious of all, the agreements merely disguised a profound difference of approach between France and Germany. It was true that Briand and Stresemann spoke the language of reconciliation; but each hoped to reconcile the others to something different. Briand wanted to reconcile Germany to the acceptance of the Versailles settlement; Stresemann wanted to reconcile France to its revision.⁸⁷

It will be argued that these conclusions do not reflect the problems faced by the Locarno negotiators, as all diplomatic processes are bound to involve national self-seeking and often mutually contradictory views. Any diplomatic negotiations, let alone those dealing with the difficulties regarding France and Germany after the Great War, are trying to reconcile apparently irreconcilable positions into an agreement that the different parties can accept. In such negotiations, any agreement reached does not require the giving up of beliefs, but a willingness, albeit very reluctantly, to move towards some common ground, that the parties can live with, and sell to their own national constituents.

Doubts about the Locarno Agreements have gone much wider than Cassels' and Bell's comments on the diplomatic processes. The most critical views of the performance of the governments can be seen when Barnett wrote of Locarno that 'the treaty was, so far as England and her guarantee were concerned, no more than a hollow gesture to soothe the French; a bogus commitment, a fraudulent IOU, that was given only because the English Government never thought for a moment that they would ever have to make it good.'⁸⁸ Many historians while not adopting Barnett's vivid language or his strange reference to the 'English Government' still put great emphasis on words such as 'illusion' or other negative terms.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Locarno Revisited*, p.81, Alan Cassels, chapter four *Locarno: Early Test of Fascist Intentions*.

⁸⁷ P. M. H. Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe* (London: Pearson Longman, 2007), p.40.

⁸⁸ Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Methuen, 1972), p.332.

⁸⁹ The use of the term 'illusion' is considered below on page 31.

The common criticism of Locarno has been that the agreements only dealt with the issues on Germany's western borders, and did not attempt to solve the much more problematic eastern issues.⁹⁰ Although Poland could be worried after Locarno that her borders were not as guaranteed as those of France, it will be argued that this is not a fair criticism; there was already a framework for a possible agreement on the western borders, and there was no practical possibility that Gustav Stresemann, the German foreign minister, could have got parliamentary approval for reinforcing the Versailles decisions in the east, even if he had personally wanted to, which he almost certainly did not. The most common analysis in the many secondary sources is that both the Versailles and Locarno Treaties fell to pieces with the rise of Hitler and the German occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, and that these events led to the Second World War. That analysis is accepted, but it will be argued that does not prove that the Locarno conclusions were not a significant achievement in the circumstances of 1925.

Of the many historians of Locarno, Doerr emphasised Jacobson's conclusions regarding the different perceptions of the three key signatories to the Treaties:

Stresemann thought that the path had been cleared for the peaceful revision of Germany's borders in the East; Briand considered that French predominance over Germany had been assured, and Chamberlain believed that since France was mollified and Germany was returned to the international community Britain would never have to assume a military role on the continent.⁹¹

However, such emphasis on the different perceptions, as also indicated above in a similar way by Bell, again emphasises the exceptional difficulties, during these years and specifically in 1925 and therefore this reflects on the achievements at Locarno.⁹² Although Jacobson's

⁹⁰ Comparison with other treaties in twentieth century is difficult, but Locarno may have some similarities with the Camp David agreements for the Middle-East in 1978. It can be argued that this was a significant achievement in 1978, even if it was only an agreement between Israel and Egypt, and not with Jordan and Syria, and even if the whole agreement might be in danger of collapsing nearly 40 years later. It could be argued that getting agreement on one front (ie France or Egypt) distracted attention from then getting agreement on the other ie Poland or Syria); that is however again an argument about the lack of follow-up on the original agreement rather than the original agreement itself.

⁹¹ Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*. p.90, citing Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy* p.44.

⁹² Jonathan Wright argued that 'the Locarno détente represented a temporary modus vivendi in the mid-1920s because there was no better power political alternative for either France or Germany in the short term...more of a democratic truce than a democratic peace. In both countries the modus vivendi was also unpopular with

standard book on Locarno was written as long ago as 1972,⁹³ we now have the advantage that Jacobson was also a contributor to the 2004 series of essays entitled *Locarno Revisited*, where there were also contributions or endorsements by Dockrill, Goldstein, Johnson, Cohrs, Wright and Dutton.⁹⁴ Jacobson's original detailed analysis is still relevant, but like the 2004 book, it was looking at the wider 'Locarno Era' rather than just the events up to the end of 1925; for example Jacobson devoted nearly twice as many pages to the Hague Conference and the other events of 1929, as he does to the events of 1925.⁹⁵

There are then many secondary sources available about the Locarno processes and the Locarno conference, but any conclusions about success and stability in 1925 must also take into account a wider analysis of Britain's total foreign policies, including all the imperial responsibilities of the British Empire and the difficulties facing the different British governments

(c) Overall Performance of Foreign Policies

The central argument of this thesis is that historiography has not given enough recognition to the successes of the different British governments during these years. As the majority of the historiography does not treat these years as a significant period or draw conclusions that are specific to it, the relevant secondary sources have to be employed for their usefulness in constructing an interpretation directly relevant to these six years. The governments of the period did have advantages in dealing with their foreign policy problems. The Lloyd George coalition government had the political advantage of its mandate being reinforced in the general election in December 1918. Britain had been one of the victors in the war, and although the benefits may not always have seemed clear, the problems arising from the war

significant sections of the electorate', Jonathan Wright, 'Locarno: A Democratic Peace', *Review of International Studies*, Volume 36/2, April 2010, pp.391-411.

⁹³ Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy*.

⁹⁴ Johnson, *Locarno Revisited*.

⁹⁵ Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, p.90, refers to Jacobson as the 'foremost historian of Locarno'.

were more manageable as a result. In addition, the pace of political life allowed more time for reflection and strategic thinking. Government was subject to a number of negative press campaigns, but these pressures were limited, especially in comparison to the round-the-clock media a century later.

Despite these advantages, it is easier to record the difficulties faced by the administrations of the period. These included the fact that the political leaders and the general population were physically and mentally exhausted after four years of total war; that the responsibilities of empire had increased as a result of Versailles; that the economic costs and the total debts of the war hit the peacetime economy; that there were immediate problems in 1919 not only of the demobilisation of up to four million from the armed forces, but also in the major readjustment for both men and women within civilian employment; that the complexity and difficulties of the Irish negotiations, including the interaction with domestic British politics, were a burden; and that while a comprehensive peace treaty had been signed in Versailles, major foreign policy issues remained unsettled, especially those between France and Germany, in Eastern Europe including the civil war in Russia, and in the Middle East.

Adamthwaite argued that 'Locarno fostered an illusion of détente' and that 'by guaranteeing the Franco-German frontier Britain implicitly repudiated responsibility for any other European frontier. Munich was the logical sequel of this policy.'⁹⁶ Marks' book was entitled *The Illusion of Peace*, her specific chapter was headed *The Years of Illusion* and she wrote that 'however, it was an illusory guarantee; the Locarno guarantees were from the start inoperable,' and that 'the public façade of the Locarno conference, and the treaties themselves, created an illusion of peace, and ordinary men rejoiced.'⁹⁷ Ross, in his wider historical survey, took a similar approach and entitled his chapter *A period of false stability 1924-1929*.⁹⁸ Doerr had a more positive chapter heading, *An era of Stability and Promise*

⁹⁶Anthony Adamthwaite, *The Making of the Second World War* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977), p.33.

⁹⁷ Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe 1918-1933* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

⁹⁸ Graham Ross, *The Great Powers and the Decline of the European States System 1914-1945* (London: Longman, 1983).

1924-1929 but still wrote that 'post-Locarno optimism now seems hopelessly unjustified.'⁹⁹ When the military history of this period was written as part of a much wider view of developments over the centuries, the tone of the approach to chapters on the inter-war years is exemplified in the chapter headings, with Kennedy on the Royal Navy choosing *The Years of Decay*¹⁰⁰ and Barnett on the British Army the equally negative *Illusion and Neglect*.¹⁰¹

Many historians have been critical of Versailles, but their critique is normally based on considering it retrospectively from the standpoint of 1939. Marks' analysis of international relations from 1918 to 1933 is worth detailed examination in this context. She itemised all the difficulties after Versailles, and all the changes to Versailles that took place such as the Dawes Report, the abandonment of Austrian and Turkish reparations, the replacement of Sèvres with Lausanne, and the Japanese concessions to China at Washington.¹⁰² On successive pages Marks wrote that 'as the peace settlement crumbled' and 'as the treaty crumbled' and also 'the will to enforce the treaties was lacking or at best divided.'¹⁰³ However, her listing of the problems after Versailles demonstrated the scale of the difficulties facing all the major powers, including Britain, during these years. It therefore reinforces the achievements at Lausanne, at the London Conference and at Locarno, all of which contributed to the significantly greater stability achieved by the end of 1925.

Considering a broader perspective, beyond the inter-war years, another way in which the historiography is deficient is that the historians of the whole of the twentieth century paid very little attention to this six-year period. For example, Hobsbawm¹⁰⁴ made no reference to Locarno, and Mazower¹⁰⁵ and Vinen¹⁰⁶ made only passing references. Looking more closely at diplomatic histories of the war and the early inter-war years, accounts start from Marks in 1976, through a large number of other accounts leading to the comprehensive volume by

⁹⁹ Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, p.89.

¹⁰⁰ Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, pp.267-298.

¹⁰¹ Barnett, *Britain and her Army*, pp.410-423.

¹⁰² Marks, *The Illusion of Peace*, p.55.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.34.

¹⁰⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ Vinen, *A History in Fragments*.

Steiner in 2005.¹⁰⁷ Broader histories of Britain during these years such as Lloyd¹⁰⁸ or Charmley¹⁰⁹ are sometimes relevant either because of insights about the members of the political establishment, or because of the effects on foreign policies of domestic developments. Dangerfield is relevant on the background of the Edwardian years, but despite the reputation of his work, he surprisingly did not make any comparison with the issues after the war.¹¹⁰

A very recent book covering these years, from an American perspective, illustrated another difficulty of getting appropriate analysis. Summarising the effects of the war and the peace on the different countries, Tooze wrote that ‘Britain had won a great victory, but then frittered away its credit in a disastrous series of post-war affairs at Amritsar, in Ireland, and in the Middle-East.’¹¹¹ While not even qualifying his list by saying that these were examples, he used the narrowness of Amritsar, where the tragedy was commissioned well out of sight of London, with the breadth of the ‘Middle-East’ without any analysis, and then listed ‘Ireland’ which can better be seen as a difficult solution to a longstanding problem. Tooze’s conclusions on this point show the problems of an over-simplified analysis of very complicated diplomatic, military and imperial situations.

The failure to get any agreement about Germany’s eastern border issues in the years after Locarno was a major reason for the events that led to the Second World War, and the principles of both the Versailles and the Locarno Agreements did collapse with Hitler’s

¹⁰⁷ Marks, *The Illusion of Peace* and Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*. Historiography of British foreign policy in these years chronologically includes Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918*; Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning and the Paris Peace Conference 1916-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991); C. J. Lowe and Michael L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power* (London: Routledge, 1972); Michael L. Dockrill and J. Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences 1919-1923* (London: Batsford 1981); G. H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period 1919-1924* (London: St Martin Press, 1995); Dockrill and McKercher (eds), *Diplomacy and World Power* is a tribute to Zara Steiner; Gaynor Johnson (ed.), *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2005). Benjamin F. Martin, *France and the Apres Guerre 1918-1924: Illusions and Disillusionment* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999) is interesting though it ends in 1924.

¹⁰⁸ T. O. Lloyd Empire, *Welfare State, Europe: A History of the United Kingdom 1906-2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ John Charmley, *A History of Conservative Politics 1900-1996* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

¹¹⁰ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York: Smith and Haas, 1935).

¹¹¹ Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of the Global Order* (New York: Penguin, 2014), p.463.

occupation of the Rhineland in 1936. However, it will be argued in this thesis that Locarno achieved what was diplomatically possible in 1925 in two crucial respects: first to confirm Germany's western borders written down at Versailles, but now accepted by Germany, and secondly to establish a diplomatic rapport or understanding between Britain, France and Germany, as equals, that could be built on, with further efforts. It will be argued therefore that, although the causes of the Second World War could be linked back to Locarno and Versailles, it is not because Locarno was a failure, but because Locarno was not built upon after 1925. This thesis will provide an analysis of the years from Versailles to Locarno, making full use of most relevant primary and secondary sources.

The Structure of the Thesis

The analysis of the secondary sources reinforces the appropriateness of looking at the six years from Versailles to Locarno, but it does not identify a school of thought either supporting or opposing the arguments of this thesis. Empire and Europe are both central to British foreign policies. While Locarno is crucial to any argument, it is important to look at the widest possible assessment of the policies, and to assess the difficulties faced by the governments.

The structure of the thesis, after the Introduction, starts in chapter one with the background to these six years. The key background factor is the Great War, and the chapter concentrates on links of the war to the post-war period, including the attitudes of the different political parties, the unmeasurable effects on politicians and the wider public of the war, the evolution of the relationships between Britain and the Dominions, and the events towards the end of the war leading to the armistice and the Paris Peace Conference. Other effects of the war, such as Britain's relationship with France, and the implications of the great build-up of international indebtedness during the war, are dealt with in subsequent chapters.

The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles have their own background section, in chapter one, as the successes and more importantly the failures in Paris provided much of

the agenda for foreign policies up to Locarno and the succeeding years. The earlier section on Edwardian Britain offers a description of the background of the British politicians who were central to post-war decisions, and an account of the implications for policy makers of how the pre-war period was seen by some as one of relative prosperity and stability.¹¹²

Chapter two provides the contemporary domestic background to foreign policy. Initially, it examines party political differences, and concludes that there was a remarkable degree of continuity in most aspects of foreign policy, whether it was the Lloyd George Conservative-Liberal Coalition, the Conservative Party or the Labour Party as the different parties in government. An overview of economic and financial matters emphasises the importance of international indebtedness caused by the war, the wish to return to stability and normality after the war and the constraints on government expenditure. Despite these constraints, which often concentrated on military expenditure as a major part of the budget, it is argued that there were no direct constraints on foreign policies, except perhaps in how the military were to operate in newly acquired territories like Mesopotamia, or in the financial pressures that led to the successful negotiations on battleships at the Washington Conference.

Chapter three, is entitled 'Global Challenges' and portrays Britain's place in the world, with an initial analysis of the growth of the United States as a global power. The global challenges facing the British Empire, which had recently been enlarged and reinforced at Versailles, are examined under the headings of the British Imperial Role, the Suez Canal and India, the new

¹¹² The leading politicians in the early 1920s were, in descending age order: Balfour (53 in 1901) was leader of the Commons in 1901, became prime minister from 1902 to 1906, and was still a leading opposition politician in 1914; Bonar Law (43) Canadian born but Scottish bred, became an MP in 1900 and was leader of the Conservative Party from 1911; Lord Curzon (42) was already Viceroy of India in 1901, and entered the Lords in 1908; Austen Chamberlain (38) was financial secretary to the Treasury in 1901, entered the cabinet in 1902 and was a leading opposition politician in 1914; Lloyd George (38) was a prominent Liberal backbencher opposing the South African War in 1901, but was to be chancellor of the exchequer in the years up to 1914; Lord Robert Cecil (37) was a barrister in 1901 before becoming an MP from 1906; Ramsay MacDonald (35) became an MP in 1906 and was chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1914; Baldwin (34) was a manager in his family steel-making firm in the Midlands, before succeeding his father as MP for Bewdley from 1908; Amery (28) had reported the South African War for *The Times*, and then wrote *The Times History of the South African War* before becoming an MP in 1911; Churchill (27), already well known as an army officer and a war reporter, became an MP in 1900 and was in the cabinet as first lord of the admiralty before 1914; Hankey (24) was a Royal Navy officer in 1901 and secretary of the CID from 1912.

responsibilities in the Middle East, and the development of Britain's relationships with the Dominions, with particular reference to Canada.

Against that global background, chapter four is a case study of the Washington Naval Conference. The emphasis given to this conference, of all the international conferences held during these years,¹¹³ is justified by the importance of the United States, as the new global power, and Britain as long-standing global power, finding a way to establish a balance that reflected the new parity in their status. The conference, which was held outside the League, was an important diplomatic achievement for Britain, and it also took into account the concerns of Australia and New Zealand in respect of the Royal Navy providing security for them in the Far East.

In chapter five, the thesis returns to Europe and after consideration of Britain's relations with the League of Nations, analyses in some depth Britain's relations with France and Germany, whose bilateral antipathy provided the major European diplomatic challenges during these years. Not all countries can be covered, but Poland is analysed in some depth, in view of the criticisms that the Locarno Treaties did not address the problems of Germany's eastern borders with Poland, and the Polish Corridor, established in Versailles.

Chapter six also concentrates on Western Europe, but adopts a chronological approach covering the two years leading up to Locarno. It takes 1923 as the turning point, then considers the significance of the Dawes Plan and the London Conference, the Geneva Conference in 1924, and then developments in the twelve months leading up to the Locarno Conference in October 1925. The chronological approach is justified for these two years

¹¹³ The years from 1920 saw a succession of international conferences. In 1920 there was San Remo in April regarding the formalization of Class 'A' League mandates and discussion on reparations; Spa in July regarding reparations; and Sèvres in August with the old Ottoman Empire to conclude the Paris agenda. In 1921 meetings on reparations in Paris in January and twice in London between February and May; the Washington Naval Conference started in November 1921 while there was a further Anglo-French meeting in London in December on German reparations. In 1922 there was Cannes in January on reparations; Genoa in April and May which was mainly about economic matters, but is more remembered for the German delegation moving surprisingly on to the adjacent Rapallo Conference between Russia and Germany; and London in August with further Anglo-French failure to on the reparation issues. Lausanne was the location for conferences with the new Turkish regime, late in 1922, and finalised in July 1923.

because, unlike the years from 1919 to 1923, the successive events from the establishment of the Dawes Committee do link together.

Chapter seven examines some key ‘unfinished business’ issues at the end of 1925 to consider whether they reinforce the argument that Locarno is a suitable end date for this reassessment of these six years; the areas examined referred to include Anglo-American relations, imperial developments, Western Europe, relations with Russia and the League of Nations. Chapter eight pulls together the overall conclusions of the thesis, and is followed by the bibliography.

Any choice of structure provides problems in that it may not emphasise the interaction between policies, or the pressure of timing on the politicians. While such issues should be addressed in the chapters on imperial and European matters, it is appropriate at this stage to give an indication of how the different imperial, European and domestic problems sometimes occurred at the same time for the cabinets at the time. Therefore, a brief summary of some of the main events of these years is given on the next page.

This summary does not aim to provide an exhaustive list of key events, and some feature more prominently in the text than others. The point of the chart is to show how those key dates from domestic, imperial and European history sometimes coincided in respect of pressure on the government, and especially the prime minister, which is not apparent from historians covering only domestic, Irish, Imperial or European history. For example, Lloyd George did not attend the Washington Conference in November 1921 because of the pressures of the negotiations with Sinn Féin, and the new Bonar Law government in January 1923 was dealing with both the problems of the proposed debt agreement with the United States and the occupation of the Ruhr, just a few weeks after taking office, and immediately after the establishment of the new Irish Free State in December 1922.

The introduction to this thesis has therefore provided justification for the period chosen, a definition of the criteria for success, discussion of the role of the individual in foreign policy, an assessment of the relevant primary and secondary sources and a brief summary of the structure of the thesis.

	Domestic	Empire (include Ireland)	Europe (or wider) ¹¹⁴
1919	Aug. Cabinet '10 Year Rule' Oct. Curzon Foreign Sec.	Sept. Smuts PM of S. Africa	June Treaty of Versailles Oct. British evacuate Murmansk
1920	July Communist Party of GB Oct. Miners' Strike Nov. Cenotaph Unveiled	May Revolt in Iraq July Amritsar Parlt. Debate Nov. Dublin Bloody Sunday Dec. Gov. of Ireland Act	Jan. League of Nations March USA Senate "No" April San Remo Conference July Spa Conference Aug. Treaty of Sèvres Oct. Poland occupies Vilna
1921	Feb. Churchill Colonial Sec March Anglo-Russian Trade Aug. Geddes Committee	March Cairo Conference June Withdrawal from Persia June Imperial Conference Nov. Washington Conference Dec. Agreement Sinn Fein	Feb. Franco-Polish Alliance Mar. Poland-Russia Peace Mar. Upper Silesian Plebiscite Apr. Reparations Bill to Germany Aug. US/German Peace Treaty
1922	Oct. Lloyd George Resigns Oct. Bonar Law P.M.	Jan. Churchill Kenya Speech Feb. Deaths at Chairi Chaura Feb. Egypt Independence Feb. Washington Conf. ends Oct. Anglo-Iraq Treaty Dec. Irish Free State	Jan. Cannes Conference April Genoa/Rapallo Conference Sept. Smyrna / Chanak Oct. Mussolini Italian P.M.
1923	Jan. Debt Agreement with US May Baldwin P.M.	March 'Halibut Treaty' Oct. Imperial Conference Oct. S. Rhodesia Self-Gov.	Jan. Occupation of Ruhr Jan. Lithuania occupy Memel July Treaty of Lausanne Aug. Corfu Incident Sep. Germ Passive resist. ended Nov. New German 'Rentenmark'
1924	Jan. MacDonald P.M. Feb. Britain recognises USSR Oct. 'Zinoviev Letter' Nov. Baldwin P.M.	April British Empire Exhib.	Jan. Franco-Czech Alliance April Dawes Report May. Herriot replaces Poincaré Aug. London Conference Sept. Geneva Protocol Drafted
1925	April Return Gold Standard April Death Sir Eyre Crowe Dec. Chamberlain Nobel Prize	May Cyprus Crown Colony	Jan. German Initiative April Hindenberg President Aug. French troops leave Ruhr Oct. Locarno Conference Dec. Signing Locarno Treaties

¹¹⁴ The term 'Europe (or wider)' ensures events covered such as the United States' Senate rejection of Versailles.

Chapter One: Continuities and Discontinuities : The Background to these Years

In order to understand and assess the foreign policy problems and successes during the years from 1919 to 1925, it is essential to understand the background of the Great War, of the Paris Conference and the Treaty of Versailles. This chapter, however, deliberately starts from the background of Edwardian Britain, in order to describe the relative normality of the pre-war years, before the extremes of the war years and the complexities of the peace conference. The analysis of the Edwardian years is also important because the key political figures of 1919 to 1925 grew up politically during these years and most of the main political leaders in Britain were in power before, during and after the war.

Edwardian Britain

The term ‘Edwardian Years’ is usually defined as the years from the death of Victoria and the accession of Edward VII in 1901 to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, even though Edward himself died in 1910, and was succeeded by his son George V. These years have been portrayed in many different ways; in the middle of the twentieth century they were looked back on as being relatively peaceful and prosperous, compared with the tragedies of two world wars, and the economic depression and unemployment of the inter-war years. More recently it has become fashionable to see these years as being more complicated, more troubled and more significant. Hattersley wrote that, ‘the persistent myth depicts the Edwardian era as a long and leisurely afternoon’ and argued that it was not an interlude but rather the time when a modern nation was born.¹

Gregory emphasised that the British working classes, who were to fight and die in the trenches in Flanders, did not come from an easy life in pre-war years. He described the ill-health, insecurity, grinding poverty and child mortality in working class families and

¹ Roy Hattersley, *The Edwardians* (London: Little Brown, 2004) in his introduction.

highlighted the extreme suffering in the welsh mining village of Sengennydd where over four hundred men and boys were killed in a pit explosion in the mine in 1913, before many of the remaining men fought and died in the war.² Gregory's description of the working class in these years was of course different again from the life of the British political establishment.

The politicians who were to be the leading figures in the early 1920s came mostly from the upper middle or upper classes. Napoleon is reputed to have said that 'to understand the man, you have to know what was happening in the world when he was twenty.' It is certainly important to understand the British politicians' progress through the Edwardian years and the considerable continuity from those years to the early 1920s. The leading figures in 1901 included Salisbury, Hicks Beach, Asquith, Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman, Balfour and Joseph Chamberlain. Of these, only Balfour and Asquith were still active in the years nearer 1914; however, of those prominent just before the war, only Asquith was not in the post-war governments, although he was still leader of his section of the Liberal Party

Apart from the issue about continuity, the main conclusions from looking at the pre-war biographies is the deep experience of the British Empire, but not of Europe, for some of the key members of the post-war cabinets. Lord Curzon was viceroy and governor general of India from 1898 to 1905; Lord Milner after some years spent in Egypt was later appointed governor of the Cape Colony and high commissioner to South Africa in 1897, and was to remain in South Africa until 1905; Churchill had experience of fighting with the British army in the Indian sub-continent and was then a war correspondent and captured by the Boers in the South African War, and Amery was the special correspondent of *The Times* for the same war.³ Asquith and Lloyd George had little experience outside domestic politics.

The Edwardian party political scene was divided by the January 1906 election which was followed by eight years of Liberal governments, under Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith. The general elections in 1900, 1906 and the two in 1910 resulted in seats in the Commons,

² Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.278.

³ Others working at the heart of government came from a colonial environment. Philip Kerr had been an active member of the *Milner Kindergarten*, and was private secretary to Lloyd George from 1916 to 1921.

and in actual votes cast, which could be seen at the time as reflecting the gradual rise of the Labour Party.⁴ What could not have been foreseen were the split in the Liberal Party after 1916 between the supporters of Asquith and those of Lloyd George, the replacement of Redmond's Irish Party by the much more radical Sinn Fein and the further rise of the Labour Party after the war.⁵ Although it will be argued that there were relatively few important differences between the political parties in foreign and imperial policies after the war, the changes in the political balance in Westminster were significant.

In looking at the key political and diplomatic events of the Edwardian years, and the extent that they may have influenced politicians after the war, it should first be said that it was a relatively peaceful time in foreign and imperial matters in those years before the outbreak of war in 1914. There was a sensitive follow-up to the situation in South Africa, and there was a generally quiet imperial scene unless Ireland is included in that definition. The attempts to be more friendly to France were exemplified by the *Entente Cordiale* which was signed in 1904, but there was growing concern about the strength and threatening attitudes of Germany with the three Moroccan crises and the competitive naval building policies. As Lloyd commented: 'British interest in imperial expansion had been replaced by a feeling of uneasiness about German policy.'⁶

Dangerfield's analysis of *The Strange Death of Liberal England* concentrates just on the years from 1910 to 1914, but his comments are of particular interest because his book was written shortly after the period covered by this thesis, and published in 1935.⁷ He analysed the four developments that he argued had the effect of destroying the Liberal Party as a party of government. These were the Conservative attacks on the Parliament Act, the threat of civil war over Ulster, the suffragette movement and lastly the increasing militancy of the trades

⁴ David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth Century British Political Facts 1900-2000* (London: Macmillan, 2000). In the general elections of 1900, 1906 and the two in 1910 the Conservatives won 402, 157, 273 and 272 seats respectively; the Liberals 184, 400, 275 and 272; Labour 2, 30, 40 and 42; and the Irish Party between 82 and 84 seats in all the elections. Labour voters, admittedly for a growing number of seats, went from 1.8% of total vote in 1900, to 5.9% in 1906, and to 7.6% and 7.1% in 1910.

⁵T.O. Lloyd, *Empire, Welfare State, Europe: A History of the United Kingdom 1906-2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.47, does however show that, in eight of fifteen by-election seats lost by the Liberals or Labour between 1910 and 1914, the parties together still polled a majority of votes cast.

⁶ Ibid. p.11.

⁷ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. (New York: Smith and Haas, 1935).

unions. Although Dangerfield's arguments lack comparisons with the years immediately after the war, they do emphasise the complexities of the domestic policies.⁸

The Conservative attack on the Parliament Act followed the Lloyd George budget of 1909, the subsequent battles about the powers of the Lords, including the two elections of 1910, and the Liberal government's threat to ask King George to create hundreds of new peers to ensure a majority in the Lords. Dangerfield was right to emphasise the bitterness of the dispute; however, despite the acrimony, it did not remain an issue during or after the war, when the Conservatives and the Liberals were in coalition. Any further debate regarding a reduction of the two-year delaying power of the Lords did not occur until after 1945.

The Irish problems returned to Westminster after 1910 with growing antagonism between the Liberals, and their commitment to Home Rule, and the Conservatives and their opposition to this. This antagonism increasingly centred on the demands of Ulster, and the close links between members of the Conservative Party and legal and illegal elements within the Ulster Unionist movement. After the increasing likelihood of violence in the first half of 1914, the main political parties agreed to a political truce at the beginning of the war. The truce in Ireland itself was shattered by the Easter Rising in 1916, and the issue became a great problem between 1919 and 1922, but again the British political situation was very different as the Lloyd George Liberals and the Conservatives were then attempting to solve the Irish problem as coalition partners, rather than facing each other in the Commons.

Then there was the question of the suffrage and the campaigning, and sometimes violent action, of the suffragettes; although some Liberals were somewhat sympathetic to the movement, there was not a great difference of emphasis between the main political parties. In the Edwardian elections only about one third of the adult population were entitled to vote, with no women having the vote. However, the Representation of the People Act of 1918 ensured that after the sacrifices of men and women during the war, all adults aged 21 and

⁸ For example, days lost through strikes were typically plus or minus 10 million days in most of the years from 1910 to 1914 and from 1923 to 1925, but with peaks of 40m in 1912, 34m in 1919, 26m in 1920, 85m in 1921 and 19m in 1922. Butler and Butler, *Twentieth Century British Political Facts*, p.399.

over, with the exception of women under 30, had the vote from the 1918 general election. The question of the suffrage was not an issue after the war, and the final equalisation for women aged between 21 and 30 was achieved in 1928.

Finally, on economic, social and labour matters, there were the arguments before the war about the Taff Vale case and trade union legislation, the Liberal initiatives on social issues regarding old age pensions, national insurance and the establishment of labour exchanges, and the initiatives on Imperial Preference led by Joseph Chamberlain. In comparison however with other decades, it was a period of relatively stable economic and financial matters. The key arguments between the parties, and within the parties, were regarding the cost of the Liberal social issues, the degree of sympathy for the newly organised working classes, the choices of tax options and then the costs of the naval building programme. The debate about the number of Dreadnought battleships to be built was particularly tense when the Admiralty demanded in 1909 that eight further battleships should be laid down, and the Liberal Cabinet eventually compromised on committing to four ships immediately with four more to follow.

Citing Dangerfield regarding the key domestic and Irish issues demonstrates the variety of issues during those years when the post-war leaders were either starting their ministerial careers or already carrying heavy responsibilities of state, and which must have influenced their thinking in post-war years. The analysis also shows the contrast between the issues that were to be still important after the war, and those which had been solved or disappeared from view. The main continuing issue was that of Ireland; those which were there but not in the same way were trade union disputes and arguments about government expenditure, including military matters. There was therefore much greater continuity in the politicians involved before and after the war, rather than in continuity in the issues. Most of the issues that seemed insurmountable, or very difficult, before August 1914, were overtaken by the threat and the actuality of war in Europe; as Churchill wrote on 24 July ‘The parishes of Tyrone and Fermanagh faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland, and a strange light began immediately, and by perceptible gradations, to fall and glow upon the map of Europe.’⁹

⁹ Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, p.364.

The Great War

Any study of the years from 1919 to 1925 could not ignore the Great War and its cataclysmic events and effects, especially in Europe. However, this section will concentrate on aspects of the war that link to the post-war period, such as the attitude of the different political parties, the unmeasurable effect on politicians and the public of the casualties of four years of total war, the evolution of British-Dominion relationships, and the events at the end of the war leading to the Paris Peace Conference. Other aspects including the development of Anglo-French relationships, and the extent of international indebtedness, will be referred to in subsequent chapters.

During the war there was general political unity in Britain behind the war aims, but there were some differences between or within the parties. Within Labour there were sharp differences between the majority who supported the war, and those such as Ramsay MacDonald who consistently opposed the conflict. The Liberals supported the war but split in 1916 when Asquith and his supporters left the coalition government and could be very critical of the Lloyd George coalition government, even though they continued to support the war. Some Conservatives had mixed feelings in joining the coalition governments in 1915 and 1916, but as Blake pointed out, they were the party more comfortable dealing with wartime issues, 'because on almost every issue that came up, Conservative tradition and ideology was better suited than Liberal to meet the needs of the hour; conscription, defence of the realm, Ireland, indeed all the necessities of a prolonged war, tended to create doubts and divisions in the Liberals.'¹⁰

While many of the countries fighting in the war suffered grievously in both military and civilian casualties, Britain's casualties were overwhelmingly military; the total of those who were killed, missing in action or died of wounds amounted to 743,000 for Britain, compared with 1,384,000 for France, 615,000 for Italy and 48,000 for the United States.¹¹ British

¹⁰ Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Major* (London: Heinemann, 1993), p.196.

¹¹ Martin Gilbert, *The First World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994), p.541.

casualties were highest among the infantry rank and file and the junior officers leading them.¹² It is customary to say that the total numbers of British deaths, disabled and wounded must have affected every family in the land; Gregory challenges this by a calculation relating the number of deaths only to immediate family, but that will underestimate the total number of wounded, and the cohesive nature of society in those years, especially in working class areas.¹³ The extent of the casualties is better appreciated by examples such as that 1,157 Old Etonians died in the war,¹⁴ or that on 1 July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 235 members of the 'Accrington Pals' battalion were killed, 17 were to die of wounds, and 350 were wounded.¹⁵

Given the age range of politicians, and the class structure of the British military forces, the attrition rate of young officers was bound to affect the sons of the leading politicians. Asquith's personal tragedy is perhaps best known, with his eldest son Raymond being killed in 1916, and two of his other sons being wounded and decorated on the western front, but Bonar Law also lost two of his four sons,¹⁶ Henderson, Redmond and Lord Hardinge, each lost a son, and Hankey lost a brother. There would have been many cases like that of Sir William Tyrrell, a senior official at the Foreign Office, who early in 1915 suffered a nervous breakdown after his son was killed in action.¹⁷ Balfour was unmarried, Curzon had three daughters and others appear not to have been directly affected either because of the age or gender of their families.¹⁸ Many future politicians were personally involved; Attlee, Eden¹⁹ and Macmillan²⁰ all had direct experience of fighting in the trenches on the western front.

¹² Naval casualties were relatively low because the Battle of Jutland was the only major naval battle.

¹³ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p.253.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.124.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.127.

¹⁶ Charles Bonar Law, aged 20, died in Gaza in April 1917; his brother James was shot down and killed in September 1917 aged 24. See R. J. Q. Adams, *Bonar Law* (London: John Murray, 1999), various references.

¹⁷ Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the Paris Peace Conference. 1916-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.67.

¹⁸ Lloyd George had two sons in the forces: Richard was a major in the Royal Engineers and Gwilym a major in the Royal Artillery, although they do not appear to have been involved in the front line.

¹⁹ Eden was informed in France in 1916 of the death of his very close younger brother Nicholas, aged 16, at the Battle of Jutland. See Anthony Eden, *Another World 1897-1917* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p.82.

²⁰ Macmillan had started his studies at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1912; of the 151 undergraduates who matriculated at Balliol between 1911 and 1913, and served in the war, 49 were killed. See J. M. Winter, 'Balliol's Lost Generation', *Balliol College Annual Record*, 1975, pp.22-26. Winter develops this as wider argument in *The Great War and the British People* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp.65-99.

Any doubts about the commitment of the wider British population to the war have been challenged in Gregory's recent book. He wrote about the consent of the population to the war in 1914, the development of what he called 'an economy of sacrifice'²¹ during the war, the 'painful final two years of war, as ideals of sacrifice and fairness came under increasing pressure,'²² and then that 'the luxury of victory was that it minimized the searching for scapegoats, and instead stressed universalism.'²³ Vinen made the valuable point that although they had very large casualties, both Britain and France, unlike many European countries, had 'no revolution, no hyper-inflation, no starvation and no plague.'²⁴ Whether the widespread outbreaks of influenza after the war would count as a plague is debatable, but Vinen's point was well made, especially in the case of Britain where no land was occupied by foreign troops, and normal government and society continued to exist.

The ebb and flow of fortunes during the war, and the stalemate on the western front, did not prevent preparations by the government for the anticipated victory peace conference. The Imperial War Cabinet in March 1917 established a 'Committee on the Terms of Peace' with sub-committees, on territories chaired by Curzon and economics chaired by Milner. Initiatives by Hankey as cabinet secretary and Hardinge from the Foreign Office developed during 1917, leading to the Foreign Office forming the Political Intelligence Department; different aspects of any peace conference were reviewed, often emphasizing that it would be the first such peace conference since Vienna in 1815.²⁵

There was, however, no inevitability of victory for the Allies during what turned out to be the last twelve months of the war. The cabinet made no assumption of any end to the war; Lloyd George was discussing with Colonel House in November 1917 the options for American troops in both 1918 and 1919,²⁶ and on the last day of 1917, the cabinet 'agreed to

²¹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p.113.

²² A. Bell, *Journal of British Studies*, Volume 48, No. 4, October 2009, p.1036, reviewing Gregory's book.

²³ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p.270.

²⁴ Richard Vinen, *A History of Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Little Brown, 2002) p.71.

²⁵ Foreign Office and other departments prepared a total of 174 historical handbooks, 71 Political Intelligence Department memoranda and 35 military intelligence reports for Paris. Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, p.281.

²⁶ Gilbert, *The First World War* p.378.

ask its chief military advisers whether there was in 1918 or 1919 any reasonable chance of a victory that would not leave the military domination of Prussia successful and intact.’²⁷ In March 1918, the German offensive pushed the allied forces back to within forty miles of Paris. Although it is easy for historians to see that this was the last desperate attempt of the German forces in the west, after the peace treaty with Russia and while their partners were increasingly under pressure on the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman fronts, this was not clear at the time. Lloyd George said, theatrically but probably accurately, in the Commons that ‘the fate of the Empire, the fate of Europe, and the fate of liberty throughout the world, may depend on the success with which the very last of these attacks is resisted, and countered.’²⁸ During the cabinet discussions on ‘Imperial Objectives’ in August 1918, Lloyd George was still stating that ‘on the question of peace terms, he considered it essential that Germany should first be beaten; that was more important than the actual terms themselves.’²⁹

Whatever the detailed preparations of the politicians for the peace negotiations, the foremost influence on Britain’s foreign policies as they entered the actual negotiations was that victory had been achieved. This situation was accentuated by the general election in December 1918, when Lloyd George and his coalition won a large victory, helped no doubt by popular anti-German election rhetoric, such as ‘Hang the Kaiser,’ and demands for the maximum contribution by Germany to the cost of war.³⁰ The effect of the threefold extension of the electorate to include the vast majority of men aged 21 and over, and women aged 30 and over, had raised concerns in the political establishment, but no evidence has been produced that the wider suffrage led to a different result.

²⁷ War cabinet minutes, 31 December 1917, NA/CAB 23/4.

²⁸ *Hansard*, Volume 104, 9 April 1918, column 1337. In June, *The Round Table* was aware of both the seriousness of the situation in that ‘the ordeal of August and September 1914 is being repeated in a sterner form,’ and the emphasis put on the British determination to defeat German, and specifically Prussian, militarism, stressing that the ‘pledge not to sheathe the sword until the military domination of Prussia was wholly and finally destroyed’, *The Round Table*, Number 31, June 1918, p.427, and in September they were still talking not of peace terms but that ‘we have first to defeat, finally and decisively, the German outrage on humanity.’ *The Round Table*, Number 32, September 1918, p.683.

²⁹ War cabinet minutes, 15 August 1918, NA/CAB 23/7.

³⁰ The expression ‘in victory...magnanimity’ expressed by Churchill in very different times, would never have been used by a British politician in 1918.

The eight months from the armistice on 11 November 1918 to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 were initially dominated in government circles by that general election, but then much more widely and intensively by the peace negotiations. In some ways the wartime military conditions ended quickly; for example by the start of the Paris Conference the German surface ships were safely secured at Scapa Flow, the majority of German submarines were in Harwich, and the German colonies were under Allied control; on the other hand the blockade of Germany continued until July 1919 and France kept many German prisoners of war interned until 1920.

Full consideration of how the Great War affected the thinking and attitudes of British policy makers, would need a separate thesis. However, some relevant points have already been established, including the effects on many of senior politicians of family casualties, the public attitudes to the war especially by quoting Gregory, the fact that there was no invasion, no revolution and no starvation, and that there could be no assumptions as to when the war would end. There was also remarkable political continuity as war changed to peace, unlike 1945, as the Lloyd George Coalition won a convincing victory in the general election.

The major issue of demobilisation was handled reasonably well, as referred to in chapter two, assisted by the economic boom in 1919-1920 which disguised many post-war economic problems. Although the discussion in chapter three on imperial policy shows some maverick views such as Montagu, the general approach of the Lloyd George peacetime coalition, and most of the subsequent government's thinking shows strong continuity of Britain's place in the world, reinforced by victory in the war and its major role in Paris. The general election was held on 14 December, but the votes were not counted until 28 December, after the receipt of forces votes. The new cabinet was announced on 10 January 1919, and Lloyd George travelled to Paris for the peace conference the next day, and there was no pause in pressures on Lloyd George and his colleagues, to allow a re-assessment of Britain's role as great imperial power.

Peace Negotiations in Paris

The Paris Conference, and the Treaty of Versailles, are very important background to this thesis, because of the problems left unresolved, and the continuing enmity both between former enemies and former allies that made it so difficult to resolve the ongoing diplomatic problems. The peace negotiations had started with Clemenceau's visit to meet Lloyd George in London in December 1918, but were then played out in detail in Paris from January mainly by Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau rather than by the official Group of Ten, which represented not just the United States, Britain and France, but also Italy and Japan. The proceedings in Paris have been fully recounted and analysed by MacMillan.³¹

The ongoing issues which are important for this thesis are the dominating and surely exhausting effect on Lloyd George and the cabinet of the six months of negotiations in Paris; the extent of the antagonism of the French towards the Germans and their determination to extract both revenge for the war and security for the future; the relative lack of attention to the issues in the Middle East; and finally the extraordinary and ironic combination of Wilson's crucial role at Paris, and the subsequent refusal of the United States Senate to ratify Versailles and membership of the League. The range of problems facing the leaders in Paris, and the apparently irreconcilable differences between France and Germany, were all discussed against the background of the democratic expectations of various majorities and minorities, but also the fears of revolution in Europe, particularly after the events in Russia in 1917.³² The unresolved issues from Versailles were essentially the agenda for the diplomacy of the years up to 1925.

Although the Versailles Treaty was signed over seven months after the armistice, the detailed negotiations in Paris did not necessarily allow a detached review of the totality of British

³¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2001).

³² In *The Round Table*, Number 35, June 1919, the comments include that 'the Peace of Versailles will never be justly appreciated by those who fail to hold in mind the pressure under which its authors have worked', p.429; that 'most of the deficiencies in the present settlement will be met only by open-minded conference and co-operation, when that becomes possible, between the victors and the various enemies', and with Germany and Russia being allowed into the League, p.431.

foreign policy. Much work had been done within the Foreign Office, whether or not it was used, but it was an extremely pragmatic approach that Lloyd George brought to the discussions in Paris. Lloyd George was no longer a radical Gladstonian Liberal, and the principle of the British Empire was now as much a part of his attitudes, as the rest of the political establishment. A starting point for looking at British policy objectives before Paris is the speech by Lloyd George on 'War Aims' given to a trade union audience during the parliamentary recess on 5 January 1918, three days before Wilson's more famous 'Fourteen Points' speech. Lloyd George included the obvious points about Belgium, Alsace and Lorraine and the German colonies, but he did not refer to the freedom of the seas, to free trade or to the continuation of the British Empire, all of which were taken for granted. Goldstein, writing of British policy for the Paris Conference, referred to:

A set of basic principles which do not mutually contradict one another and which run right through British thinking on the post-war order. The three schools can be clearly identified: the balance of power, the New Europe, and imperial expansion. All three schools recognized that 1919 was the great hinge of British foreign and imperial policy, marking the critical point of transition from the era of expansion to the era of consolidation.³³

The use of the term 'schools' could be confusing if it was implying three separate and possibly conflicting schools of thought, but Goldstein goes on to make clear that they are not contradictory; he argues that the British continued to be concerned that there should be a balance of power in Western Europe, with no continental power pre-eminent and no requirement for British involvement; 'New Europe' referred to Central and Eastern Europe which was the prime attention for many academics and Foreign Office specialists before and at Paris, but not generally by British politicians between 1919 and 1925.

In the Commons in February 1919 there had been the normal wide ranging debate on the King's Speech, but a month later Bonar Law in answer to a question was still saying 'I hope that my Hon. Friend will realise that it is not possible for the government to answer questions as to discussions between the peace delegates, which have always been treated as

³³ Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, p.229.

confidential.³⁴ Steiner referred to the telegram to Lloyd George in Paris from 233 Unionist MPs on 8 April, regarding concerns about any possible compromise on reparation claims, but Lloyd George was able to calm any concern in the Commons when he returned to London and spoke in the adjournment debate a week later.³⁵ When the conclusions at Paris were announced, the increase in both territory and population of the British Empire was taken for granted by all the political parties in Britain, and no real discussion took place regarding the responsibilities, the costs, or the wishes of the peoples affected, when the treaty was debated in the Commons on 21 July 1919. The terms of Versailles were however criticized initially by Keynes over the economic arguments, and subsequently by statesmen and historians arguing that the treaty contributed to the causes of the Second World War.³⁶

Many of the decisions in Paris affected British policies in the following years, though it could be argued that many of its terms were the best achievable at the time, and that the overall result was perhaps better than the value of the individual contributions of Lloyd George, Wilson and Clemenceau. On the specific British objectives in Paris, Riddell reflected the wider British view when he recorded in his diary in May that ‘the freedom of the seas has been relegated to the background, and we have got the German Colonies, Mesopotamia and Palestine. Our protectorate in Egypt has been confirmed. They are the big things.’³⁷

The collapse of other empires during or at the end of the war must have affected thinking in Britain, whether the regimes were enemies during the war, or in the case of Russia an ex-ally which had had a revolution. The fall of the Romanov Russian Empire in 1917 was followed in 1918 and 1919 with the end of the German, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires either

³⁴ *Hansard*, Volume 113, 17 March 1919, column 1740.

³⁵ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed; European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.55. *Hansard*, Volume 114, 16 April 1919, columns 2936-2956.

³⁶ J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1919). On the issue of reparations, Germany had held France responsible for five billion francs in the 1871 peace treaty, and in the financial section of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty at the beginning of 1918, Russia was due to pay six billion marks as compensation to Germany. Macmillan has calculated, *Peacemakers*, p.490, that from 1919 to 1932 Germany probably paid slightly less in reparations than France, with a much smaller economy, had paid Germany after 1871; but it was the perception in Germany that mattered.

³⁷ George Riddell, *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After 1918-1923* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933), 4 May 1919, p.66.

directly as a result of war, or at the Paris Conference.³⁸ Lloyd George was certainly very conscious of the ‘complete break up of three ancient Empires – Russia, Turkey and Austria’ when reviewing the situation in the Commons in that April debate.³⁹ The only surviving empire comparable to Britain’s, was that of France, which was only a third of the size of the British Empire.⁴⁰

There is substantial evidence in primary sources of a full analysis of issues from the British point of view, during the last two years of the war, whether or not Lloyd George took notice of these analyses.⁴¹ MacMillan described the weekend, at the end of March, when Lloyd George took his staff to Fontainebleau to review the British policies, and this did include some role-playing, by Hankey and Wilson, of the other countries’ positions.⁴² A resulting memorandum did update the British positions, but it is doubtful whether there was any regular and serious analysis of the diplomatic and political problems of the other powers; for example did Lloyd George make any real attempt to understand the problems of Woodrow Wilson or of Clemenceau?⁴³ The British Empire was accepted almost without question, and was enlarged in Paris, and the need to prevent future wars between France and Germany was accepted, if not the means to achieve this. The attitudes of Lloyd George in were essentially pragmatic and, for example, the British arguments about the Middle East were about how to restrict the influence of France, and were not part of a long-term imperial strategy or about the interests of the Arabs.

³⁸ The problems of minorities had been relatively easier to deal with in the Ottoman or the Austro-Hungarian Empires, as the size of such empires meant a proliferation of minorities which had to be accommodated.

³⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 114, 16 April 1919, column 2939. American academics writing 75 years later about British war aims argued that ‘the theme that the War would have profited Britain little, if it had eliminated Germany as a threat to its security, only to have it replaced by Russia, France or after April 1917, the United States, recurred throughout the War when British policy makers considered their war aims.’ Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elizabeth Glaser (eds.), *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), p.71.

⁴⁰ Martin Thomas, *The French Empire between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics and Society* (Manchester: University Press, 2005), p.1, gives figures of 27% of world area for Britain and 9% for France. The other remaining empires were much smaller, whether on the Allies’ side during the war, in the case of Portugal and Belgium, or neutral, in the case of the Netherlands.

⁴¹ To take just one example, a Foreign Office briefing for Paris was later published as *A History of the Eastern Question* (London: HMSO, 1920).

⁴² MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p.207.

⁴³ It is not suggested that Clemenceau or Wilson were any better in analysing the needs of other countries.

Reviewing the background to the years from 1919 to 1925, it is clear that the Edwardian years are relevant both as providing the normality before the war and being the years in which the leading post-war politicians grew up politically; the Great War destroyed regimes and countries and brought great human and economic consequences on all the nations and peoples involved, and provided specific links to post-war problems. The Paris Conference and the Treaty of Versailles involved both examples of great discontinuities, such as with regard to the absentees of Germany, Russia, Austro-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire, and continuities in most respects with regard to Britain and France, and the United States until it rejected Wilson's policies. Whether or not Versailles is rated as a success, there is no doubt that there were many unsolved, or partly solved, issues for the Lloyd George peacetime government, and the other European governments to inherit and attempt to resolve.⁴⁴

Ireland

Although it is reasonable for historians to consider British policy towards Ireland as part of imperial policy, it was clearly seen as domestic policy by a large majority of contemporary politicians. Therefore, Ireland does not form a major part of this thesis, but it is important to refer to the subject in view of the continuity of the problems before, during and after the war, the amount of time Lloyd George, and other cabinet members, devoted to Irish matters, and because the Dominion solution would affect imperial thinking both then and in subsequent decades.

⁴⁴ The Versailles Treaty had 440 clauses. The complexities are clear in the subjects recorded in the minutes of the Supreme Council in July, after the Treaty signing in June, in Documents, Volume 1. For example, on 8 July Fiume, the status of Modane, German command in the Baltic provinces, and Austrian prisoners of war; on 12 July Teschen, the Blockade of Russia and German action in Asia-Minor; pp.32 and 79. Austen Chamberlain himself writing in 1935 *Down the Years* (London : Cassell, 1935) p.152 about the period after United States and Britain refused guarantees to France said 'there followed four years of irritating and embittered friction between the Allies and Germany. The Peace Treaties were signed, but peace found no place in the minds and hearts of men, or in the policy of states. Some of the conditions imposed by the victors on the vanquished were inexcutable and remained unexecuted'

The 'Irish Problem' could be said to have existed for several hundred years, but the first sign of a possible permanent solution was seen in Gladstone's Home Rule Bills at the end of the nineteenth century. In the short term they were both unsuccessful and had the political effect of splitting the Liberal Party, with the Liberal Unionists starting a slow move to merge eventually with the Tories. Buckland emphasised the point that 'perhaps a quarter of Conservative MPs after 1906 were either Irish Unionists, Southern Irish gentry sitting for mainland constituencies, or married into Southern Unionist families.'⁴⁵ The traditional Tory view of Ireland can be seen when Lord Salisbury had said some years earlier that:

The highest interests of the Empire, as well as the most sacred obligations of honour, forbid us to solve [the Irish] question by conceding any species of Independence to Ireland...It would be an act of political bankruptcy, an avowal that we were unable to satisfy even the most sacred obligations, and that all claims to protect or govern any one beyond our narrow island were at an end.⁴⁶

The Liberal governments had made further attempts at progressing towards Home Rule in the years between 1906 and 1914, and the passing of the 1911 Parliament Act meant that the Lords' powers would only be able to delay for two years the passage of any Home Rule Bill. However, the outbreak of war led to a postponement of the arguments with the Liberals still committed to Home Rule and the Tories having concentrated on supporting the Ulster Unionists. Although the British government crushed the Sinn Fein Dublin rising in 1916, it lost the moral argument by executing a number of the leaders and so created new martyrs for the cause of Irish Republicanism. The intention in 1918 to eventually extend wartime military conscription to Ireland, was bound to exacerbate feelings there, and in the December 1918 general election, Sinn Fein won 73 seats although 36 of those elected were in prison. Sinn Fein refused to take their seats at Westminster, and those MPs who were free to do so, met as a self-declared Irish Parliament, or *Dail Eireann*, in Dublin in January 1919. Hopes amongst Irish republicans that the Paris Conference, and particularly Wilson's emphasis on self-determination, might bring some positive movement for their quest for Home Rule, were not met in any way.

⁴⁵ Patrick Buckland, 'The Southern Irish Unionists, the Irish Question and British Politics 1906-1914' in Alan O'day (ed.), *Reactions to Irish Nationalism 1865-1914* (London: Hambledon, 1987), p.381.

⁴⁶ Cited in David Marquand, *Britain since 1918: The Strange Career of British Democracy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008), p.58.

The Irish problem therefore continued to be at the centre of the political stage through the Lloyd George peacetime government, with the twenty-six counties moving from being an integral part of the United Kingdom in 1919, with seats in the Commons, to full Dominion status by the end of 1922. Montagu had been concerned as early as 1917 about the links between Ireland and empire; he did see Ireland as different, but he interestingly wrote that unless the British recovered the ‘courage and sureness of touch which rendered us famous as empire builders, we shall simply make a series of Irelands in different parts of the world.’⁴⁷ The key development was the passing of the Government of Ireland Act in December 1920 which provided for a degree of self-government both for Ulster in the north-east and for the remainder of Ireland.⁴⁸ This legislation could be said to have been trying to solve the pre-war conflicts and threats about Ulster, but it did provide a *de facto* situation which made the 1921 negotiations possible; partition preceded the treaty rather than being the result of it.

As the military situation in Ireland deteriorated during 1920, the concept of Dominion status was increasingly discussed in London political circles, and there were letters on the subject to the press from Lord Grey and from Asquith. The chairman of the abortive 1917 Irish Convention, Sir Horace Plunkett, had formed the Irish Dominion League in June 1919, and Harkness described a growing enthusiasm for an Irish Dominion solution that would keep Ireland united within a British Commonwealth, and pointed out that ‘the actual creation of an Irish Dominion, in 1922 ... was a compromise that represented the relativities of brute force at the time, even though, as a solution, it turned out to have more to recommend it than was generally realized, more that is for Ireland.’⁴⁹ As Boyce wrote, ‘Dominion status lacked precision, because the self-governing dominions had acquired their powers gradually and almost imperceptibly over a period of time... but the idea was an attractive one to many

⁴⁷ Montagu papers, draft letter from Montagu to Lloyd George 27 June 1917; cited in John Darwin, *The Empire Project : The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830-1970* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.353.

⁴⁸ ‘Ulster’ was defined, as demanded by the Unionists, as the six counties, rather than the full nine counties of the traditional province of Ulster.

⁴⁹ David Harkness, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume V Historiography*, Robin W. Winks (ed.), p.124.

Englishmen, because it had roots in the past, and because it had been applied successfully elsewhere.’⁵⁰

The changes in Lloyd George’s views on Ireland are perhaps best seen in the contemporary diaries of Lord Riddell. In April 1921 he quoted Lloyd George as asking ‘whether the British people would be willing for us to negotiate with the head of a band of murderers,’ seeing the analogy between the Irish situation and the American Civil War and declaring that ‘a republic at our doors is unthinkable.’⁵¹ However, six months later in November 1921, Lloyd George was recorded as saying that ‘I am not going to continue the Irish war if a settlement is possible. I shall resign and the King will have to ask for someone else’ and concluded that ‘Sinn Fein are prepared to accept allegiance to the Crown and to agree that Ireland shall remain part of the Empire, subject to Tyrone and Fermanagh being joined to Southern Ireland or, at any rate, to a plebiscite.’⁵² It was between these dates that King George V opened the new Northern Ireland Parliament in June 1921, with his speech including the statement that ‘everything which touches Ireland finds an echo in the remotest parts of the Empire.’⁵³

The treaty settlement was recommended by Churchill to the Commons on 15 December 1921, when he commented that while Sinn Fein demanded an independent sovereign republic for the whole of Ireland, Britain had been absolutely firm on the need for allegiance to the Crown, membership of the empire, facilities and security for the Royal Navy, and complete options for Ulster. He went on to say that in his view ‘every colonial statesman will feel, if this succeeds, his task in his Dominion of bringing people closer and closer into the confederation of the British Empire will be eased and facilitated. There is not a Dominion Parliament throughout the British Empire where this Treaty will not be accepted and endorsed.’⁵⁴ Lloyd George then appointed Churchill to chair a cabinet committee to manage the implementation of the settlement; although the secretary of state for Ireland kept his

⁵⁰ George Boyce, ‘How to Settle the Irish Question: Lloyd George and Ireland 1916-1921’, in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971), p.153.

⁵¹ George Riddell, *Lord Riddell’s Intimate Diary* 3 April 1921, p.289.

⁵² *Ibid.* 3 November 1921, p.332.

⁵³ Harold Nicolson, *King George V: His Life and Reign* (London: Constable, 1952), p.353.

⁵⁴ *Hansard*, Volume 149, 15 December 1921, columns 169-183.

formal responsibilities, an analysis of entries in *Hansard* shows Churchill's great involvement during the remaining months of the Lloyd George Government.⁵⁵

Within Britain, the events in Ireland did attract comparisons with the wider empire. Birkenhead, in defence of the settlement with Sinn Fein, and in a similar vein to Churchill, said that those responsible for the agreement realised 'the misapprehensions our best friends will feel and are entitled to say to you that you must examine our careers and our antecedents before giving rein to apprehension that we shall be prepared to surrender anything of the greatness of this empire or the fundamental principles on which the whole of this empire depends.'⁵⁶ Carson, as the leading Ulster Unionist, in his maiden speech in the Lords, drew very different conclusions, when he said 'if you tell your Empire in India, in Egypt and all over the world that you have not got the men, the money, the pluck, the inclination and the backing to restore order in a country within twenty miles of your own shore, you may as well begin to abandon the attempt to make British rule prevail throughout the Empire at all.'⁵⁷

The issue of Irish independence can be seen as different from other countries in the empire in at least three respects; British critics of Home Rule could argue that Ireland was too close geographically to be entrusted with self-government; it was part of the British Isles and at the centre of the empire, not an outlying province.⁵⁸ Then there was the entanglement with British politics; the analysis of Conservative MPs was given above and this was quite unlike the position of the English speaking white minorities in Africa, later in the century. Finally, because of the millions of Irish immigrants in the United States, there was that dimension to consider, especially when American support was essential during the war; the Irish minority in the Dominions especially Australia was also significant. The Canadian, Lord Beaverbrook,

⁵⁵ During the Commons session from February to November 1921 there were 118 references to Churchill in the *Hansard* index but none of these referred to Ireland. However, in the new session from February to August 1922 there were 562 references to Churchill with 286 of them being under the headings of Ireland or the Irish Free State and 276 to other colonial issues. Greenwood, the secretary of state for Ireland, had 626 entries for the 1921 session, all regarding Ireland; however, in the 1922 session he had only 186 references, all with reference to Ireland. The government fell before the next session due in November 1922.

⁵⁶ Birkenhead speech to London Unionist Association at Caxton Hall 25 October 1921, as cited in John Campbell, *F.E. Smith First Earl of Birkenhead* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), p.566.

⁵⁷ *Hansard*, House of Lords Volume 41, 14 December 1921, column 41.

⁵⁸ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p.299, citing Sir Gilbert Parker's *Home Rule and the Colonial Analogy*.

who was no friend of Lloyd George, wrote to support him in 1921 saying that he was 'convinced that Empire unity waited upon reconciliation of Irish elements in Canada and Australia, who refused co-operation with Britain until, as they believed, Irish wrongs were put right.'⁵⁹

Although Carson drew that comparison between commitments in Ireland and elsewhere in the empire, there is little evidence that other politicians saw that comparison. Pressures for independence in India, Egypt or Mesopotamia could be compared with each other and concessions seen as precedents, but Ireland was seen as part of the British Isles and quite different. The Irish Problem was unique, but it had a substantial effect on British politics, and was a continuing problem before, during and after the war. In the short term, the pressures on Lloyd George and his government were enormous, but a pragmatic settlement was found, which must be to the credit of the British Government.

⁵⁹ Lord Beaverbrook, *The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George* (London: Collins, 1963), p.108.

Chapter Two: Domestic Influences on Foreign Policies

While the statesmen were arguing in Paris about the complex problems caused by, or not resolved by, the Great War, the British public were trying to recover from the national and personal traumas resulting from those years of total war. The war had had some positive effects for the working classes in respect of a modest improvement in living standards, better food for many of those in the armed forces away from the front lines, limited moves for the emancipation of women at work, and the acceptance of a substantial move towards universal and female suffrage for the election in 1918. Moreover, apart from being on the winning side in the war, Britain also had the advantage of political stability, which had been reinforced in that election, which had provided a clear majority for the Lloyd George coalition.

However, these benefits did not counter the personal effects on families across the country of the deaths, injuries, and sickness of their husbands, sons and brothers in France, Belgium, Turkey or the Middle East. At a national level, the politicians must have been personally and collectively exhausted by the war, but then had to face different peacetime problems in both domestic and foreign affairs. On top of the casualties of the war, there was then a worldwide influenza pandemic, known as the Spanish Flu, which swept across the world between 1918 and 1920. It affected all major countries, and estimates of deaths in Britain ranged between 200,000 and 250,000 during the three years.

The governments between 1919 and 1925 faced challenging economic situations, and they were threatened during the Lloyd George government by mounting trade union pressures that were released after wartime restraints. Politicians, not only on the left of the political spectrum, were very conscious of the level of unemployment, with the effects of the trade cycle and the policies of governments. Although in retrospect the unemployment figures may look low compared with the 1930s, they would then have seemed high compared with the figures before the war, and more importantly high compared with the expectations raised by the sacrifices of war.

Although politicians were becoming more conscious of public opinion during these years, it was of course a completely different world from the 24/7 media scrutiny of the late twentieth century or the early twenty-first century. The one major public opinion campaign was the Anti-Waste campaign led by the *Daily Mail* in 1921, and the associated Anti-Waste League, with support from many MPs and industrialists, which sponsored various candidates in by-elections, and was reflected in the 'Geddes Axe' and the 1922-1923 budget. It was, however, a campaign aimed not so much at opposing a government policy, but rather reinforcing it.

These were not the years of the major problems of the League of Nations, and the growth of the Peace Pledge Union, in the 1930s, but Howard commented that 'after 1918 the reader becomes conscious of a new sound: the heavy and ominous breathing of a parsimonious and pacific electorate, to the variations of which the ears of British statesmen were increasingly attuned.'¹ The country welcomed Locarno, but Chamberlain was clearly sensitive about the mood of the British people about commitments in Europe. Dutton wrote that Chamberlain told Stresemann in 1927 that if he had to bring the Locarno treaties before Parliament again, he would not get them accepted.² However, the full quotation in the Stresemann diaries, was 'if we have to bring the Locarno treaties again before the House of Commons, I could not get them accepted. The people simply would not stand for it. They are resisting any extension of the obligations undertaken by England. We were plunged into the Great War; we are now obliged, if a war breaks out between France and Germany on the Rhine, to mobilize again to our last man, and it is quite out of the question for us to undertake any further obligations.'³

Within the changing and challenging domestic climate after the war, it is appropriate to consider the three key areas of the party political differences, the financial constraints and, associated in part with those, the military constraints on foreign policies.

¹ Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of Two World Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p.79.

² David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: Gentleman in Politics* (London: Ross Anderson, 1985), p.239.

³ E. Sutton (ed.), *Stresemann: His Diaries, Letters and Papers* (London: Macmillan, 1940), Volume III, p.230. Moreover, Petrie emphasised that 'all three governments were in advance of public opinion in their respective countries' Sir Charles Petrie *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain* (London : Cassell, 1940) p.262.

Party Political Differences

Looking back on the years from 1919 to 1925, it is possible to see important long term changes in the balance of power between the political parties in the Commons. Most obviously the settlement in Ireland in 1922 meant that there were no longer a block of Irish MPs. Although this had not been important from 1919, because of Sinn Fein's policy not to take seats in Westminster, Redmond's 84 Irish Party MPs had been very important to the Liberal Government between 1910 and 1914. Within Great Britain the results of the elections masked to some extent the rise of the Labour Party and the decline of the Liberal Party. The detailed figures recorded by Butler and Butler show these changes; perhaps most significant is the comparison between the Liberal and Labour total votes between 1910 and 1924, against a near tripling of the electorate from 1918, with the Liberal Party only increasing by 30%, but with Labour increasing from 371,000 to 5,489,000 in a vastly increased number of seats:⁴

	Dec 1910	Dec 1918	Nov 1922	Dec 1923	Oct 1924
Cons seats	272	335	345	258	419
Lib seats	272	113 + 28 ⁵	62 + 54	159	40
Lab seats	42	63 + 10	142	191	151
Lab candidates	56	406	411	422	512
Lab votes	371 k	2,546 k	4,241 k	4,438 k	5,489 k
Lib votes	2,295 k	2,754 k	4,189 k	4,311 k	2,928 k

The battle for the left of British politics might be expected to be reflected in very different approaches to foreign and imperial policies compared with traditional Conservative attitudes

⁴ David Butler and Gareth Butler *Twentieth Century British Political Facts 1900-2000* (London : MacMillan, 2000).

⁵ The 28 Liberal MPs and 10 Labour MPs refer to "non-coalition" MPs.

and policies. This might appear to be the case; for example, the Labour and Liberal amendments to the King's Speech in February 1923 are interesting enough to be cited in full. They were written about halfway through the six- year period on the first occasion of a return to normal party politics after the coalition, and after the Labour party's advances in the 1922 general election. The Labour amendment read:

recognising the present grave and dangerous condition of affairs in Europe and the Near East to be the certain source of future wars and a serious aggravation of unemployment and reduced wages in Great Britain, [we] regret the absence of any indication of policy upon these affairs which will check the progressive economic ruin of Europe, which contemplates an all-round cancellation of international war debts as an essential part of a workable general settlement, which will make the League of Nations representative of all peoples and employ it both for conciliation and arbitration in pressing and critical matters like the occupation of the Ruhr, and also for reconsideration at the earliest moment of the clauses, especially the economic ones, of the Peace Treaties which while they operate will decide the efforts of all governments for economic reconstruction and peace.⁶

And the Liberal amendment:

that, inasmuch as the future peace of Europe cannot be safeguarded nor the recovery of reparations promoted by the operations of the French and Belgian Governments in the Ruhr, it is urgently necessary to seek effective securities against aggression by international guarantees under the League of Nations, and to invite the Council of the League without delay to appoint a Commission of experts to report upon the capacity of Germany to pay reparations and upon the best method of effecting such payments, and that, in view of the recent indication of willingness on the part of the Government of the United States of America to participate in a Conference to this end, the British representative on the Council of the League should be instructed to urge that an invitation be extended to the American Government to appoint experts to serve upon the Commission.⁷

⁶ *Hansard*, Volume 160, 16 February 1923, column 495.

⁷ *Hansard*, Volume 160, 19 February 1923, column 665.

On the surface, these motions would indicate very different and distinctive approaches to foreign policy issues, but it will be argued that the analysis of what the different parties actually did when in government, as opposed to what they said they would do when in opposition, showed fewer differences. On imperial issues, the empire appeared to nearly all British politicians that it worked to the advantage of all, and there were few people who argued that Britain should not have that imperial role. Although the costs were sometimes queried, a reasonably mature party system in Britain had few debates within elections or between elections about the rights and wrongs of empire.⁸

The South African War had initially shown important differences both between the Conservative and Liberal Parties, and within the Liberal Party between the three factions of the Liberal Imperialists, the so-called 'Pro-Boers' including Lloyd George, and a centrist group of MPs led by Campbell-Bannerman. These divisions were not carried forward into subsequent party politics, as the Liberals were quickly reunited, mainly because of the Conservative 1902 Education Act, and their developing thoughts on tariff reform which were anathema to the Liberals. Moreover, the war appeared to have been a one-off military event which was followed by political progress in South Africa. It would have been expected that the loss of the Liberal Unionists after 1886 would have made the Liberal Party more radical and less imperialist, but any change does not seem to have been significant. Apart from the South African War, the Liberal Party had discovered, as Porter wrote, that: 'ideologically, imperialism could be squared as easily with Liberalism as with Conservatism: if a Liberal felt strongly enough about his Liberalism, it was arguable that he should want to bestow it on others.'⁹ Those identified with anti-imperial thinking on the left of the political spectrum, whether from the Liberal Party or the Labour movement, for example J. A. Hobson, the left-wing academic and writer, were clearly in a small minority.¹⁰

⁸ This brief analysis of imperial issues is taken back to 1900, because of the continuity of issues; the Great War and Versailles provided a completely new situation in Europe.

⁹ Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1970* (London: Pearson Longman, 2004), p.201.

¹⁰ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (London: Nisbet, 1902).

The large increase in the British Empire agreed at Versailles in both territory and population was taken for granted by all the political parties in Britain, and no real discussion took place regarding the costs, the responsibilities or the wishes of the peoples. The *Treaty of Peace Bill* was debated in the Commons on 21 July 1919 with the second reading, the committee stage and the third reading being completed in just one twenty-two-hour session. The leading opposition speakers, Maclean for the Asquithian Liberals and Clynes for Labour, had been associated with the wartime government and provided little criticism of the treaty.¹¹ MacDonald, a consistent opponent of the war, did not speak in the debate, nor was he one of the minority of MPs who voted in the division, which the government won by 163 votes to just four.

Dutton commented that the central question for British policy makers after the war was

the extent to which Britain, with her aims and ambitions largely satisfied by the outcome of the War, could now divorce herself from the affairs of the continent, reassured and safe within her island fortress...To the right stood committed isolationists such as Churchill, Amery and Birkenhead, supported by the Beaverbrook press. These men thought of Britain as an Imperial rather than a European power...To his left were internationalists who, with the exception of Cecil, were not well represented in government, but who had important extra-parliamentary backing in the League of Nations Union.¹²

Although it is an interesting argument, it is too simplistic an analysis of the so-called right and left of the Lloyd George Coalition, or of the Conservative Party. These two strands of thinking could emerge on particular issues, but many politicians including Churchill often demonstrated a combination of different attitudes at different times on different issues.¹³

Many of the key secondary sources on party politics during these years, concentrate on analysing the developing domestic policies and the internal party arguments, especially on

¹¹ *Hansard*, Volume 118, 21 July 1919, column 951 etc.

¹² Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*. p.239.

¹³ Williamson had an unusual quote from Baldwin, who spoke fluent French and understood German, in a speech at Oxford in June 1923 'let us not forget this, that while we are Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen, Irishmen, we are at the same time Europeans' Philip Williamson *Stanley Baldwin : Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.295.

the changing positions of the Liberal and Labour Parties. They do not have many references to foreign and imperial policies and to the specifics of Versailles, Locarno, relationships with the United States, or even relationships with Russia except with regard to the Labour Party.¹⁴ With the Liberal-led, but Conservative-dominated, coalition from 1919, and the Conservative governments under Bonar Law and Baldwin, it would be expected that any opposition to imperial or European policies would come from the Labour Party, or from the right-wing of the Conservative Party. Within the Labour Party, Howe argued that ‘most of the party leaders, most of the trade unionists who formed the bulk of Labour’s parliamentary strength, and most of the Fabians who so dominated its political thinking, were primarily if not exclusively concerned with domestic politics.’¹⁵

Thompson was no doubt right to say that ‘there was nothing like the annual debate on the Indian estimates to empty the chamber of the Commons,’¹⁶ but this was not the case on the occasion of the debate on India in 1920 about General Dyer and the infamous massacre at Amritsar in April 1919, which raised the most vociferous imperial political argument during this period. While the story of this tragic incident has been told many times, it is the parliamentary arguments which are directly relevant to this subject. The debate regarding the ‘Punjab Disturbances and Lord Hunter’s Committee’ took place on 8 July 1920, and concentrated not on the victims of the massacre, but on whether General Dyer had himself been victimised.¹⁷ Moreover, the vote did not split on party lines and the headline in *The Times* the next day indicated that ‘Ministers Saved by the Opposition’ as 129 coalition MPs, mostly Conservative and often ex-military, voted against the government, but the vast majority of the 40 Labour and the 26 Asquithian Liberal MPs on the opposition benches voted with the government.¹⁸

¹⁴ For example, Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Major* (London : Faber, 2010). Ross McKibbin, *Parties and People : England 1914-1951* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010). Kenneth O. Morgan, *Age of Reform : Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left* (London : I.B. Tauris, 2011). Henry Pelling and Alastair J. Reid *A Short History of the Labour Party* (Basingstoke : MacMillan, 1996). G.R.Searle *The Liberal Party : Triumph and Disintegration 1886-1929* (Basingstoke : MacMillan, 2001).

¹⁵ Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.45. MacDonald had considerable knowledge of India, having first visited the subcontinent in 1910: he returned in December 1912 as a member of the Royal Commission on the Indian Public Services and then again in 1913.

¹⁶ Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?* (London : Pearson Longman, 2005), p.127.

¹⁷ *Hansard*, Volume 131, 8 July 1920, column 1705.

¹⁸ *The Times*, July 9 1920.

The more significant point is that apart from the Dyer debate, the right-wing Diehard faction of the Conservative Party did not have any effect on major imperial or European issues.¹⁹ The Diehards had the advantage of friends in Fleet Street including the *Morning Post*, the *National Review* and *The Spectator*, but many of the Diehards' issues were of a domestic nature, including the anti-waste campaigns, and Morgan indicates that 'the right was short of numbers. Its strength lay in its connections in Parliament and Fleet Street, and its ability to provide a megaphone for fundamental Tory instincts.'²⁰ Thompson suggested that 'only one-fifth' of the anti-coalition votes at the famous Carlton Club meeting in 1922 were Diehard MPs, although this could also be stated that 'as many as one-fifth' were Diehard MPs.²¹ Thompson also said that 'the wider political context for the defence of Dyer is the build-up of Diehard Tory sentiment during 1919 to 1922...they believed Britain to have providentially sanctioned imperial obligations, and they insisted that challenges to colonial authority had to be resisted, whether in Ireland, Egypt or India.'²²

Thompson indicated that Diehard MPs came mainly from the landowning classes and the armed forces, and a high percentage of them were Irishmen or had Irish connections.²³ There was obviously scope for the right-wing on a number of imperial and European issues during these six years, including the Versailles Treaty itself, the developments in India and the reaction in London to the Amritsar massacre, nationalistic pressures in Egypt, the overall situation in Ireland, the agreements at the Washington Conference, the circumstances surrounding Chanak, and the events leading up to and including Locarno. However, the Diehards were not a significant force, after the settlement in Ireland, until the debates on the India Act in the 1930s.

¹⁹ The government had been defeated by a Diehard-led revolt on the relatively unimportant Aliens Restriction Bill in October 1919.

²⁰ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.236.

²¹ Andrew S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain :The Empire in British Politics c.1880-1932* (London : Pearson Longman, 2000), p.165.

²² Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?* p.135.

²³ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p.163.

While Churchill could be seen at times emerging as a powerful right-wing figure on imperial matters, and was certainly to be that in the 1930s on India, there was no equivalent on the left, and no left-wing pressure group, which had the influence that the Movement for Colonial Freedom was to have after 1950. Howe, when writing of the later period, commented that 'within the Labour Party and Trade Unions, anti-colonialism was perhaps the only issue on which the left seemed to score unequivocal victories during the 1950s and 1960s.'²⁴ It is interesting to note that Fenner Brockway, later to be a leader of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, entered parliament in 1929, and immediately took on an informal role of ILP spokesman for colonial affairs. It had, however, not become an issue in the years up to 1925.

There was all-party agreement about the Washington Naval Conference and its conclusions. After the conference, the Conservative government decided to confirm the start of building a modern naval base at Singapore and as Thompson said, 'the Singapore strategy became something of an acid test of Britain's resolve to maintain a truly imperial navy.'²⁵ The spending on the base might have developed into a major indicator of imperial commitment between left and right, as the Labour government halted construction at Singapore in 1924, and the Conservatives resumed the work in 1926.²⁶

The issue of Imperial Preference could be analysed either under party politics or economic policy, but in view of its limited effect on practical economic policies, it is dealt with under party political differences. The movement appeared to have promised so much, but in practice it had little effect on policies in the years under review. Initiated by Joseph Chamberlain in 1903, when he resigned as colonial secretary, he saw the tariff reform movement according to Clarke not just as a policy but more of a 'crusade to avert British decline through an exercise of will.'²⁷ The Tariff Reform League was set up as a pressure group to achieve the change, but the orthodoxy of Free Trade of the previous fifty years was deeply entrenched, even though the policies had different economic effects in different industries and regions.

²⁴ Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, p.20.

²⁵ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p.176.

²⁶ David W. McIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base 1919-1942* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

²⁷ Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (London: Penguin, 2004), p.25.

Before the war the Conservatives had no opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to tariff reform; Balfour had made a pledge during the December 1910 election to submit the issue of food taxes to a referendum, but this was subsequently dropped by Bonar Law. One minor effect of the thinking was that duties imposed in 1915 on the importation of luxury goods, were lowered in 1919 by one third for imperial goods. The duties were abolished by Snowden in 1924 but re-introduced by Churchill in 1925. Baldwin had been a tariff reformer, before he became leader, but more from the basis of domestic protection than from any imperial ideology. In 1922 Bonar Law committed himself that there would be no change of policy towards tariff reform during that parliament, but at the 1923 party conference Baldwin said that that commitment would lapse at the end of that parliament, and his half-hearted programme of tariff reform in the December 1923 election only re-invigorated the Liberals. Baldwin withdrew that commitment for the 1924 election which the Conservatives won conclusively, and he appointed Churchill, a traditional free trader, to the Treasury.

The election in 1918 had been complicated by coalition politics, but the party manifestos for the subsequent elections during this period might normally be expected to give an insight into the imperial or other priorities of the three parties. A study of the manifestos does not, however, indicate any clear choices on imperial matters, except in respect of those tariff arguments which went under the positive headings of 'Fair Trade' or 'Free Trade.' There were occasional platitudes such as the Labour government saying that 'it has maintained, and even strengthened, the ties of sentiment within the Dominions upon which...the very existence of the British Commonwealth of Nations depends.'²⁸ The single most interesting statement is the Conservative manifesto in 1924, which took some notice of those ruled, but then had a sharply stated conclusion about authority:

we favour the progressive grant of constitutional liberties in every part of the Empire where the capacity and loyalty of the people will make such measures a benefit to themselves and a strength to the Empire; but we are no less determined to maintain the authority and the unity of the Empire against factious and misguided agitation wherever it assert itself.

²⁸ Labour Party, *Election Manifesto*, 1924.

There were no differences between the parties in 1924, when the British Empire Exhibition was opened on 23 April, St George's Day, by King George V at Wembley Park, and which attracted during its two-year lifespan over 27 million visitors, who must have come from all classes and political opinions.²⁹ The exhibition had cost £12m; it was believed to be the biggest exhibition ever held in the world at that time and it had as its aim 'to stimulate trade, strengthen bonds that bind Mother Country to her Sister States and Daughters; to bring into closer contact the one with each other, to enable all who owe allegiance to the British Flag to meet on common ground and learn to know each other.' The apparent great public interest in imperial matters at Wembley was clearly not reflected in the manifestos or discussions at elections, and Thompson was undecided as to whether the public interest reflected real interest in wider imperial policies.³⁰

Some of the imperial issues showing similarities between the parties overlap with European issues; for example, the lack of parliamentary criticism of the Versailles Treaty reflected on the attitudes of MPs of all parties to most decisions from Versailles. Looking more widely at the party philosophies, Gupta wrote that while the traditional 'aim of British strategy and diplomacy was to maintain the security of Britain's imperial and commercial sea lanes, and also to prevent any one power from dominating the Continent,' Labour's ideological preference was for 'open diplomacy, strengthening the League of Nations by admitting Germany and Russia, reducing armaments as a step towards universal disarmament, and general recourse to arbitration in international disputes.'³¹

In looking at those differences between Conservative/Coalition and Labour policies, there were perhaps two main strands of differences, both of them relating predominantly to Europe rather than the empire. On Russia there was a natural affinity of the Labour Party, and the left wing more generally, with the new Russian Government. This can be seen in reactions to the Russian Civil War, when Churchill pursued support for the White Russians, and then

²⁹ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p.181.

³⁰ Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?* p.87.

³¹ P. S. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.93.

in differences about trade agreements and the row about the Zinoviev letter in the 1924 election. Pelling and Reid argued that the Macdonald Government policy on Russia ‘made a start by giving unconditional recognition to the Soviet Government; but it proved much more difficult to agree on the terms of financial and commercial agreements.’³² More generally on the question of peace Labour felt more comfortable as the proponent of international peace, the League of Nations, and for example MacDonald’s support for the Geneva Protocol in 1924. The dilemma of supporting efforts for international peace, or supporting military expenditure which had a direct effect on employment most obviously in the shipyards, had not emerged in the political debates in the 1920s.

However, if the governments of the Liberal-led coalition, the Conservative governments and the first Labour government are compared, there was no great discontinuity in the actual practice of the different governments in dealing with the problems arising from Versailles, particularly with regard to relationships with France and German reparations. Although MacDonald’s support for the Geneva Protocol did provide a divergence from the Conservative Party, his work up to and including the London Conference in August 1924 had been consistent with the previous administrations, and in 1925 he supported Locarno when in opposition, even if he would have wanted to go further in the direction of the Protocol.

On imperial matters, it is surprising that issues were not more central to the debates between the parties. There were potentially divisive issues such as the after-effects of the Amritsar massacre, the prospects of greater self-rule in India, the on-going issue of imperial tariffs, and the question of the naval base at Singapore. The Indian issues were to show up bitter differences within the Conservative Party, rather than between the parties, and Labour had not yet developed an agenda for colonial freedom, which would have opened a divide with the whole of the Conservative Party.³³ The Liberal and Labour Parties were less inclined to be involved in overseas commitments so when the Conservative Party was ambivalent, the

³² Pelling and Reid *A Short History of the Labour Party* p.54.

³³ The Labour Government was unlikely to be radical in these areas given MacDonald’s choices of J. H. Thomas as colonial secretary and of Lord Olivier, an experienced colonial administrator, as secretary of state for India, rather than Josiah Wedgwood a supporter of Indian independence.

overall balance was clear.³⁴ There was much less difference between the parties than might have been expected, and in particular the comparison between the parties when actually having the responsibilities of government shows considerable continuity.

Although dating from as long ago as 1961, Johnson's summary of differences over Europe and the Protocol is still interesting:

The Labour Party was divided by 'revisionism' and the need to reassure the thirty-two signatory states in Europe by applying the Treaty; they were divided between their belief that secret diplomacy and 'the balance of power' had caused 1914 and MacDonald's personal enjoyment of the old system whereby a few individuals could secretly settle the affairs of the world...the Liberal Party was divided between an idealistic attachment to the League and the more adventurous policies of Lloyd George...in the Conservative Party, the dangers that could come from France, or Germany, or Soviet Russia, were given various degrees of prominence. Some Conservatives were in favour of Great Britain isolating herself from Europe and concentrating on her Imperial connections; some were disturbed that the policy of 'benevolent neutralism ad infinitum' was reducing British influence; others were insistent upon the importance of the League.³⁵

However, the key conclusion in respect of this thesis is that although there may have been clear contrasts between attitudes or policies in opposition, there were surprisingly many fewer differences between the parties when faced with foreign policies issues in the real problems of government.

³⁴ Charmley wrote of the years 1924 to 1929 that 'the Conservatives had foreborn the pursuit of a forward imperial policy under Salisbury because they did not want to pay for it – this attitude now received reinforcement from an electorate which showed more concern with domestic politics than with events in far-away countries about which they knew little and cared less.' John A. Charmley, *A History of Conservative Politics 1900-1996* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.76.

³⁵ Douglas Johnson, 'Austen Chamberlain and the Locarno Agreements' *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, Volume 8. 1961 p.67.

Economic Constraints

Foreign policies will always be affected by economic strength; a direct effect will be the link between economic success and expenditure on the armed forces; an indirect linkage is the time that government ministers spend on economic as opposed to diplomatic and military issues. Immediate economic effects of the Great War were the very large increases in international indebtedness, which presented problems for all the European Allies. The importance of this scale of international debt is not just the economic or financial complexities, but also the political implications of the possibilities of repayments, the links to the debates on the reparation demands on Germany, the effect on the drawing up of post-war budgets, and a wider indirect effect on government thinking in view of the size of the debts. The large scale of the inter-government debts in November 1918, nearly all arising from the war, can be summarized as follows, stated in millions of US dollars: ³⁶

Borrower	from USA	from Britain	from France	Total
Britain	3,696	----	----	3,789
Russia	187	2,471	955 ³⁷	3,614
Italy	1,031	1,855	75	2,961
France	1,970	1,682	----	3,652
Belgium	171	422	534	1,128
Total	7,077	7,014	2,237	16,422 ³⁸

³⁶ Harold G. Moulton and Leo Pasvolksy, *War Debts and World Prosperity* (New York: The Brookings Institution, 1932), p.426.

³⁷ This figure is relatively small because many loans from France, on which the new Russian Bolshevik Government defaulted, were private or business loans and investments, rather than inter-governmental loans.

³⁸ All the totals include smaller figures for, or from, other countries.

The first major agreement on the treatment of the debts was the Anglo-American agreement of January 1923; this resulted from the recommendation by Baldwin and Montagu Norman from the Bank of England, after major negotiations in the United States. The proposed sixty-one-year agreement, defining an initial interest rate of 3% rising to 3.5% for most of the loan, was reluctantly accepted by Bonar Law and the rest of the cabinet, and was followed by the much wider international agreement at the London Conference in 1924.

Following the extraordinary wartime conditions, the post-war boom in 1919 may have insulated the government from some of the immediate economic priorities in peacetime. Looking back ninety years later, Crafts concluded that:

the difficulties that beset the British economy in the 1920s came from the world economic environment compared with the pre-war period, from the legacy of the war itself, and from the policy choices made in the aftermath of war. The implications were a substantial rise in the equilibrium unemployment, a big squeeze on real earnings and a need for eye-watering primary budget surpluses to preserve fiscal sustainability.³⁹

After initial problems in January 1919 about the principles of demobilization, the massive operation to return up to four million men and women to civilian life and employment went remarkably smoothly, with the armed forces reduced to 370,000 by November 1920. The post-war boom allowed the absorption of the majority of those men from the forces and from wartime munitions and similar work, into peacetime activities. The figures were greatly helped by the assumption, and then the reality, that most working women would revert to family duties, either personal or in service, rather than compete with men for jobs that had been traditionally done by men.

The issue of employment, and more importantly unemployment, are often referred to in the debates on foreign policy during these years, but Garside was correct in the analysis of economic priorities of the different governments when he wrote that:

³⁹ Nicolas Crafts *Walking Wounded : The British Economy in the Aftermath of World War I* (Warwick : C.E. P. R., 2014) p.1.

Driven by an intense desire to restore Britain's economic, financial and trading pre-eminence, governments in the 1920s worked assiduously to forestall inflation, sustain sound budgetary practice and protect the value of the currency, even if ...policies of deflation, retrenchment and minimum intervention in the workings of the free-market system afforded little opportunity for the adoption of a deliberate anti-unemployment strategy.⁴⁰

The government added to the post-war boom by increasing the floating debt to meet heavy public expenditure, and spending the money raised by the sale of war surplus equipment. There was no government action to prevent the rapid increase in prices, which was not matched by wages. The collapse of the boom began in April 1920, in the month that the government belatedly raised bank rate to 7%. The budget for 1920-1921 showed a surplus, and including the effects of the bank rate and the increased excess profits duty, had a markedly deflationary effect. The subsequent slump in Britain in 1921 and 1922 might have been foreseen in the general cutback in government expenditure and the falling off of business from 1921, associated with the traditional remedies of economy and deflation. Crafts emphasised the severity of the reduction in real GDP in these years, which has traditionally been underestimated compared with the Great Depression which was to follow, and argued as recently as 2014, that further research was required.⁴¹

Government income and expenditure had increased dramatically during the war, after the gradual increases during the Edwardian years when arguments mostly centred on the costs of the Royal Navy and on social improvements such as old age pensions.⁴² The following chart shows the post-war government budget figures, balance or imbalance of income and expenditure, and the sharp reductions of expenditure, including those for 1922-1923 after the Geddes Committee:⁴³

⁴⁰ W. R. Garside *British Unemployment 1919-1939* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.380.

⁴¹ Crafts *Walking Wounded* p.3.

⁴² Government revenue increased from £198m in 1913-1914 to £1,340m in 1919-1920; Expenditure increased from £197m in 1913-1914 to £2,579m in 1918-1919; and £1,665m in 1919-1920. Sidney Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy 1914-1990* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), p.24.

⁴³ Butler and Butler, *Twentieth Century British Political Facts*, pp.419 and 422, with total debt charges taken from Susan Howson, *Domestic Monetary Management in Britain 1919-1938* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.156.

	Total government revenue (£m) ⁴⁴	Defence expenditure (£m)	Health, labour, insurance (£m)	Pensions (£m)	Total debt charges (£m)
1919-1920	1,340	692	74	100	270
1920-1921	1,426	292	73	110	332
1921-1922	1,125	189	73	96	350
1922-1923	914	111	61	83	352
1923-1924	837	105	59	72	324
1924-1925	799	114	65	71	347
1925-1926	812	119	65	70	357

Modern comparable unemployment figures were not introduced until 1921, but according to the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* the number of persons receiving the ‘out-of-work’ donation, both ex-servicemen and civilians, never exceeded 1,100,000, and by October 1919 was below half a million.⁴⁵ The newly unemployment figures became available on a comparable basis from December 1921 when the post-war boom was over. Garside identified unemployment figures, on the new basis, as being 2,212,000 in 1921, 1,909,000 in 1922, 1,567,000 in 1923, 1,404,000 in 1924 and 1,559,000 in 1925.⁴⁶ As stated above, the governments still felt confined by the effects of the wartime debts and the post-war constraints on spending, and the most worrying figure particularly for MPs was that of unemployment.

All the governments during this period saw the balancing of the national budget as the major priority, when in peacetime conditions considerable expenditure was still allocated for the

⁴⁴ Income tax was 5/- in the pound in 1918, up to 6/- in 1919 before reducing to 5/- in 1923 and 4/6 in 1924.

⁴⁵ Garside *British Unemployment* gave a breakdown that 650,000 civilians and 360,000 ex-servicemen were drawing the ‘out-of-work’ donation in May 1919. p.36.

⁴⁶ Garside p.5. The 1926 figures were affected by the general strike and other industrial action.

armed forces and even more significantly up to forty per-cent was to pay for the post-war levels of national debt. The national debt had been £650m in 1914, but after all the wartime expenditure this had increased massively to around £7,000m by 1919 and stayed between £7,000m and £8,000m in all the years to 1925. British net wartime borrowings were complicated by Britain's large indebtedness to the United States; although Britain was in considerable credit with European wartime allies, they were unlikely to repay the loans at an early date. Although Crafts does not make specific post-war break points in his work on *Britain's Relative Economic Performance 1870-1999*, the long-term changes between United States and Britain continued throughout these years.⁴⁷

Pressures on government expenditure by anti-waste campaigners, including campaigns in the press including Lord Northcliffe, led to the appointment in August 1921 of a committee to review the 1922-23 provisional estimates and recommend further economies. This committee of business leaders was chaired by Sir Eric Geddes, who had previously been minister of transport under Lloyd George.⁴⁸ The committee's three reports recommended sharp cuts in expenditure, and were referred to in the press as the 'Geddes Axe' when they were published in February 1922. Although they were published after the key negotiations in Washington on battleships, the politicians in London were already clear about the need for further economies.

A major economic pressure for the Lloyd George Government, but not so much for the successor governments until 1926, was trade union industrial action; this was partly because of the possible or actual effects on the economy, and partly because of the association of left-wing elements with the new revolutionary Bolshevik regime in Russia, especially during the union's 'Hands off Russia' campaign in 1920. Certainly in the years 1919, 1920, 1921 and 1922 days lost through strikes were at the high levels of 35 million, 26 million, 85 million and 20 million respectively; this compares with figures of 10 million or below for the years from 1923 to 1925, before the record figure of 162 million in 1926 with the general strike

⁴⁷ Nicholas Crafts *Britain's Relative Economic Performance 1870-1999* (London : Institute of Economic Affairs, 2002) p.72.

⁴⁸ Not to be confused with his brother Sir Auckland Geddes, who was British Ambassador to the United States from 1920 to 1924.

and the national coal strike.⁴⁹ The years immediately after the war were associated with government initiatives in the industrial sector, but also considerable industrial muscle being exercised by the trade unions representing miners, railwaymen and transport workers. These issues added to the problems in terms of time and pressures for Lloyd George and his government, even if they did not greatly affect military and foreign policy thinking.

The governments still felt confined by the effects of the wartime debts and the post-war constraints on spending. The term ‘Keynesian Economics’ is associated with calls in the 1930s from Keynes and his associates for counter-recessional government investment and spending, but in the early 1920s Keynes was only known for his book criticising the severity of Versailles. There appears to have been no pressure, for example from Labour MPs, for such counter-cyclical government spending, to try to bring down unemployment. This is relevant to this study because of the employment that would have been created by the building of capital ships, in traditional shipbuilding areas in the north of England and Scotland. All governments, however, had traditional approaches to balancing the national budget, and there was also continuing concern about economic developments in other countries, especially with the inflation and hyper-inflation in Germany.

The issue of Imperial Preference had been on the political agenda since Joseph Chamberlain’s initiative in 1903. As referred to in the section above on party politics, this had the effect of dividing opinion within the Conservative Party, but had united and galvanised the Liberal Party. After the war, Baldwin’s inconclusive attitude to the subject contributed to the loss of his overall majority in the general election in 1923. Although the issue threatened to tear the Conservative party apart on various occasions, it did not do so, and it never achieved importance as a national economic issue.

Perhaps the most significant economic decision during these years was that of the Baldwin Government, and specifically by Churchill when in charge of the Treasury, to restore the

⁴⁹ Butler and Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts*, p.399.

pound to the Gold Standard as announced in the budget speech on 28 April 1925.⁵⁰ Crafts took the view that ‘the key post-war policy decision, taken following the report of the Cunliffe Committee in 1919, was to seek a return to the gold standard pre-war parity of \$4.86.’⁵¹ The 1925 decision was consistent with the generally deflationary policies since 1920, and followed the relatively stable British economic situation since 1923 with industrial disputes down and weekly wage rates rising slowly. Those who argued against the restoration, and particularly against the pre-war parity, were concerned that the pound would be overvalued with effects on exports and on a continuing trade imbalance.

The medium and longer-term economic and financial effects of the return to the Gold Standard, are outside the boundaries of this thesis, but it should be recorded that these decisions were being planned in early 1925 at the same time as the difficult cabinet discussions on European security issues. It is also relevant that it added to the feeling of a return to normality, and was therefore consistent with the diplomatic mood in that year of 1925. There were clearly short and long-term implications of the financial developments during these years, but it is not reasonable to expect the political establishment to have seen the long-term changes at the time, and therefore the general welcome of the move back to the Gold Standard is understandable.

Overall, during these years, the economic situation influenced military and foreign policy in respect of the debt burdens inherited from the war, and the effect of that and other pressures on balancing the budget at a time of traditional political attitudes to such budgeting. The issues of industrial relations and of imperial preference were important to some of the governments at certain times, but are not important for this thesis, except in adding to the general pressures on the governments. The so-called economic constraints will only be crucial to the foreign policy decisions if they directly affected military decisions and how those military decisions assisted, or prevented, foreign policy decisions.

⁵⁰ Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire* (London: Macmillan, 2010), p.167, Churchill emphasised the Dominion link; that Canada was already on the Gold Standard, that other Dominions would join Britain in the new arrangement, and that a uniform standard of exchange would revive international and inter-imperial trade.

⁵¹ Crafts *Walking Wounded* p.2.

Military Constraints

The most important decision regarding military policy taken by the cabinet after Versailles was the so called ‘Ten Year Rule’ which refers to the conclusions of the cabinet in August 1919, when it was decided that:

it should be assumed for framing revised estimates, that the British Empire will not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years, and that no expeditionary force is required for this purpose... The principle [*sic*] functions of the Military and the Air Forces is to provide garrisons for India, Egypt, the new mandated territory and all territory (other than self-governing) under British control, as well as to provide the necessary support to the civil power at home.⁵²

This cabinet decision was taken on 15 August, after apparently only a brief discussion of the foreign and military implications, but significantly after a full cabinet discussion on economic priorities ten days earlier on 5 August.⁵³ There was no real discussion of the military implications except for the commitment to the costs of providing garrisons for India, Egypt and the new mandated territories, and saying that the maximum estimates to be aimed for were £60 million pounds per annum for the Royal Navy and a total of £75 million for the Army and the RAF. Bond recounted that there had been a cabinet committee meeting on the subject on 11 August, between the cabinet meetings, but with no representatives of the military departments present.⁵⁴ It was clearly a financial decision rather than one of military strategy. The Ten Year Rule, which was kept secret from the British public and from foreign governments, continued to be the basis for British military planning throughout the next decade, and was not rescinded until 1932.

This emphasis on financial constraints was not at all surprising, in view of the burden of war debts, and the problems of peacetime budgeting. Kennedy emphasised the changing balance

⁵² Cabinet minutes, 15 August 1919, NA/CAB 23. The term ‘expeditionary force’ meant similar to the BEF in 1914.

⁵³ Cabinet minutes, 5 August 1919, NA/CAB 23.

⁵⁴ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.25.

of government expenditure, for example between social services and military expenditure; within the total government expenditure of £197m in 1913-14, £35m was allocated to the army and £50m or 25% of total government expenditure went to the Royal Navy.⁵⁵ Adamthwaite explained that the expenditure on the Navy had been to ensure that ‘the old two-power standard of pre-war days,’ that is the principle that the Royal Navy should be as strong as the combined next two most powerful navies in the world, but that had to be modified after the war, and particularly at the Washington Conference.⁵⁶

Although the war was over, the military establishment had three challenging years between the armistice in 1918 and the Washington Conference in 1921; initially there were the problems of demobilising up to four million men and women; then there were the ongoing military commitments which did not stop in November 1918, initially in Russia, and then with imperial commitments in Mesopotamia, India, Egypt and Ireland; and finally in working out the shape of military resources in the much stricter budgetary situation from 1920. Military savings could at any stage get complicated by political priorities; in January 1919 Churchill ‘set out to reduce Britain’s military expenditure everywhere except Russia, where he was prepared to spend whatever might be necessary to destroy the Bolshevik regime.’⁵⁷

Orde quoted from CID minutes in 1920 that naval policy should be ‘to maintain superiority at sea over any combination of powers likely to be arrayed against the forces of the Empire.’⁵⁸ The whole background of the importance of naval power with regard to the British Empire has often been described, including Sprout’s account of the historical analysis by Captain Alfred Mahan published in 1890.⁵⁹ Gibbs described it that

until late in the nineteenth century Britain, by her control of the seaways into and out of Europe, was able to use her command of the sea to ensure the

⁵⁵ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p.272.

⁵⁶ Anthony Adamthwaite, *The Making of the Second World War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977), p.31. Gupta wrote that ‘the traditional official aim of British strategy and diplomacy was to maintain the security of Britain’s imperial and commercial sea lanes, and also to prevent any one power from dominating the Continent.’ Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*. p.93.

⁵⁷ David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London: John Murray, 1994), p.514.

⁵⁸ Anne Orde, *Great Britain and International Security 1920-1926* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), p.157, citing CID paper 251-B, 10 July 1920, CAB 4/7.

⁵⁹ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783* (New York: Low, 1890).

security of the British Isles themselves, the freedom of Britain's trade, and the safety of her colonies. Britain could exercise naval command as far afield as the Pacific because there, in all normal circumstances, a challenge to her authority could only come from the navies of Europe.⁶⁰

It is important to explore the extent to which British imperialist interests determined the shape and deployment of military resources and planning. Gooch for example maintains that after the war 'imperial considerations impinged upon Britain at every turn, problems they were now predominantly internal threats within different parts of the empire, and as such not receptive to the action of the traditional British palliative, the Royal Navy.'⁶¹ The army had in February 1920, after the immediate effects of the demobilization program and the formal adoption of the Ten Year Rule, moved a considerable way towards deployment in peacetime conditions.⁶² There were then only 16,000 British troops in Germany, but in comparison to this small number close to home in Europe, there were large numbers in different locations within the Empire.⁶³ The biggest commitment was the garrison in Ireland, which was seen as part of the home numbers, where the numbers increased from 53,000 in May 1919 to 80,000 in July 1921 before the start of the negotiations. The spread of troops worldwide shows both the spread of imperial responsibilities and the inter-linkage with the Royal Navy.⁶⁴

With regard to the Royal Navy, Clayton pointed out that 'almost half of the Navy's effective strength was kept in the Mediterranean throughout the period. In the Mediterranean it was available for despatch against Japan without appearing to be in a challenging posture, it was

⁶⁰ Norman Gibbs, 'British Strategic Doctrine' in *The Theory and Practice of War*, Michael Howard (ed.) (London: Cassell, 1965), p.192. Gibbs argued that the Liberal Government in 1914 declared war 'in support of the long tradition, that the upsetting of the balance of power in Europe could directly threatens Britain's naval supremacy.' p.189. Kennedy said that 'interconnections between her commercial expansion and her rise to maritime supremacy, and between her industrial revolution and the Pax Britannica, are historical facts which few would contradict.' Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* p.267.

⁶¹ John Gooch, *Armies in Europe* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p.187.

⁶² There were 20,000 British troops in Russia during the Civil War but they were all withdrawn during 1920.

⁶³ There were 9,000 British with 14,000 Indian troops in Turkey, 6,000 British troops and 20,000 Indians in Egypt, 10,000 British and 13,000 Indians in Palestine and 17,000 British and 44,000 Indians in Mesopotamia. Anthony Clayton, *The British Empire as a Superpower 1919-1939* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1966), p.45.

⁶⁴ Clayton also wrote more generally about the inter-war years, that the British army had a strength of 180,000. Approximately one-third of the army was stationed in India; smaller garrisons served in Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jamaica, Malta, Gibraltar and later Cyprus. Clayton, *Oxford History of British Empire Volume IV Twentieth Century*, p.283.

not far from home for administrative purposes – for recall in the event of an emergency crisis with the Soviet Union or the USA, and there was the useful prestige to be gained by its presence in the Mediterranean itself.’⁶⁵ Malta was, however, the farthest east that the largest naval ships could be maintained or repaired; all the details of the political, financial and inter-service rivalry about the proposal for a Singapore base were analysed by McIntyre, with the first discussions on Singapore being as early as October 1919.⁶⁶

These military pressures reflect the ongoing commitments of a worldwide empire against financial constraints once the government receipts and expenditure became clear after April 1920. As a result of Versailles, there were increased imperial commitments in the Middle East, but there was no considered thinking about the financial consequences. Churchill’s efforts to reduce costs in the Middle East were initially an attempt to slow the increase in costs; the change of strategy in Mesopotamia from traditional army occupation to a combination of the use of RAF squadrons and armoured car companies did reduce the annual expenditure there from £20m in 1921-1922 to £1.6m in 1927-1928.⁶⁷

The significant decrease of the total military budget from £195m in 1921-1922 to £138m in 1922-1923 followed the work of the Geddes Committee which sat in the winter of 1921-1922 in anticipation of the budget year from April 1922. The timing overlapped with the Irish peace talks that were completed in December 1921, and with the Washington Conference from November 1921 to February 1922. Following the cabinet agreement on the Ten Year Rule in 1919, the effect on the military budgets is shown in the following table.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Clayton, *The British Empire as a Superpower*, p.9.

⁶⁶ McIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base*.

⁶⁷ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (London: Macmillan, 1941), Appendix on ‘Pacification of the Middle East’ pp.461-466.

⁶⁸ H. M. Hyde, *British Air Policy between the Wars 1918-1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976), Appendix VI. Although the totals for the three services are somewhat different from the total defence expenditure given above by Butler and Butler, the trend and relativities are clearly consistent.

	Royal Navy (£m) ⁶⁹	Army (£m)	RAF (£m)	Total (£m)
1920-1921	91	125	23	239
1921-1922	83	94	18	195
1922-1923	65	62	11	138
1923-1924	58	52	12	122
1924-1925	56	45	15	116
1925-1926	61	45	16	122

Not all the details of the Geddes reports were implemented, but the major changes were the reduction in manpower of 50,000, the consequent disbandment of eight cavalry regiments and twenty-eight infantry battalions, further savings as a result of new equipment and the use of the RAF instead of troops on the ground.⁷⁰ Amongst the infantry battalions disbanded were five Irish regiments and two battalions from surviving Irish regiments, which reflected the political situation, and seven battalions were withdrawn from overseas garrisons.⁷¹

The results of the Washington Conference were mostly assumed in the financial thinking around the Geddes Committee, even if the diplomatic route to achieve them had not been finally reached. The four ‘super-Hood’ capital ships, which had been authorised earlier in 1921, were never built. Treasury pressures were always present and an example affecting the wider foreign and military policies was recorded in the minutes of the CID in October 1921, when Sir George Barstow for the Treasury said that ‘while not dissenting from the general staff note for the purpose of the Washington Conference, made the reservation that it must not be inferred from this concurrence that the Treasury was thereby precluded from pressing

⁶⁹ The navy’s expenditure included a much larger amount of capital expenditure when a battleship could cost seven million pounds; Clayton, *The British Empire as a Superpower*, p.20, gives the cost of a de Havilland DH9A bomber for the RAF as only three thousand pounds.

⁷⁰ Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, p.26.

⁷¹ One Geddes proposal not accepted was the establishment of a single Ministry of Defence; this would have produced important long term strategic and cost savings, but was not implemented until the 1960s. Bond did quote that between 1922 and 1925 the War Office staff was reduced from 4,114 to 2,561. Ibid. p.27.

on the War Office the need from further reduction of military forces.’⁷² Although this referred to the War Office, the Treasury was not any more sympathetic to the Admiralty.

British politicians were sensitive about Britain’s military capability especially in comparison to France’s army; Curzon said at the Imperial Conference in 1923 that ‘we now have an army, in relation to the vast extent of Empire, of almost insignificant dimensions’ and this ‘puts us in chronic inequality with France.’⁷³ France had not hesitated to continue to maintain a large conscript army after the war and *The Economist* openly commented in January 1924 that ‘France is, of course, the greatest power in the world today.’⁷⁴ There are very clear links between economic and financial circumstances and military policy and resources, because everything has to be paid for either at the time or through borrowing. However, links between military and foreign policy may not be so clear. In her detailed chapter on ‘Defence Policy and its relation to Foreign Policy’, Orde argued that connections between foreign and defence policies were in fact not close during this period:

None of Britain’s international engagements contained military commitments; avoiding them was a feature of policy on international security. Although there was plenty of disorder and minor threat in and on the borders of British-controlled territory there was no major threat to Great Britain or any part of the Empire, nor was it likely that the minor conflicts of other countries would seriously involve Britain....The army reverted to its peacetime function of providing garrisons for territory under British control: : its size was fixed not by comparison with that of any other country but by the needs of India and of overseas garrisons.⁷⁵

Orde’s conclusion seems to be correct in the overall assessment of foreign policy, but that does not invalidate the need for this analysis of possible economic and military constraints. Economic considerations did lead to the Ten-Year Rule, they did strongly influence policy in Mesopotamia and they were important in the positive approach to the Washington Conference. However, the possible economic and military constraints did not provide major determinants or limitations of British foreign policies during these years.

⁷² Minutes of the 146th meeting of the CID, 2 October 1921, NA/CAB 2/3.

⁷³ Minutes of the 3rd meeting of Imperial Conference, 5 October 1923, NA/CAB 32/9.

⁷⁴ *The Economist*, 5 January 1924.

⁷⁵ Orde, *Great Britain and International Security*, p.155.

Chapter Three: Global Challenges

A contemporary view of Britain's place in the post-war world, was that of the German historian, Erich Marcks, writing in the winter of 1920-1921 when he said:

Russia and Germany have now collapsed, a colossal gain for England...she has secured the double aim of her Imperialism, to dominate the route from Cairo to the Cape, and from Cairo to Calcutta...the Indian ocean in its totality has become an English sea... She has strengthened her power and her trade. Has gained valuable new regions in Mesopotamia, Persia and Africa, and her world Empire has increased in land-size by around 27 per cent, and in population by almost the same. This has resulted in a global power and position as never before; England is the only winner from this war, England together with North America; one can see an Anglo-Saxon world mastery on the horizon.¹

Darwin argued that 'in the decade that followed the armistice of 1918, the danger of any serious threat to British imperial interests appeared remoter than at any time since 1880, with the collapse of Germany, the weakness and internal preoccupations of Russia, the isolationism of the United States, and the discretion with which Japan pursued her longstanding ambition of a larger influence in China.'² To this could be added the exhaustion of France, Britain's main colonial rival, and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East in an area that Britain saw as vital to its imperial interests. Of the other powers, the growth of the United States was the clearest challenge to the British Empire.

The concept of 'Imperial Overstretch' which was popularised by Paul Kennedy³ in 1988, when he analysed the imperial experience of western powers over the last five hundred years, and concluded that there was an emergent 'bi-polar world' dominated by the United States and Russia in the second half of the twentieth century. His argument was that any empire can extend itself beyond its ability to maintain its political, economic and military commitments; it is clear in retrospect that Britain's empire was unsustainable, in the new

¹ Paul Kennedy *The Realities behind Diplomacy : Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London : Allen and Unwin, 1981) p.223.

² John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p.34.

³ Paul Kennedy *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London : Unwin Hyman, 1988).

political, economic and military situation after the Great War. However, looking at the situation in 1919 or 1925, it was not unreasonable for the British politicians, to see the British Empire as the most successful surviving ongoing empire, with no obvious signs of unsustainability. Before examining Britain's imperial position during these six years, it is appropriate to consider the new position of the United States, and then that of Russia.

The United States

Britain's relationship with the United States was clearly going to be very important after the Great War, whatever the results from Paris and the implementation of Versailles. During the previous twenty years, the United States had assumed an increasingly wider global role, starting with the 1898 war with Spain and the acquisition of the Philippines, Guam and the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 was another reflection of the global aspirations of the United States, this time into the Pacific. In economic terms, by 1900 both Germany and the United States had already overtaken Britain in many aspects of industrial production and development.

The global importance of the United States was emphasised during the war, initially by the effects of its neutrality, and then by the effects of its direct involvement after its declaration of war on Germany in April 1917. Although its direct effect on the war, and specifically on the western front, took 12 to 15 months to have a great influence, there were other more immediate effects during 1917 shown in its productive strength, its industrial potential, the speedy building of both merchant and naval ships and its ability to boost food exports to Europe. The direct contacts between United States and German leaders in October 1918, to the exclusion of Britain and France, gave a clear indication to the new diplomatic power of the United States.

The implementation of Versailles and the setting up of the League of Nations excluded Russia, whose regime had not even been invited to Paris; Germany, who was only invited to

Versailles to sign an Allied document; and the United States when Wilson could not persuade the Senate to endorse what he had agreed in Paris. The most immediate problem for Britain was the position of the United States and the relative 'isolationism' of President Harding from March 1921 till his death in August 1923, and his successor President Coolidge who was in office from 1923 till 1929.

The relationship between United States and Europe in the 1920s was complicated; Watt commented that 'President Wilson's fate taught American's leaders that neither Congress nor the American electorate understood or would support permanent institutionalised American involvement in world politics' and therefore initiatives such as the Washington Conference or the Dawes Committee had to be justified as being in the United States' interest.⁴ Writing specifically of the relationship with Britain, McKercher said that 'Britain and the United States struggled with one another throughout this period : Britain to retain its position as the only truly global power against the American challenge; and the United States to achieve its own global status over the opposition of the British.'⁵

The relative and growing strength of the United States, the weakness of Russia and the stagnation of Central and Western Europe is clearly shown in some statistics cited by Kennedy, which compared changes in world indices of manufacturing production for the years from 1913 to 1925 as follows

	1913	1920	1925
World	100	93.6	121.6
Europe	100	77.3	103.5
USSR / Russia	100	12.8	70.1
United States	100	122.2	148.0
Rest of World	100	109.5	138.1 ⁶

⁴ Donald Cameron Watt *Succeeding John Bull : America in Britain's Place* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.42.

⁵ B.J.C. McKercher *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s : The Struggle for Supremacy* (London : Macmillan, 1990) p.209.

⁶ Paul Kennedy *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London : Unwin Hyman, 1988) p.361.

Britain had been the clear global and imperial power during the second half of the nineteenth century, and had generally avoided formal alliances with other major states during those decades, while trying to ensure a balance of power in Europe. At the beginning of the twentieth century formal treaties were signed with Japan in 1902, with France in 1904 in the 'entente cordiale' and with Russia in 1907. After the war, there was Britain as the traditional but now weakened imperial power, and the United States, as the new global challenger.

After the American rejection of Versailles, and her absence from many subsequent international obligations and discussions, there were a number of references in British discussions, to expressions such as that used by Curzon at the Imperial Conference in 1921, when he spoke of the 'the defection of America.'⁷ Relationships with the United States had also been affected since the war by the continuing problems in Ireland, the problems associated with Britain's war debt to the United States, the general concerns about relative military power and the rivalry of oil companies in the Middle East, including Persia.⁸

Given the history of the United States as a former colony of Britain and the millions of American citizens with British or Irish ancestry, it was not surprising that British views on the relationship with the United States were ambivalent, as to whether they were natural allies or rivals. Goldstein commented that 'the United States remained throughout these years, an enigmatic factor in British policy globally, and in Europe.'⁹ However, although there were a number of possible conflicts with Britain, it is very significant that there were two major Anglo-American foreign policy events between Versailles and Locarno where major successes followed the United States determining that it was in their interest to take initiatives in the Washington Naval Conference in 1921-1922 and the London Conference in 1924, based on the Dawes recommendations. Both of these are examined in depth in subsequent chapters.

⁷ Minutes of 4th meeting of Imperial Conference, 22 June 1921, p.4, NA/CAB 32/2. Having not signed the Versailles Treaty, the United States on 2 July 1921 formally declared an end to hostilities of the world war; then in August 1921 peace treaties were signed by the United States with Germany, Austria and Hungary.

⁸ G. H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period 1919-1924* (London: St. Martin Press, 1995), chapter 9.

⁹ Erik Goldstein 'The British Official Mind and Europe' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Volume 8/3 1997. p.169.

Russia

Unlike the position after the Second World War, Russia or the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' as the larger country was designated from 1922, was in no position to aspire to play a global role during these six years. The effect of the war on Russia, the fall of the Romanovs and the subsequent revolution in 1917, and the humiliating treaty with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, were followed by the civil war which eventually ended in October 1922, and the consolidation of the Bolshevik regime.

Russia was not invited to the Paris Conference, was ignored by its participants, was not a member of the League during these years, and was not normally involved in the international conferences, except with Germany at Rapallo in 1922. Fortunately for the Allies, the secret agreement between Britain, France and Russia in March 1915, which would have given Russia both Constantinople and the Dardanelles was publicised and renounced by the new Bolshevik Government in 1917; this removed a dangerous complication from the Paris Conference. The Allies' commitments in different ways to the 'White Russian' armies in the Civil War, were personified by the attitude and actions of Churchill who was secretary of state for war. Churchill's commitment in 1919 and 1920 to assist the anti-Bolshevist forces has normally been seen as anti-Communist, although he did argue from a wider concern that Germany might go in the same direction, and that the whole continent might lapse into anarchy.¹⁰

The new regime in Russia was in no condition to be a key global player at this time, and the figures quoted above on manufacturing production emphasise the economic difficulties of the new government. Relationships with Russia were not central to British foreign policies after the withdrawal of the British forces in 1920, and also Russia was not seen as relevant in the discussions that led up to Locarno, when Poland was an active participant.

¹⁰ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (London: Macmillan, 1941), p.143.

Perhaps the general British political establishment attitude to Russia during these years was best summed by the diplomat Harold Nicolson who wrote, in a memo to Chamberlain, which was then forwarded to the full cabinet,

The Russian problem, that incessant, though shapeless menace, can be stated only as a problem; it is impossible to forecast what effect the development of Russia will have on the future strategy of Europe... Today she hangs as a storm-cloud upon the Eastern horizon of Europe – impending, imponderable but at present, detached.¹¹

The main Russian issues that did appear in British foreign policies after 1920, were the assumptions, real or imaginary, of links between the new Russian regime and left-wing organisations in Britain. After the Bolshevik regime triumphed over the White Russian forces, British attitudes towards Russia were next tested during the Polish-Russian War with some establishment sympathies with the Poles, but with left-wing trade unions and political groups leading the ‘Hands off Russia’ campaign to prevent supplies being shipped to the Polish Government. After that, the issue remained in respect of the establishment of trade relations and diplomatic recognition, with the growing number of Labour MPs seeing the new Russian regime as the answer to their diplomatic and economic problems, and right-wing MPs seeing Russia as a threat to the established order and linked to potentially revolutionary forces in Britain. The alleged ‘Zinoviev Letter’ in the 1924 General Election emphasised the sensitivity of the relationship.

Britain’s concern regarding the external security of India, and the assumed threat from Russia towards the warm water ports of the Indian sub-continent, was always in the background. An example from early in the period was Curzon’s concern about Persia, and Britain’s rivalry with Russia in areas west of India, immediately after the war. He said that ‘Our stake is the greatest, our knowledge of these parts of the world by far the most profound, our experience extends over a much longer period of time.’¹² Russia was clearly seen as a threat by many British politicians, but Russia was not a direct influence on the important diplomatic events of these years.

¹¹ *Documents* Volume XXVII, No.205, 20 February 1925, p.311.

¹² Minutes of the 45th meeting of the Eastern Committee, 19 December 1918, NA/CAB 27/24.

The British Imperial Role

In view of the history, size and complexity of the British Empire, an analysis of imperial developments is central to any reassessment of overall foreign policies during this period. The changing of the relationship with the Dominions, the unique position of India, the needs of the colonies mostly in Africa and the Pacific, and the newly acquired territories in the Middle East, all contributed to pressures on the British governments. The key responsibilities are initially examined in this chapter through study of the British imperial role, the importance of the Suez Canal and India, the new responsibilities in the Middle East and finally the developments in the Dominions, with particular reference to Canada. The majority of the imperial problems took place in the three years of the Lloyd George Government, rather than in the period from 1923 to 1925, but it is not suggested that this was due to the wisdom or otherwise of the different governments. The different aspects of British imperial policies do not indicate failures during these years; rather there is a much greater continuity than might have been expected, from the pre-war years, despite the traumas of the war and the effects of Versailles. However, the very success, or at least the lack of failure, can be seen in retrospect as containing the seeds of long-term imperial decline.

It is arguable whether the zenith of the power of the British Empire had been as early as Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, or as late as just before the Second World War, but there is a strong argument that 1919 reflected the greatest imperial responsibilities. Darwin wrote that in 1914 'more than eighty separate territorial units acknowledged the sovereignty, or accepted the protection of the British Crown... scattered over the globe, this fragmented colossus covered more than 11 million square miles and counted over 400 million subjects.'¹³ The maximum geographic size of the empire was certainly then reached in 1919 when, as the result of Versailles, Britain received directly, or indirectly through the mandates given to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, responsibility for former German colonies

¹³ John Darwin in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p.1.

in Africa and the Pacific, former territories of the Ottoman Empire such as Palestine and Mesopotamia, and confirmation of responsibility for Egypt.

Darwin spelled out Gallagher and Robinson's classic analysis of British expansion by informal control wherever possible, and by direct rule only where necessary.¹⁴ Darwin described the different types of empire that emerged in mid-Victorian times and continued through the first half of the twentieth century; there were:

the settlement colonies enjoying almost complete self-rule under the tag of responsible government; India, whose curious double government was entrenched and civilianised when the Crown replaced the (East India) Company in 1858; the numerous dependencies, from the Caribbean to Hong Kong, ruled by Crown Colony government ...and the various cases of informal empire... where British business or diplomats exerted a preponderant influence, but without risking recourse to, or needing the help of, colonial rule.¹⁵

The emphasis on the Queen as the 'Empress of India' in the later years of Victoria's reign, and the other imperial connotations including the jubilee celebrations in 1887 and 1897, were not reflected as strongly either in the short reign of Edward VII (1901-1910) or the longer reign of his son George V (1910-1936). George did spend 18 weeks in India when he was Prince of Wales, and returned there after his coronation in 1911 but, although long distance travel was becoming more feasible, Rose confirmed that 'only once during his reign did he set foot in India, and never in Australia or New Zealand, Canada or South Africa; when implored to tour his Dominions, he would reply that he must do all or none, and that the pressure of home business denied him long absences from London.'¹⁶ The new Prince of Wales did undertake major imperial tours during George's reign, but the King was not persuaded to do so.

¹⁴ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, Volume 6/1, 1953, pp.1-15.

¹⁵ Darwin in Stockwell, *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, p.8. Examples of informal empire were Argentina, and China. Porter, referring to years before 1914, said 'that the British were anxious to avoid adding control and further direct responsibility to their existing commitments, and expressed their Imperial ambitions above all in support for the more intensive development of existing formal possessions like India and the Dominions.' Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism 1860-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p.69.

¹⁶ Kenneth Rose, *King George V* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p.348.

The constitutional developments in the Dominions at the beginning of the century had included the establishment of the Commonwealth Constitution in Australia in 1900 and the passing of the South Africa Act at Westminster in 1909. Between the Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and the outbreak of war in 1914, the nature and apparent invincibility of the British Empire had continued but with two major problems. The South African War had shown the limitations of British military power, against a determined minority, but the sensible diplomacy after the war led to the establishment of the independent Dominion of South Africa in 1910. The positive developments in South Africa gave a stimulus to the concept of the Dominion, and the notion of sharing responsibilities such as defence; it therefore both reinforced British power and began to circumscribe it. The other major problem of Ireland had not been resolved before the wartime diplomatic truce, but most contemporary politicians would have seen Ireland as a domestic problem.

The Colonial Conference of 1907 had taken place with Lord Elgin as colonial secretary, and Churchill as his parliamentary secretary. Among the conclusions were the adoption of the designation 'Dominion' for the self-governing countries; commitment to a more permanent secretariat for such conferences; and finally that although there would not be a separate Dominions Office, there would be a separation in the Colonial Office organisation between dealings with the Dominions and with colonies. After the 1911 Imperial Conference the separate Committee on Imperial Defence increased in importance, and after 1916 Hankey and his cabinet secretariat also serviced the Imperial Conferences. With the pressures of the war, the traditional links with the Colonial Office were bound to be less important, and the Dominions directly involved in the Imperial War Conferences and Imperial War Cabinet meetings in 1917 and 1918. The Imperial Conference in 1917 agreed that when peace came, there should be a full scale constitutional conference to regularise and amplify the new status of the Dominions, although this did not take place until 1926.¹⁷

In understanding the attitude of the British establishment to the imperial role, it is interesting to note Curzon's submission to the cabinet in December 1917 about the future of the German colonies. Curzon defended the right of Britain to retain the colonies which she has won by

¹⁷ Robert Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance 1918-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p.7.

conquest in war, and dismissed the argument that it might be desirable to purchase the goodwill of Germany in future by making concessions. He also dismissed the argument that said why ‘not avoid the odium of annexation, by internationalizing the territories which Germany has forfeited and cannot be allowed to redeem’; he argued the practical problems and the conflicting interests and ambitions that were associated with a number of nations being involved, and also suggested, ‘ask the native himself, and he will at once reply that he would sooner work out his own salvation under the aegis of any one of the Allied Powers whom he knows, than under a mixed Cabinet of nations.’¹⁸

A very different emphasis came from another cabinet member, Edwin Montagu, the secretary of state for India. He said during a discussion about the Caucasus in December 1918 that:

we seem to be drifting into the position that right from the east to the west there is only one possible solution of all our difficulties, namely, that Great Britain should accept responsibility for all these countries. For some reason, France is objectionable here; for other reasons, America is objectionable there, and the only solution is that we should be the tutelary power, the protecting power, or whatever the adjective is, although we agreed that there should be no annexation.¹⁹

Later that month Montagu’s views were recorded at the cabinet when he said ironically that ‘it would be very satisfactory if we could find some convincing argument for not annexing all the territories in the world.’²⁰ It was most unusual to find a senior minister like Montagu expressing such views, and it must be emphasised that they were very much a minority view.

The political leaders who had been born and grown up during the Victorian and Edwardian years, had to adjust to the imperial circumstances after 1918.²¹ The war had reinforced the

¹⁸ Memo to Cabinet, 5 December 1917, NA/CAB 24/4.

¹⁹ Minutes of the 42nd meeting of the Eastern Committee, 9 December 1918, NA/CAB 27/24.

²⁰ Cabinet minutes 20 December 1918, NA/CAB 23/24. Nicolson wrote in Paris that he was ‘distressed about Cyprus. The British Empire delegation have decided to retain it on strategical and other grounds. They are wrong entirely; its retention compromises our whole moral position in regard to the Italians.’ Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London: Constable, 1933), diary 19 January 1919. p.242.

²¹ Pre-war attitudes may be seen in Vansittart’s description of Curzon and Hardinge in Paris in 1920, ‘the situation, said the ex-Viceroy adjusting Edwardian collars as they sat down to a simple six-course dinner, was explosive, but – mixing wines and metaphors – one must not rush one’s fences. The French were not

solidarity and continuity of empire in a number of ways; the politicians regularly stressed that it was not just Britain but the British Empire that was fighting the war; the Dominions and India suffered enormous casualties in support of the Mother Country, and Lloyd George had reinforced the role of the Dominions in the Imperial Conferences and the Imperial Cabinet from 1917. Early discussions in Paris identified problems regarding the status of the Dominions and India at the conference, with Lloyd George being forced by Canada and Australia to insist that the Dominions must have individual representation; an offer of one delegate per country infuriated the Dominions, as they were seen as no more important than minor Allies like Siam or Portugal.²² It was finally agreed that Canada, Australia, South Africa and India would be entitled to have two delegates each and New Zealand one. In practice, they were also members of the wider British Empire delegation, and many of the Dominion issues were discussed in detail at the meetings of that delegation.²³

While the British Empire had been reinforced at Versailles, the negotiations in Paris had directly or indirectly marked the end of the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Of the major empires, only the French Empire had also survived the war and gained from the peace terms, and the Anglo-French imperial rivalry was an important factor in those peace negotiations, particularly in the Middle East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Britain's acquisition of Palestine, Mesopotamia and Egypt brought a new emphasis and potential imbalance to the British imperial role, but the territories were important to Britain partly to resist French aspirations in the area, but also to reinforce or protect the trade and military routes to India.

Opening the Imperial Conference in June 1921, Lloyd George expressed his vision of the empire by saying that 'it is not so much that it combines men of many races, tongues, traditions, and creeds in one system of government. Other empires have that, but the British Empire differs from all in one essential respect. It is based not on force, but on goodwill, and

people to go tiger-shooting with, and tigers roused competitive reminiscences over the fish.' Robert Vansittard, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittard* (London: Hutchison, 1958), p.262.

²² Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2001), p.52.

²³ Minutes of the British Empire delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, NA/CAB 29/28.

a common understanding. Liberty is its binding principle.’²⁴ Lord Curzon²⁵ said two days later in a more cautious tone, but still with a similar assumption of the rightness of the empire, that the objective was:

to keep what we have obtained, sometimes almost against our will, not to seize anything else; to reconcile, not to defy; to pacify, not to conquer...a policy of splendid isolation is no longer possible, it is not possible for a country like Britain, geographically situated as we are. We are a country, by virtue of our insular position in Europe, and our Imperial position abroad, with maritime approaches on every side that make everyone our neighbour; our frontiers are the frontiers of every state, or almost every state, in the world.²⁶

Most British political leaders no doubt believed that their colonial record was better than others, and believed, to differing degrees, that Britain had a civilizing role throughout the empire. It would, however, be surprising if the majority did really agree with Robert Cecil’s statement in the Commons debate on the terms of Versailles, when he said he agreed with Lloyd George that it had ‘always been the principle of the British Colonial Policy – namely that we hold those countries, not in order to exploit them for the benefit of the Mother Country, but in order to do our utmost for the prosperity of the population they contain.’²⁷

The size and complexity of the empire was reflected in the composition of the cabinet; although the colonial secretary was the main minister responsible for the empire, there were three other colleagues, in addition to the prime minister, who shared these responsibilities. Both India and Ireland had their own secretaries of state in the cabinet, and the foreign secretary had not only the overall responsibility for foreign affairs, but also had direct responsibility for Egypt and the Sudan. Ironically the main imperial pressures on the Lloyd George government were in India, Egypt and Ireland, but none of these were officially the responsibility of the colonial secretary. In view of the space available, a short detailed look will be made of the different colonial secretaries during these years, rather than other cabinet

²⁴ Minutes of 1st meeting of Imperial Conference, 20 June 1921, p.6, NA/CAB 32/2.

²⁵ Curzon had been under-secretary of state at the Foreign Office from 1895 to 1898, when Lord Salisbury, as prime minister and foreign secretary, was in the Lords.

²⁶ Minutes of 4th meeting of Imperial Conference, 22 June 1921, pp. 2 and 4, NA/CAB 32/2.

²⁷ *Hansard*, Volume 118, 21 July 1919, column 988.

members, especially in view of the differences of their backgrounds and the roles they were asked to do, or took, within the department.

Lord Milner, who was colonial secretary from January 1919 to January 1921, had been a colonial administrator in Egypt from 1889 to 1894, and then he returned to senior civil service roles in Britain. In 1897 Joseph Chamberlain sent him to South Africa as governor of Cape Colony and high commissioner to South Africa. Although his record during and after the South African War has been debated by historians, there are no doubts about his colonial experience or the later influence of his acolytes who had served within the so-called *Kindergarten*. He was a senior minister in Lloyd George's wartime government, and brought considerable administrative skills to his responsibilities, but his overall contribution to the Colonial Office was limited, and *The Economist* in 1924, writing on the death of Milner, commented that neither Milner or Curzon were 'able to exchange the role of Imperial ruler, for that of democratic chief.'²⁸ Milner's contribution on Egypt was that, despite his colonial Egyptian background, he did move British thinking on Egyptian independence, or self-government. This led, after he left government, to Britain unilaterally declaring Egypt's independence in 1922, subject to conditions that Egyptian nationalists could not accept, and then to a more mutually acceptable settlement in 1936.

Churchill's role as colonial secretary, from January 1921 to October 1922, is the most interesting; he can be seen at other times in his career as the jingoist young imperialist, as a soldier and a journalist in the Sudan and South Africa between 1898 and 1900, as the young minister at the Colonial Office from 1906 to 1908, as the leader of the opposition to the India Act in the early 1930s, and as the reluctant acceptor of imperial developments after 1945. It might therefore have been expected that he would have been an expansive colonial secretary, both in terms of his role with colleagues in the cabinet, and the role of his department.²⁹ However, in his time at the Colonial Office, Churchill was very much the pragmatist; his

²⁸ *The Economist*, 16 May 1924, p.959.

²⁹ The personal pressures affecting a politician, are exemplified by the three family events that hit Churchill in 1921; initially the suicide of his brother-in-law, in April; then the death of his 67-year-old mother in June, a month after a fall; she had remarried twice after the death of Lord Randolph Churchill but Churchill was still very close to her; and most tragically the death of his three-year-old daughter Marigold in August 1921.

prominent roles outside the normal Colonial Office responsibilities, in the Middle East and Ireland are discussed in the respective sections.³⁰

Leaving aside his involvement in the Middle East and Ireland, and indirect involvement in India and Egypt, Churchill's main departmental work continued with varying attention to issues in territories such as Kenya or Nigeria. A traditional colonial response was shown in a debate in July 1921 when Churchill spoke about investment in Nigeria and said that they 'should try and encourage and accelerate the development of these great properties which have come into our possession, by supplying them with the necessary technical apparatus of railways, harbours, etc., which are needed to make their great natural wealth accessible for the advantage of the whole Empire.'³¹ There were however strong reactions in India to Churchill's speech to the Kenya Colony and Uganda dinner in London in January 1922, when he said that 'the democratic principles of Europe are by no means suited to the development of Asiatic and African people.'³² *The Times* devoted a number of critical editorials to Churchill as colonial secretary during his first six months in that office.³³

The Duke of Devonshire was a Conservative MP from 1891 to 1908 when he became the 9th Duke and was elevated to the Lords; perhaps his most significant political role was as governor general of Canada from 1916 to 1921.³⁴ Devonshire was appointed colonial secretary under Bonar Law and in Baldwin's first cabinet. Hankey's comment that he looked 'like an apoplectic idol and adds little counsel,'³⁵ may have been unfair but Devonshire made

³⁰ Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire* (London: Macmillan, 2010) only devotes forty pages to the period from 1908 to 1922, and he does not pay particular attention to Churchill's two years as colonial secretary.

³¹ *Hansard*, Volume 144, 14 July, column 1623.

³² Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, p.122. In London, Montagu also objected strongly to Churchill's words and it was left to their junior ministers, to find a joint policy on the position of Indians in Kenya. Ibid. p.156.

³³ On 21 January 1921 *The Times* editor wrote of the need for 'An Imperial Secretary of State', and on 23 February under the heading of 'Mesopotamia and Mr Churchill' makes his position clear when writing of the 'British Taxpayers, who are groaning under their burdens.' The editor often showed his appreciation of Milner and Amery, the former ministers, and writes of Churchill on 11 April that 'the Colonial Secretary is on his way back from his Durbar in Egypt, and will now perhaps find time to give to the main work of his office', and highlights the need to be working on Dominion matters and the forthcoming Imperial Conference. On 9 May the editor is critical of 'transferring the cost of the forces in the Middle East to the Colonial Office where Churchill wanted an Empire that the country could not afford.'

³⁴ One of his daughters became engaged to his ADC in Canada, Captain Harold Macmillan.

³⁵ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (London: Collins, 1972), Volume 2, p.323, quoting Hankey's diary of 26 November 1922.

no great impression in his role, and the obituary in *The Times* in 1938, while generally sympathetic of his role as a member of the social establishment and his role in Canada, could only say of his time as colonial secretary that ‘during his single year of office he managed, amid a great deal of other sound unobtrusive work, to present forcibly the case for settlement within the Empire.’³⁶

Although J.H. Thomas was a Labour MP and the leader of the National Union of Railwaymen, he brought a traditional approach to colonial matters and did not bring any radicalism to the role in 1924. He did use his union background to help settle a labour dispute which might have prevented the opening of the British Empire Exhibition by the King in April 1924, and dealt with the setting up of the Irish Boundary Commission. He also claimed success of his lengthy trip to South Africa, and particularly the commitment from Prime Minister Hertzog that South Africa would be represented at the Imperial Conference planned for 1926.³⁷

Leo Amery was appointed colonial secretary in November 1924, and was not always an admirer of his predecessors; writing in his diary he recorded a brief discussion with Churchill when he noted that ‘on the question of dividing the office he (Churchill) was not at all sympathetic, taking the view that the CO was lightly worked and that he had never had any difficulty in doing it all. I couldn’t very well reply that except for Ireland and Iraq he had largely neglected the work and that no one had really done it since Milner and I left in 1921.’³⁸ The organisation of the Colonial Office, established in 1907, did not change until Baldwin announced in June 1925 that there would now be two secretary of state roles, one for Dominions and one for colonies, although Amery continued to do both roles until 1929. During the parliamentary debate Amery described the relationships with the Dominions as being ‘political, consultative...quasi-diplomatic’ while that with the colonies as being ‘administrative and directive.’³⁹

³⁶ *The Times*, 7 May 1938.

³⁷ J. H. Thomas, *My Story* (London: Hutchison, 1937).

³⁸ L. S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p.392.

³⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 187, 27 July 1925, column 66.

The Suez Canal and India

The Middle East and India were the major areas for British imperial activity during these years. While India was central to Britain's imperial thinking, the Middle East was the area with the greatest increase in territory at Versailles, with the confirmation of responsibility for Egypt, the granting of mandated responsibility for Palestine and Mesopotamia,⁴⁰ and the continuing strong informal interests in Persia, all following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ As argued above, the British motivation for ensuring that significant Middle East territories came within its responsibilities, was to do with preventing the French from getting new possessions or influence, or to do with the British priority for the routes to India, rather than any real thinking through of the advantages for Britain, or any concern for the interests of the inhabitants.

The importance of the Suez Canal in the Middle East, and crucially on the route to India, is clear in the statistical tables which were brought together by Farnie.⁴² The tonnage going through the canal rose from nine million tons in 1918 to twenty-six million tons in 1925, with the large British percentage varying between sixty and seventy per cent. The annual receipts of the Suez Canal Company rose from 92 million francs in 1918 to 608 million francs in 1925, with dividends rising from 53% of total receipts in 1918 to an extraordinary figure of 76% in 1925. Although its shareholding was not its main interest in the canal, the government shares had a market value of £35 million pounds in 1925 and it received in that year over a million pounds in dividends.

India had long been the jewel in the imperial crown, in both the political and economic benefits it brought to Britain. The break-up of the Ottoman Empire, and Britain's concerns about continuing Russian aspirations in the direction of the warm water ports of the Indian

⁴⁰ The term 'Mesopotamia' covered the two Ottoman territories based on Baghdad and Basra; the term 'Iraq' reflected the larger country, including Mosul and Kirkuk, which was agreed with Turkey in 1926.

⁴¹ The formal confirmation of the Middle East mandates for France in respect of Syria and Lebanon, and Britain in respect of Palestine and Mesopotamia, were made at the San Remo Conference in April 1920.

⁴² D. A. Farnie, *East and West of Suez: The Suez Canal in History 1854-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.751-57.

sub-continent, presented potential threats to India, and it was assumed that a British-orientated Middle East, and a British-controlled Suez Canal, were essential. The significance of Egypt and the Suez Canal, as perceived in London, was well captured by Duff Cooper, in his Commons speech in 1924:

Our position in Egypt was described in analogy many years ago by Lord Palmerston. He said that a gentleman with an estate in the north of England and one in the south could not wish to own all the inns on the road – so it was unnecessary for us to own Egypt – but he said that such a gentleman would insist, or desire, that those inns should be properly run, and should be able to furnish him with post-horse and mutton chops. That is still our position in Egypt and that is why we cannot afford to allow any other power to step in.⁴³

As early as 1902, there had been an agreement between the British and Indian authorities, that India should bear a financial responsibility for Egypt, ‘so far as the security of the Suez Canal is affected,’ as well as for Persia, the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan.⁴⁴ The relative closeness of India to the Middle East, and the fears that India was vulnerable on both its northern and western flanks, was also shown in India’s responsibility for the war efforts in Mesopotamia up to 1917 and the administration of the area immediately after the war.⁴⁵ Other members of the empire expressed concerns regarding the Suez Canal; for example, at the 1921 Imperial Conference both Australia and New Zealand had these concerns, with the New Zealand prime minister, William Massey, describing the canal as ‘the British Empire highway from the very heart of the Empire, where we are today, to India, to Australasia, to the whole of the Far East’ and saying that it would not be possible to ‘run the Empire without keeping control of the main artery.’⁴⁶ An additional link to the Middle East was that the large Muslim minority in India had seen the Caliphate in Constantinople as their spiritual leader.

Cabinet, and especially cabinet committee, discussions at the end of the war often referred to India. When Montagu asked why Britain should push herself out in the directions of Armenia

⁴³ *Hansard*, Volume 179, 15 December 1924, column 700.

⁴⁴ Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922* (Manchester: University Press, 1984), p.3.

⁴⁵ Charles Townshend, *When God Made Hell; The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

⁴⁶ Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Imperial Conference, 6 July 1921 p.5, NA/CAB 32/2.

and the Caucasus, as suggested by Curzon, he answered himself with the word 'India'. Balfour argued later at same meeting that the gateways of India were always getting further and further from India, and Britain should not take on fresh responsibilities in so distant a region as the Caucasus.⁴⁷ It is therefore necessary in understanding Britain's concerns about the Middle East to stress the position of India, and the importance to Britain of the sub-continent; India was central in Britain's imperial thinking for a combination of economic, diplomatic, military and prestige reasons.

There had been important political developments in India in 1917 when the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms proposed 'increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India, as an integral part of the British Empire.'⁴⁸ The subsequent 1919 *Government of India Act* ensured the implementation of the reforms which had the stated objective of eventual self-government, despite the misgivings of many Conservative MPs. However, any possible positive effects of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were overtaken in India by the political reaction and general unrest opposing the *Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act* passed in Delhi in March 1919, and known as the *Rowlatt Acts*, which increased powers for the arrest and summary trial of political suspects. Moreover, economic difficulties were accompanied by the spread of the influenza epidemic which was responsible for at least six million deaths across India.⁴⁹

1919 also marked both the Indian Army's involvement in the Third Afghan War from May to August, and the infamous Amritsar massacre which took place in April 1919, even if the parliamentary clashes did not take place until July 1920. Apart from the Amritsar debate, the Middle East was now more often on the agenda of the cabinet than India, partly because India had its own dedicated secretary of state and viceroy and partly because the new Middle East territories brought more problems. After Amritsar, the Indian National Congress, now dominated by Gandhi, was committed not to reforming the British Raj but replacing it by

⁴⁷ Minutes of the 42nd meeting of the Eastern Committee, 9 December 1918, NA/CAB 27/24.

⁴⁸ Roy Douglas, *Liberals: The History of Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London: Hambledon, 2005), p.176.

⁴⁹ Penderel Moon, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (London: Duckworth, 1989) p.988.

Indian self-rule. Gandhi launched a non-cooperation movement encouraging the boycott of British goods and refusal to serve the British in any capacity. At the same time the Muslim minority was disturbed by the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, and the threat to the Caliphate; Gandhi saw the opportunity to unite Muslims and Hindus in opposition to British rule.

Although Gandhi initially gathered support for his non-violent civil disobedience, this did not lead to any progress towards Indian self-rule or independence. The Muslim leaders saw that the Turks themselves retained little enthusiasm for the Caliphate and it did not survive the establishment of the new Turkish state. The main non-cooperation movement did not gain great momentum, and Gandhi lost control of the civil disobedience movement, particularly when it degenerated into anti-government mob violence, as when twenty-two police officers were burnt alive at Chauri Chaura in February 1922. Gandhi was arrested later in 1922 and sentenced to a prison term. It would have appeared in both London and New Delhi that the political crisis of the previous two years had passed, and that the economic situation was somewhat better and had alleviated some of the distress that had fuelled the discontent. With pressures on military budgets, and increased confidence in India, there was a significant reduction in the armed forces; between 1921 and 1925 the Indian army was reduced from 159,000 to 140,000, and the British troops in India from 75,000 to 57,000.⁵⁰ The years after 1922 were to be relatively quiet for the nationalist movement, until the failure of the British Government to appoint a single Indian to the Simon Commission in 1927 gave new momentum to the nationalist movement. However, in 1925, it must have appeared in both Delhi and London that there was a relatively stable situation in India.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.1018.

New Responsibilities in the Middle East

Anglo-French rivalry had been at the heart of the British acquisitions in the Middle East in 1919; the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 had drawn a line across the area giving France post-war responsibility for Greater Syria, and for the Mosul region, with Britain taking south of the line including Mesopotamia, with Palestine being under some international control, and no decision being taken about the Arabian lands which would mostly become Saudi Arabia.⁵¹ In November 1918, the members of the cabinet's Eastern Committee agreed that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was an 'unfortunate agreement, which has been hanging like a millstone round our necks ever since.'⁵² This was not because of any sympathy for France, but because the committee was looking for solutions which ensured that as Turkey lost its wider territories, that they should not be formally annexed by Britain, but rather that Britain would see 'indigenous Arab administration or administrations' with foreign relations being conducted by Britain.⁵³

Egypt was the largest and most strategically-placed country in the region. Britain had assumed responsibility for Egypt in 1882, but it had formally remained part of the Ottoman Empire until the start of the war in 1914, when it was declared a British protectorate. After 1918, and with no support arising for Egyptian nationalists in Paris, there was a clear resurgence of that nationalism under the leadership of Saad Zaghloul Pasha.⁵⁴ Pressures to open talks with Britain were rejected by London and following violence and suppression, the existing high commissioner was replaced by General Allenby. As Egypt was seen as the strategic location on the route to India, it was surprising that the Milner Mission on the

⁵¹ James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

⁵² Minutes of the 39th meeting of the Eastern Committee, 27 November 1918, NA/CAB 27/24.

⁵³ Minutes of the 37th meeting of the Eastern Committee, 29 October 1918, NA/CAB 27/24. Colonel T. E. Lawrence had been present earlier in the meeting. At the later meeting, the committee was again emphasizing that it rejected the idea of an 'Arab Kingdom without British advice, assistance or control' and again rejected restoration of Turkish rule or formal annexation by Britain. Minutes of the Eastern Committee, 27 November 1918, NA/CAB 27/24.

⁵⁴ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

possibilities of Egyptian movements towards independence was appointed as early as December 1919. After submitting his conclusions to Curzon in May 1920, Milner was allowed to have discussions with Zaghloul during 1920, and this was followed by further inconclusive negotiations between Curzon and Adly in 1921.⁵⁵ Britain eventually conceded self-government to Egypt in February 1922, but with conditions that the Egyptian government could not accept. Ironically in view of his views elsewhere on Ireland, Churchill was a critic of any movements towards independence in Egypt.

After Versailles, Palestine was allocated to the Foreign Office, while the India Office took responsibility for Mesopotamia. At the end of 1920, there were detailed cabinet discussions about these different responsibilities in the Middle East, bearing in mind the costs of the new territories; and these discussions led to changes in favour of Churchill and the Colonial Office early in 1921. Churchill appears to have had mixed feelings when Lloyd George offered him the move from the War Office to the Colonial Office, and he did not receive the formal seals of office until 7 February. Churchill was apparently attracted to the Colonial Office, by the cabinet decision that the Colonial Office would have the full responsibility for the Middle East, which essentially meant Mesopotamia and Palestine, and therefore bringing together responsibilities previously spread between the Foreign Office, the War Office, the Colonial Office and the India Office.

Churchill's arranged for a conference in Cairo at the beginning of March. Although held in Egypt, it was not about Egypt but about the other Arab lands that had been part of the Ottoman Empire and especially Mesopotamia and also Palestine, including the area to be known as Transjordan. Churchill was trying to combine his acceptance of Britain's responsibilities in the former Ottoman Empire, his commitment to reduce Britain's military costs in the area and his wish to look for local dignitaries who could rule and work with the British. His ideal scenario was for internal administrations under local Arab Leaders, with the Royal Air Force, rather than expensive ground forces, being responsible for British military and diplomatic interests. Cannadine wrote that 'Churchill had evolved into a fully-

⁵⁵ See John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East : Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918-1922* (London : Macmillan, 1988) pp.108-138.

fledged social conservative, who was dismayed by the demise of the old world, with its princes and potentates, its secure ruling classes and its splendid social pageantry. He much regretted the disappearance of the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs, and the collapse of settled values and ancient institutions.’⁵⁶

Responsibility for Palestine arose from the conquest by Allenby’s troops in 1917, the need to prevent French influence spreading from Syria, the moral obligation of the Balfour Declaration, and the views of those like Curzon and Amery that Palestine should be seen as part of a strategic buffer related to Egypt and the Suez Canal.⁵⁷ Churchill supported Prince Feisal to be ruler of Iraq and his brother Prince Abdullah to be ruler of what was going to be Transjordan. Later in March Churchill travelled on to Jerusalem for talks with Sir Herbert Samuel, the British high commissioner, and other local political leaders. Churchill had said in January 1921 of the new government in Baghdad that ‘western political methods are not necessarily applicable to the East, and the basis of election should be framed.’⁵⁸ He also said that ‘no province of the British Empire has ever been acquired by marching in and maintaining a large regular army at the cost of the British exchequer, but always by skilful and careful improvisations adapted to its special needs.’⁵⁹

After the initial concentration on the Cairo Conference, and the discussions in Jerusalem, Churchill’s Middle East responsibilities continued through the next eighteen months with day-to-day issues in all the territories, including sensitive matters such as Jewish immigration to Palestine. The implementation of the RAF’s formal responsibility for Iraq came into force on 1 October 1922, and Feisal finally agreed to the terms of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty on 5 October; both of these events took place in the middle of the Chanak Crisis. Looking back at those eighteen months, Churchill could express in July 1922 some political satisfaction when he emphasised in the Commons that despite there still being no final settlement with Turkey, ‘so far as Iraq proper (not Kurdistan) and Palestine are concerned, not only have we had this

⁵⁶ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001), p.75. Darwin wrote that Churchill was convinced that ‘British interests were best served by friendship and co-operation with the party of monarchy and tradition.’ Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, p.135.

⁵⁷ Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, p.123.

⁵⁸ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume IV 1917-1922* (London: Heinemann 1975), p.512.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.516.

colossal reduction of expenditure' but that this had been achieved 'in a period in which no one representative of Imperial authority has lost his life.'⁶⁰

Apart from the importance of the routes to India, and the management of the new territories in the Middle East, the third reason for the importance of the Middle East after the war was the growing concern about the importance of oil. Although Darwin pointed out that the Middle East only provided 1% of world output of oil in 1920, mostly from south west Persia,⁶¹ and this was only to grow to 5% by 1939, the British percentage would have been higher in each case, and perceptions regarding the importance of oil were clearly growing.⁶² The Admiralty, with its growing reliance on oil-fired naval ships, was a strong advocate of the importance of securing supplies,⁶³ and Hankey was briefing Lloyd George on the importance of Mosul for possible future oil supplies in 1918.⁶⁴ However, Jeffery's conclusion is convincing when he wrote that at this time 'the primacy of India and imperial communications was never challenged by petroleum.'⁶⁵

During the cabinet discussions about the Middle East in December 1920, Hankey's reaction to the alternatives of the Foreign Office or the Colonial Office taking responsibility, was instructive, as he records that 'I should personally have voted for the Foreign Office had I had a vote, though I would have preferred to clear out of both Palestine and Mesopotamia.'⁶⁶ This was an extraordinary comment from a key player in the British delegation to Paris less than two years previously, when Britain put the greatest emphasis on achieving the mandates for these territories. In contrast to Hankey, Churchill's commitment to the responsibilities assumed at Versailles is reflected in what the editor of the *Daily Mail* wrote after lunching

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 156, 11 July 1922, column 1118. He could have emphasised the comparison with 1920; Chandavarkar wrote that in that year the 'rebellion in Iraq cost the British £50 million and some 400 soldiers' lives to suppress.'⁶⁰ Rajinarayan Chandavarker, 'Imperialism and the European Empires in Europe' in Julian Jackson (ed.), *Europe 1900-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.149.

⁶¹ Despite arguments from Curzon and Milner, the cabinet agreed to pressure from Churchill and Wilson to withdraw troops from Persia by June 1921.

⁶² John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires 1400-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p.387.

⁶³ Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, p.35.

⁶⁴ James Barr, *A Line in the Sand*, p.65.

⁶⁵ Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, p.36.

⁶⁶ Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, p.202.

with Churchill. After talking about the costs of Mesopotamia, and asking what was Churchill's objection to Britain leaving Mesopotamia altogether, Churchill 'replied that it was only because it would be disgraceful to do so. We have undertaken liabilities, turned out the Turks, and we cannot turn our backs on it all. All we can do is to reduce the costs of our liabilities to the lowest possible level.'⁶⁷

The ambivalent attitudes to the new territories in the Middle East were highlighted by Darwin when he wrote 'what is surprising in retrospect is how little interest the British seemed to take ...in the new Treaty Empire they had founded in the Middle East.'⁶⁸ He went on to wonder whether this was partly because of ignorance of Islamic lands, partly the absence of causes such as a struggle for souls in Africa, and partly because it was a time of introversion and exhaustion in Britain, with priority being given to domestic politics. He also wrote of the Middle East in an article in 1999, when he commented that the Middle East was the poor relation in historiography of the Empire and that 'compared with those heartlands of colonial rule in India or tropical Africa, it was an awkward case: acquired by subterfuge; ruled (for the most part) by proxy; abandoned in confusion.'⁶⁹ The territories were different from both the traditional imperial dominions and from the colonies; they had no history of links to Britain and no British settlers; on the contrary, they had a varying, but growing, educated middle class with clear aspirations for independence rather than just accepting being transferred from one empire to another. There was no British strategic plan for the Middle East, apart from thwarting the French, and that the decisions during this period were essentially pragmatic, and carried out against a background of strong financial constraints.

⁶⁷ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Companion Papers Volume IV 1917-1922* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p.1478, citing memo to Lord Northcliffe, 30 May 1921, from Thomas Marlowe, editor of the *Daily Mail*. Gilbert also quotes Churchill writing to Sinclair that 'everything else that happens in the Middle East is secondary to the reduction of expense.' Gilbert, *Churchill*, p.638. This approach towards Mesopotamia was not welcomed by all Conservative MPs, such as the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, MP for Stafford; he acknowledged that the Commons had 'responsibilities as the representative of the British taxpayer, but still more, to my mind, it is responsible as the guardian of a far greater responsibility than that of the taxpayer, namely, the honour of the British Empire.' *Hansard*, Volume 143, 14 June 1921, column 311.

⁶⁸ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.385.

⁶⁹ John Darwin, 'An Undeclared Empire: The British in the Middle East 1918-39', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 27/2, 1999, p.159.

The Middle East played a central role during the years of the Lloyd George Government from 1919 to 1922, but was relatively quiet for the next three years, although there were long-term issues in Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia to be resolved. The expansion of the empire at Versailles in the Middle East had not been thought through, and was already being questioned, and Hankey's reservations went to the heart of the problem. Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia did not have any British traditions, apart from any short-term links in the previous forty years in Egypt, and they did not fit into either the Dominion concept or the British colonial definition.

Dominion Developments, especially related to Canada

Much contemporary political discussion about the empire concentrated on the Dominions,⁷⁰ and there were significant development about the Dominions, although the changes cannot be associated with one particular colonial secretary or one prime minister. Reference has already been made to the Colonial Conference in 1907, the adoption of the term Dominion for the self-governing countries, the commitment of the Dominions, and India, to the war, the involvement by Lloyd George of the Dominion prime ministers in the Imperial Conferences and the War Cabinet in 1917, and the active participation of the Dominions in Paris. Against this background it was surprising that the Imperial Conferences in 1921 and 1923 did not seriously discuss the concept of real independence for the Dominions, even though the conference in 1921, for example, had thirty-four main sessions, with the prime ministers surveying a multitude of imperial, European and other issues.⁷¹

Alongside the other Dominions, Canada had been founder members of the League of Nations, and although Canada cooperated with Britain, and the other imperial delegations, the

⁷⁰ Hankey, writing much later about imperial developments concentrates almost exclusively on the 'White Dominions' rather than on India or the colonies. Lord Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference - Studies in Public Affairs* (London : Ernest Benn, 1946).

⁷¹ Minutes of the Imperial Conference 1921, NA/CAB 32/2.

Canadian delegates received their 'instructions' from Ottawa.⁷² In October 1922, the most important implications of the Chanak Crisis were not so much as a contributory factor in the fall of Lloyd George, or even the miscommunication to the Dominion prime ministers, but that the Dominions, with the exception of New Zealand, did not automatically rally to the support of Britain at the time of possible conflict.⁷³ It has, however, been rather too easy for historians and others to refer to the 'White Dominions', ie Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and technically including Newfoundland at this stage, and Southern Ireland from December 1922, as a common grouping. In practice, there were many differences of policies and emphasis, bearing in mind their global geography and their emotional ties to Britain.

Of the White Dominions, Canada had a particularly significant position, partly due to the balance of British and French history, languages and traditions, which was reflected in Canada's reaction to the war, partly due to the natural closeness and relevance of the United States as shown in attitudes to the possible renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty before the Washington Conference, and partly just by her greater political concern to exercise her own national identity. There had, for example, been a public face of imperial unity at Paris, after the agreement on representation, but the Canadian prime minister, Sir Robert Borden wrote to his wife from Paris of 'an anomalous position; a nation that is not a nation.'⁷⁴

The term 'Dominion' with the very clear difference from that of a 'colony' had in fact first been used for the 'Dominion of Canada' in 1867, before being adopted on a wider basis in 1907. In the years immediately after Versailles, Canada was particularly concerned, about differences with Britain; for example, at the 1921 Imperial Conference there were clashes between Canada and McKenzie King who 'promoted harmony with the United States' above everything else, with Lloyd George and Australia and New Zealand on the danger of

⁷² Robert Bothwell *The Penguin History of Canada* (Toronto : Penguin, 2006) p.318.

⁷³ Bond highlights an earlier less publicised British request in 1920 for 'Dominion troops to share the garrison duties in Mesopotamia met with firm refusal from all but New Zealand who offered one battalion.' Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) p.11.

⁷⁴ Norman Hillmer and J. L. Granatstein *From Empire to Umpire* (Toronto : Copp Clark Longman, 1994) p.81

offending Japan regarding the Anglo-Japanese Treaty;⁷⁵ and then there were the Chanak differences about possible commitments in Europe, in October 1922.

The growing independence of the Dominions, and specifically Canada, was then shown in the 'Halibut Treaty' which Canada signed in her own right with the United States in March 1923 regarding fishing rights in the Pacific, and therefore established the principle of a Dominion making its own international treaties without the involvement or approval of Britain. Although the 1923 Imperial Conference did not discuss the independence issue in detail, Hillmer and Granatstein emphasised that Canada influenced the conference resolution on foreign affairs and the role of the Dominions, and Britain had 'to regard the halibut treaty not as an aberration, but as a precedent.'⁷⁶

In asserting Canada's role on a wider stage, Hancock emphasised how in the deliberations of the League 'Canada had sought for the deletion or modification of the territorial guarantee contained in Article X of the Covenant; in 1923 the League Assembly voted an interpretative resolution...which took account the political and geographical circumstances of each state and laid it down that no Member should be under the obligation to engage in any act of war without the consent of its parliament, legislature, or other representative body.'⁷⁷

Canada's greater autonomy in foreign policy was analysed by McKercher, regarding the term of office of Sir Esme Howard, British Ambassador to Washington from 1924 to 1930, and his assistance in helping Canada establish its first permanent diplomatic mission in a foreign country, which was established in Washington in 1927.⁷⁸ Howard's previous experience in the Washington Embassy between 1908 and 1910, as counsellor for Canadian-American relationships, and the contacts he had established with McKenzie King, and others, ensured greater British sympathy for Canada.

⁷⁵ Bothwell *The Penguin History of Canada* p.319. Canada agreed to be part of British Empire Delegation at the Washington Conference, when the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was replaced by the wider treaties.

⁷⁶ Hillmer and Granatstein *From Empire to Umpire* p.95.

⁷⁷ W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* (London : Oxford University Press, 1937) Volume 1 p.258.

⁷⁸ B. J. C. McKercher, *A Greater and a Higher Ideal in Power, Personalities and Policies* Essays in honour of Donald Cameron Watt, edited by Fry M.G. (London : Frank Cass, 1992) p. 107-143.

More generally, the implicit changes in relationships with Britain at the time of Chanak and Lausanne was shown more clearly in 1925 in the non-involvement of the Dominions in the process in leading to Locarno, and the conference itself. In the Foreign Office *Documents*, there is correspondence in January 1925 from the colonial secretary, Leo Amery, to the governor general of Canada, quoting a telegram from Baldwin to his Dominion colleagues, indicating that there were ‘great difficulties in arranging for special meeting of the Imperial Conference at beginning of March 1925 to discuss problems arising out of Geneva Protocol.’⁷⁹

During the next few months it became clear to the British government that it was not practicable to include the Dominions in the commitments in Europe that would eventually be written into Locarno. In the Commons debate on 24 June 1925, on the ‘Proposed Security Pact’, Chamberlain was challenged, particularly by Percy Hurd MP, that he had not covered the crucial question about the position of the Dominions.⁸⁰ Chamberlain replied in a non-committal way when saying that:

the Dominions have been kept fully informed of all the proceedings of His Majesty’s Government. With the exception of New Zealand, which has expressed its complete confidence in the policy of His Majesty’s Government, and its readiness to leave the decision in their hands, they have not declared themselves. But no Dominion can be committed except by its own Government, acting with the consent of its own Parliament.⁸¹

Writing about what he called ‘the refusal’ of the Foreign Office to consult the Dominions over Locarno, Holland concluded that ‘it arose from a real anxiety that Dominion involvement in British policy-making on such a contentious issue would seriously restrict Britain’s ability to play the mediating role which the Versailles system had thrust upon her.’⁸² The September 1925 issue of *The Round Table* accepted that the Dominions ought not to be

⁷⁹ *Documents*, Volume XXVII, No.183, 15 January 1925, p.263; the letter was sent to all the Dominions.

⁸⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 185, 24 June 1925, column 1645. Sir Percy Hurd Conservative MP for Frome 1918-1923, and Devizes 1924-1945, perhaps better known as grandfather of Douglas Hurd MP for Mid-Oxfordshire / Witney 1974-1997 and foreign secretary 1989-1995.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* column 1667.

⁸² Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, p.47.

expected to sign any Rhineland guarantee pact because ‘it is not reasonable to expect peoples at the other end of the earth to commit themselves formally on a territorial question in Europe under conditions as they are today’ and that Britain ‘subject to consulting the Dominion Governments at every stage of the negotiations, must take the primary responsibility for deciding whether in the interests of her own security and the stability of Europe she should give such a guarantee.’⁸³

The British Government must have realised earlier in 1925 that they had to accept the reluctance of some of the Dominions to commit themselves to further involvement in European security. This would be true of both the traditional Dominions, and especially of the Irish Free State which had recently achieved Dominion status in contentious circumstances. There are no consultative documents published in the *Foreign Office Documents*, and it appears that the possible inclusion of the Dominions was quietly and conveniently left out of the discussions during the diplomatic exchanges during the summer. Article 9 of the Locarno document was drafted to say that ‘The present Treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government of such Dominion, or of India, signifies its acceptance,’ and none of those countries did sign then, or later.

During the Commons debate on 18 November on the conclusions at Locarno, Percy Hurd was again concerned regarding the lack of involvement of the Dominions and pointed out that the treaties would however be ‘signed on our behalf by the Sovereign as King of the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, and Emperor of India.’⁸⁴ Chamberlain just repeated that he deeply regretted ‘that the circumstances of the different Governments of the Empire made it impossible for His Majesty’s present advisers, before they entered into any negotiations with foreign countries, to have a conference with the Dominion Governments.’⁸⁵ The Imperial Conference which settled the status of the Dominions in 1926, and which is detailed in chapter seven, showed

⁸³ *The Round Table*, Volume 15, Number 60, September 1925, p.658.

⁸⁴ *Hansard*, Volume 188, 18 November 1925, column 479.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* column 519.

according to Hillmer and Granatstein, that ‘the radicals in the British Empire were no longer the Canadians, but the Irish and the South Africans who were pressing for decentralisation on a grand scale.’⁸⁶

The imperial challenges during these years led to some different reactions and policies from the different governments from 1919 to 1925, but there were no great differences between the political parties or governments, with all the British politicians assuming that a continuing British Empire was the most natural government for about a quarter of the world, and with India still being the jewel in the imperial crown. There were, however, surprisingly pragmatic views on particular developments, close to home in Ireland, but also with regard to Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Looking back from the twentieth first century, it is clear that even the imperial successes such as the Washington Conference, the Dominion developments, and the settlement in Ireland, involved symptoms of longer-term decline, and which would eventually have implications for India, the Middle East, and finally for the colonies. Despite these signs of imperial decline that can be seen in retrospect, Britain could and still did control its empire in 1925. Kennedy’s arguments about ‘Imperial Overstretch’⁸⁷ regarding how any empire can extend itself beyond its ability to maintain its political, economic and military commitments, is clearly relevant in retrospect to the British Empire during these years; as it is clear in retrospect that Britain’s empire was unsustainable, in the new political, economic and military situation after the Great War. However, looking at the situation in 1925, it was not unreasonable for the British politicians, to see the British Empire as the most successful surviving ongoing empire after both the Great War and the challenging years between Versailles and Locarno, with no obvious signs of unsustainability.

⁸⁶ Hillmer and Granatstein *From Empire to Umpire* p.100.

⁸⁷ Paul Kennedy *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London : Unwin Hyman, 1988).

Chapter Four: The Washington Naval Conference

The analysis of 'Global Challenges' has demonstrated both the size and complexity of the British Empire after the Great War, and the example of the development of the Dominions that was both a success for Britain, but also an indicator of a longer-term decline of the empire. The Washington Naval Conference was important because it found an expression of equality between Britain and the United States on the issue of battleships, which could be accepted both by Britain as the existing major power, and the United States as the up-and-coming major power, even though it can also be seen now as part of the British Empire's longer-term decline. The conference which lasted from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922, was a diplomatic landmark between Versailles and Locarno. It was a significant event in British imperial history, because the same government that established the widest definition of the empire in Paris, accepted that parity with the United States on the question of battleships. These conclusions were important to Australia and New Zealand, which relied on the Royal Navy and were fearful of the strength of Japan in the Pacific, in economic terms because of the financial pressures, and in domestic political terms because of the surprising lack of opposition even from the Diehard wing of the Conservative Party.

Usually referred to as the Washington Naval Conference, it was in fact a mixture of negotiations on naval armaments and on wider diplomatic issues. It was not held under the auspices of the League; it had its origins both in the accession of the new Republican President Harding in March 1921 and in the British Imperial Conference which met from June to August 1921.¹ The Washington Conference was then important because agreement was reached on limiting expenditure on capital ships, which included Britain's acceptance that it could no longer be the premier naval power on its own, and the United States' acceptance that at this stage it would not overtake Britain; moreover, the Anglo-

¹ John Darwin *The Empire Project : The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830-1970* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.366 described the navies in 1918, with Britain having 70 battleships, 120 cruisers and 463 destroyers, while the United States had 40 battleships, 35 cruisers and 131 destroyers.

Japanese Treaty, and the diplomatic irritant of whether it should be renewed or not, was replaced without great acrimony.

The conference covered a wide range of military and diplomatic issues that led to seven different treaties: the three most important were the Five Power 'Treaty for the Limitation of Armaments' limiting the naval forces of Britain, the United States, Japan, France and Italy, and defining the status quo with regard to the fortification of naval bases in the Pacific; then the diplomatic 'Four Power Pact' between the United States, Japan, Britain and France which also replaced the Anglo-Japanese Treaty; and finally the 'Nine Power Pact' regarding China, between the signatories to the Naval Treaty, China itself, and also the Netherlands, Portugal and Belgium,² which aimed according to the wording of the treaty 'to stabilize conditions in the Far East, to safeguard the rights and interests of China and to promote intercourse between China and other powers on basis of equality of opportunity.'³ France perhaps played a somewhat negative role in complicating the negotiations, and there were some critical statements about France in London, but Anglo-French rivalry was not a major issue.

Most historiography has concentrated on the detailed negotiations on the limitations on capital ships, including the scrapping of existing ships, a ten-year moratorium on new construction and the fixing of the relative size of fleets in the ratio of 5, 5, 3, 1.75 and 1.75 for the United States, Britain, Japan, France and Italy respectively; no agreement was reached on other surface ships, on submarines, auxiliary craft or land armaments. British objectives at the conference were a mixture of meeting the pressing financial pressures to achieve a balanced budget; maintaining the British imperial role including the guardianship of Australia, New Zealand and the other colonial territories in the Far East; managing the relationship with the United States, and the pressure from Canada to put the United States as a priority rather than Japan; and dealing with the continuing wish of the Foreign Office to extend the existing relationship with Japan, which had been renewed for ten years in the 1911 Anglo-Japanese Agreement. The British Empire

² The Netherlands, Portugal and Belgium were invited as colonial powers; Russia was not invited.

³ Harold and Margaret Sprout, *Towards a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene. 1918-1922* (Princeton, New Jersey: University Press, 1943). Appendix B, pp.302-317, gives the full text of the Washington Agreements, with this extract being on p.315.

delegation included Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India, but Smuts had asked Britain to look after South Africa's interests.

In an article in December 1920 on the future of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in *The Round Table*, the author spoke of British interests as being 'peace and security for British territory, good relations with all Far Eastern powers, the open door for trade with China, and the capable and progressive government in China itself' and that 'before the alliance is renewed, the whole Far Eastern question should be frankly and openly discussed.'⁴ A study of the *Documents* in 1921 show that they included technical discussion on whether the Anglo-Japanese Treaty would expire if it was not renewed, some lengthy posturing about the best process, and some exchanges on the nature of British interests in China.⁵

The diplomatic skirmishes before the conference included the suggestion that the American Ambassador had approved the idea of a preliminary conference in London.⁶ There was also some scepticism about American politicians, as when the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Auckland Geddes, commented to Curzon in London that 'no member of United States Government except Mr Hoover knows practically anything [*sic*] about the war, except what he read in newspapers while it was going on.'⁷ Curzon then said at the Imperial Conference that at the end of the Wilson era 'official relations with the American Government almost ceased to exist, and for ten months we practically did no business with America at all.'⁸ In September 1921, *The Round Table* had a special article on the American view, including that 'those Americans whose interests in British affairs consists mostly in preoccupation with the Irish Question'; that 'the Anglo-Japanese Alliance breeds mistrust and should be terminated' and wondered what feelings would be aroused in England by an American-Chinese alliance.⁹

A Foreign Office paper in October 1921 provided an analysis in advance of the Washington Conference on political, economic and racial issues in the Far East, and emphasized in a somewhat nostalgic tone that until the 'advent of Japan as the pivotal

⁴ *The Round Table*, Number 41, December 1920, p.95.

⁵ *Documents*, Volume XIV, No.399, 17 October 1921, p.428.

⁶ *Documents*, Volume XIV, No.343, 29 July 1921, p.356.

⁷ *Documents*, Volume XIV, No.348, 31 July 1921, p.362.

⁸ Minutes of the 5th meeting of Imperial Conference, 22 June 1921, NA/CAB 32/2.

⁹ *The Round Table*, Number 44, September 1921, pp.837, 843 and 845.

factor in the Far East, the supremacy of British Economic interests and naval power went unchallenged.’¹⁰ The Committee on Imperial Defence, which would have been the central point of preparations for the Washington Conference, did not meet between 28 July and 14 October when Churchill commented that he ‘trusted that the British delegates would not go to the conference, as if the British nation were unable to maintain at least an equality, and probably a superiority, in naval programmes to any other power.’¹¹

Although there were no obvious references in the Cabinet or C.I.D. papers to the position before 1914, the post-war leaders must have been very conscious of the costly Edwardian naval arms race with Germany. That naval competition with Germany had been very significant in military, diplomatic and financial terms. After 1918 the German naval challenge had disappeared, but the British politicians had now to react to the growth of the American military, especially their navy.

There was one major debate on the conference in the Commons, in the autumn of 1921, when a motion was approved on 4 November, without a division, that ‘this house warmly approves of the meeting of the International Conference at Washington and trusts that a supreme effort will be made to arrive at such a measure of agreement as will secure a substantial and progressive reduction of the crushing burden of armaments.’¹² The chairman of the parliamentary Labour Party, John Clynes, proposed the motion and set the tone by saying ‘we have been victorious in the War; how heavy are the liabilities and the burdens of victory, we in this country now know.’¹³ Sir Donald Maclean, leading for the Asquithian Liberals, stressed the costs that the country had to bear with his analysis that Britain was spending twenty per-cent of income tax on armaments and forty per-cent on the ongoing costs of war debts.¹⁴ During the long debate, it was emphasised that this was an opportunity to further the cause of peace, and that it was an initiative that was complementary to the work of the League and a way to involve the United States; there was concern, but understanding, that Lloyd George was not going to Washington because of the sensitivity of the Irish negotiations.

¹⁰ *Documents*, Volume XIV, No.404, 20 October 1921, p.434.

¹¹ Minutes of the 145th meeting of the CID, 14 October 1921, p.4, NA/CAB 2/3.

¹² *Hansard*, Volume 147, 4 November 1921, column 2093.

¹³ *Ibid.* column 2094.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* column 3001.

There were no backbench pressures either from the Diehard MPs on the needs of the empire or alternatively from Labour MPs on the effect on employment in their constituencies of cutbacks in the building of capital ships. The silence from Labour was more understandable because of their priority for peace, but the absence of comment from the Diehards was surprising. Any other references in the Commons to the conference between November and February were of a supportive or mundane nature. *The Times* had commented in an editorial before the November debate that ‘two subjects are of prime concern to Britain. One is close to home – Ireland...the other is very far away – the Far East.’¹⁵ After the November debate, the opening statements in Washington, and the day after Armistice Day, *The Times* headed its editorial with the title ‘The Dawn of Hope’ and talked only of the prospects for peace, with no reference to threats to the empire or to the issues regarding capital ships.¹⁶

Among the major factors in achieving success in Washington were the chairmanship of the American secretary of state, Charles Hughes, the American tactics of the ‘big bang’ initial presentation which set the tone and structure of the negotiations, and President Harding’s decision to include both Republican and Democratic Senate leaders.¹⁷ The American decision to go straight to a detailed solution on battleships was a very different process than that used at the various European conferences. There were various difficulties in the negotiations; for example, for the Japanese on keeping the *Matsu*, which had been financed by public subscription, for the French on accepting the capital ships ratio, and for the Americans themselves on the definition of naval fortifications in the Pacific, but these were all diplomatically managed.¹⁸

Balfour, as leader of the British Empire delegation, gave the initial response to Hughes’ presentation, and although he had not been briefed on the proposals in advance, gave both a statesmanlike initial response, and continuing measured support during the negotiations. Balfour, now aged 73, managed in a pragmatic way the military and diplomatic pressures

¹⁵ *The Times*, 1 November 1921.

¹⁶ *The Times*, 12 November 1921.

¹⁷ Charles Evans Hughes; as Republican presidential candidate lost narrowly to Woodrow Wilson in 1916; secretary of state 1921-1925; chief justice 1930-1941. *The Round Table*, Number 47, June 1922, p.493, admired the astuteness of President Harding in including both the party leaders in the American delegation.

¹⁸ The four ‘super-Hoods’ which had been authorised by the British cabinet in 1921, were to be cancelled within the Washington proposals.

with generally supportive messages from Lloyd George and the cabinet in London.¹⁹ On the major issues of the limits on capital ships, the 'ten-year holiday' on building, which was objected to by British naval experts in both London and Washington, and on helping to achieve a finessing of the existing Anglo-Japanese Treaty into the new Four Power Treaty, Balfour showed diplomatic skills which had been developed over forty years. He probably felt that Britain was not at the centre of the most difficult negotiation issues and could therefore give his support to Hughes. Churchill, acting as chair of the CID meeting, reacted to Hughes' opening proposals by saying that they were fair and honest.²⁰ At a further meeting in December, he made clear that the cabinet was sticking to the ten-year holiday in capital ship building, when Lord Beatty on behalf of the Navy, emphasized that 'without sea power the British Empire would cease to exist.'²¹

It was significant that the apparently minor issue of Wei-Hai-Wei, a leased naval outpost in China, led to some of the tensest exchanges between Balfour and the cabinet in London during the negotiations, and exposed issues about British attitudes to empire. Ironically it was Balfour who had signed the lease in 1898, when he was acting as the junior Foreign Office minister under his uncle, Lord Salisbury. The issue was highlighted before the conference because of the similarities, on a much smaller scale, to leases within the maritime province of Shantung, which the Japanese had taken from the Germans during the war, and which they had resolutely refused to give back to the Chinese in Paris, much to the annoyance of the Chinese and their American supporters.

Balfour was inclined to make a magnanimous gesture of giving up the lease on Wei-Hai-Wei, but Curzon wrote to Balfour on 24 November saying that the 'Colonial and Foreign Offices attach much greater value to retention of Wei-Hai-Wei than you appear disposed to do.'²² Churchill was amongst those leading the opposition, partly on the grounds of the precedent that would be set, given the dependence that Hong Kong Island had on the lease of the New Territories. However, a week later at the CID, with Curzon in the chair, it was agreed that the location had no strategic value, and could only be used as a sanatorium.

¹⁹ Even Curzon, who was not a great admirer of Balfour, said of his performance in Washington that it was 'a masterpiece of tact and intellectual superiority'. David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London: John Murray, 1994), p.503.

²⁰ Minutes of the 149th meeting of the CID, 14 November 1921, NA/CAB 2/3.

²¹ Minutes of the 154th meeting of the CID, 12 December 1921, NA/CAB 2/3.

²² *Documents*, Volume XIV, No.446, 24 November 1921, p.501.

Vice-Admiral Oliver, the second sea lord, added that it was not defensible, and that in the event of war with Japan, it should be evacuated at once.²³ Balfour's initiative regarding the surrendering of the lease on Wei-Hai-Wei, and the reluctance in London to give up a base, is an interesting example of a country dealing with the issues of imperial possessions, however obtained and however unimportant.²⁴

Sprout's analysis of British media reaction to the Washington settlement concludes that both the Conservative and Liberal papers were enthusiastic.²⁵ *The Times* talked about 'a great day for all time in the history of the world'²⁶ while the *Daily Telegraph* 'found cause for great satisfaction in the psychological and material results of the Conference.'²⁷ The *Daily Chronicle* and the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* were also very supportive of the results with the *Guardian* saying that 'the Conference has made a unique contribution to world peace.'²⁸ Looking in more detail at *The Times*, there was an earlier editorial in December,²⁹ headed 'A Triumph for Peace' regarding 'the unanimous adoption by the Washington Conference of the draft quadruple treaty,' and of more interest, a letter to the paper at the end of December from the president and chairman of the Navy League.³⁰ The letter gave fulsome praise to Balfour, and the results of Washington, and goes on to say 'that the primary object for which the Navy League exists remains unaltered – namely, to secure the adequate naval protection of British subjects and British commerce all the world over' but that 'the League cannot but believe that the Four Power Agreement will add strength to his aim and benefit all mankind.' Although the letter referred specifically to the Four Power Agreement, rather than the restriction on capital ships, the shape of the agreement restricting capital ships was very clear.

Sprout's analysis of the weekly and monthly press found that most specialist military, and especially naval, views accepted what might be seen as inevitable, such as the editor of *Brassey's Naval Annual* saying that as a result of the conference 'the trident of Neptune passes into the joint guardianship of the English-speaking peoples' and that 'while

²³ Minutes of the 152th meeting of the CID, 1 December 1921, NA/CAB 2/3.

²⁴ *Documents*, Volume XIV, No.580, 4 February 1922, p.636, lists Balfour's final conclusions on why Wei-Hai-Wei should be given up.

²⁵ Sprout, p.263.

²⁶ *The Times*, 2 February 1922, p. 11.

²⁷ *Daily Telegraph* quoted in *New York Times*, 5 February 1922, p.2.

²⁸ *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 10 February 1922, p.101.

²⁹ *The Times*, 12 December 1921.

³⁰ *The Times*, 31 December 1921.

Englishmen might view this result with misgiving, it was preferable to the expenditure of vast sums in a vain effort to out-build Japan and the United States.³¹ Much more critical were views about the cabinet's 'humiliating acquiescence in the arms proposals of the United States'³² or 'the bloodless surrender of the world's greatest Empire.'³³ The most vitriolic criticism came from retired Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wester-Wemyss; in an article published simultaneously in London and Paris he wrote that England's voluntary surrender was 'an act of renunciation unparalleled...in history' and that England's voice would 'no longer carry the same weight as heretofore' in the councils of the nations; Britain, he maintained, had won the late war on the sea only to lose it at the conference table – 'truly a paradoxical result of the greatest victory' in history.³⁴

It would have been expected that such views would be reflected in the Commons by the Diehard faction in the Conservative Party, but Morgan pointed out that they were generally unsuccessful in the Commons, and that although they had many aspirations, including that 'they would have revoked the naval disarmament agreed to in Washington,' they were not really a threat to the government.³⁵ He also pointed out the lack of leadership in the Diehards and maintained that the only person of stature was Joynson-Hicks who was to be a 'predictably conservative, puritanical, unimaginative Home Secretary' in Baldwin's Government from 1924 to 1929.³⁶ For whatever reasons, the Diehards did not provide the opposition that might have been expected, either to the principles of the conference, and to the agreements themselves.

The Commons did not sit from 10 November to 14 December, or from 19 December to 7 February, and when it was sitting, the only references to the conference were of a procedural or positive nature, such as when an MP requested the publication of the

³¹ *Fortnightly Review*, Volume 117, March 1922, p.396.

³² *Saturday Review*, Volume 133, 11 February 1922, p.137.

³³ *The English Review*, Volume 34, March 1922, p.260.

³⁴ Roslyn Baron Wester-Wemyss, 'Washington and After', *Nineteenth Century*, Volume 91, March 1922, p.405ff. Wester-Wemyss was an illegitimate great-grandson of William IV, a friend of the future George V as a naval cadet between 1879 and 1882, see Kenneth Rose, *King George V* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p.10, and allegedly still a friend of George. He had been first sea lord from 1917 to 1919, had been the chief naval representative in Paris, and was appointed admiral of the fleet and a baron when he retired in 1919.

³⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p251.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p.252.

agreements in a ‘popular form for record of achievement.’³⁷ During the six months after the conclusion of the Washington negotiations, the main discussions of naval matters were within the naval estimates debates in March and July when much of the discussion was around the effect of the cuts in government expenditure.³⁸ One MP, Lieutenant-Colonel Ashley, recognized the constraints on his imperial dreams when he said that he would ‘like to see the whole world red, because the British Government is the best form of Government ever invented by man. But we must come down to realities... (that the agreements) ...enabled us, who are financially poorer, to have a navy equal to that of the Americans, who have all the money in the world.’³⁹

The parliamentary procedures to ratify the Washington agreements did not start until 20 June in the Lords, when the government case was put by Lord Lee who, as first lord of the Admiralty, had been part of the Washington negotiating team, and 7 July in the Commons by Leo Amery, the parliamentary secretary to the Admiralty.⁴⁰ Writing his memoirs thirty years later, Amery was very concerned with the politics and figures dealing with overall government expenditure and the naval estimates, but did not discuss the rights and wrongs of the Washington Agreements.⁴¹ Some of the limited discussion in the Commons was taken up by the technical explanations of which parts of the agreements actually needed new legislation. There were no voting divisions, and there was a general mood of self-congratulation; the main regrets were that the naval agreements did not include submarines, and that there were no proposals on land armaments. There was again no attack on the agreements by the Diehards. The only serious dissent came from Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke, the MP for Devonport, and Major Sir Bertram Falle, MP for North Portsmouth, reflecting the concerns of their naval constituencies.⁴²

Historical views of the Washington Conference have generally been positive about the results of the conference, where it has been analysed as to what was realistically achievable at that time. Richardson, as one of the key secondary sources on progress on

³⁷ *Hansard*, Volume 151, 6 March 1922, column 836.

³⁸ *Hansard*, Volumes 152 and 156, 24 March 1922 and 18 July 1922.

³⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 152, 24 March 1922, column 842.

⁴⁰ *Hansard*, House of Lords Volume 50, 20 June 1922, column 979ff, and *Hansard*, Volume 156, 7 July 1922, columns 717ff.

⁴¹ L. S. Amery, *My Political Life: War and Peace 1914-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), pp.216-221.

⁴² *Hansard*, Volume 156, 7 July 1922, columns 745ff.

disarmament in the 1920s, starts from his conclusion about Versailles, that ‘the peace settlement of 1919 was not conducive to general disarmament since it failed to provide a security system that was acceptable or adequate for all nations.’⁴³ Leaving aside whether that was fair view of Versailles, his strongest criticisms are reserved for the second Baldwin Government, after 1925, which he summarises as ‘in essence, Britain’s policy was one of procrastination verging on duplicity,’ rather than the earlier years covered by this thesis, including the Washington Conference.⁴⁴

From a very different perspective, Gordon understandably discussed the negative effects of the agreements on the naval shipbuilding industry and the experienced skilled workforce. He emphasised that with the limited programmes permitted after Washington, much capacity did become derelict and many thousands of skilled jobs were lost. He added that the Admiralty help was very limited and ‘in 1924, a suggested addition to naval estimates of £5m. to offset unemployment in shipbuilding was cut by the Treasury to £1.8m. and not repeated.’⁴⁵ Maurer wrote on broader naval strategy that for Britain’s leaders, ‘parity in battle-fleet strength did not mean overall equity. Instead, they insisted that Britain’s special strategic requirements of defending a global empire meant that the Royal Navy must be superior in overall strength; in particular Britain required a superior force of cruisers.’⁴⁶ This however relates more to disarmament issues in the later 1920s and is somewhat similar to arguments about Locarno, in that it was far better to get agreement on battleships, or Germany’s western borders, even if cruisers or the eastern borders could not be addressed at that time, as long as the first agreement did not prejudice the chance of a second agreement.

Financial issues had clearly become more central to government priorities in 1921 than 1919, and were of key importance in establishing the attitude of the government to the Washington negotiations. The conference was a diplomatic success for Britain partly because it helped balance the national budget and removed the threat of international naval escalation, partly because the agreements were acceptable to the various

⁴³ Dick Richardson *The Evolution of British Disarmament Policy in the 1920s* (London : Pinter, 1989) p.4.

⁴⁴ Ibid p.v.

⁴⁵ G.A.H.Gordon *British Seapower and Procurement between the Wars* (Annapolis : Naval Institute Press, 1988) p.76-77.

⁴⁶ Erik Goldstein and John Maurer (eds.) *The Washington Conference 1921-22* (London : Frank Cass, 1995) p.277.

Dominions, and partly because it found a diplomatic solution on whether the Anglo-Japanese Treaty should be renewed. The equality between Britain and the United States in battleships was an imaginative solution which suited both countries at least in the short-term. The British political establishment, apart from some of the serving admirals, and ex-naval men like Wester-Wemyss, could accept the situation of no longer having the most powerful navy in the world, as long as it was not openly demoted. There was practically no reaction in the Commons from the Diehard wing of the Conservative Party; the atmosphere reflected the approach of the government, which seems to have been a mixture of keeping a low profile in case it was a disaster, some distrust in London about the American positions, and then relief that a balanced agreement was possible.

The Washington Conference was not, of course, applauded by all the interests on either side of the Atlantic; on the American political scene, Cordell Hull, a leading Democrat and future secretary of state, wrote in his autobiography that he ‘felt that the achievements of the conference were very partial, and that the United States had paid a heavy price compared with other countries.’⁴⁷ This might also be a compliment to Balfour, but more widely any considered assessment must be that the conference was a successful diplomatic negotiation, with compromise on all sides. Although in the long term it can be seen as a significant step in Britain’s long-term decline as a global imperial power, it would be reasonable in 1922 or 1925 to see the conference as a diplomatic success, which also reflected the hopes in the country for more permanent peace.

⁴⁷ Cordell Hull *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* Volume 1 (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1948) p.117.

Chapter Five: European Stability

The problems in Europe were more complex than those in the British Empire, and Britain was only one of the major powers involved. The Great War was not just a European war, and Versailles was not just a European settlement, but the majority of the fighting, and the most difficult problems facing the diplomats in Paris, were in Europe. Europe was very different after the war, with the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the changes in regimes in Russia and Germany, and the number of new states established in Central and Eastern Europe. It can be argued how successful the statesmen were in Paris, but it certainly left many problems unresolved. In analysing British policies towards Europe, concentration on France, Germany, and Poland, means that it is not possible to include, for example, analysis of Lloyd George's support for Greece, of Italy and the rise of Mussolini or of Spain after its neutrality in the war,

Analysis of the relationship with France concentrates on the background to the alliance, the experiences of being allies during the war, and then the difficult years between Versailles to Locarno with regard to what type of alliance was possible and what form of security guarantees Britain might give to France. The subject of relationships with Germany does not concentrate on the wartime enmity; rather it seeks to explain the growing antagonism in the years before 1914, when the post-war leaders grew up politically, and the difficulties of dealing with Germany after the war. Discussion of Poland is important because a major criticism of Locarno was that it did nothing to address the German/Polish border issues, and more generally because Britain was very reluctant to get involved in Eastern Europe. Before looking at relations with those countries, it is appropriate to look at the League of Nations, as the new international backcloth to the national arguments in Europe.

The League of Nations

One of the most profound decisions at the Paris Conference was the establishment of the League of Nations which came into existence on 1 January 1920. There had been no such permanent international organisation before the war for the solution of diplomatic problems between nations. This thesis is not concerned with an assessment of the League's first two decades and its failure to prevent the Second World War but the League's first six years did cover the period from Versailles to Locarno.

The League will always be associated with President Woodrow Wilson, partly because it would not have been created without his promotion of the idea in Paris, and partly because he could not then convince the American Senate or the American people that the United States should become a member. Mazower has emphasized that internationalism was already very active in American foreign policy thinking before the war, with much emphasis on lawyers and international arbitration.¹ Both President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 and his former secretary of state, Elihu Root, were recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1912, for their contributions to international peace; Root was a leading member of the American Society of International Law but unlike Root, Wilson wanted to keep the power with the politicians, rather than give it to lawyers.²

After Wilson had emphasised the League in his Fourteen Points speech in January 1918, the details were developed in Paris by the Commission that drafted the League Covenant. While Wilson was involved personally in the work of the Commission, Lloyd George and Clemenceau left it to others to be involved. The concept had been supported by various strands of British and Dominion political opinion,³ including Cecil and Smuts who were nominated by Lloyd George as his representatives on the Commission. The main powers had different agendas in the discussions; France saw the League as a vehicle for collective security while Britain and the Dominions saw the League as a potentially useful body for

¹ Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2012).

² Ibid. p.119.

³ The British League of Nations Society was founded in 1915 to support the ideas being discussed in various liberal circles internationally.

investigating and solving disputes.⁴ Wilson personally saw the establishment of a new form of international relationships as central to the objectives of the conference. It was tempting for politicians in Paris to support Wilson's aspirations for the League in exchange for Wilson's support on other matters. The final form of the Covenant, which was incorporated into the peace treaties with Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and Hungary, was closer to the British concept, and the League came into effect on 1 January 1920, when the Paris Conference formally ended.⁵

The establishment of the League was significant, even if the history of the League was later to be derided when it failed to solve the international problems of the 1930s, and even if Hankey could write in his diary in Paris that the British Empire was worth a thousand League of Nations,⁶ and Churchill said that the League was 'no substitute for the British fleet.'⁷ The failure of Wilson to get Senate approval for Versailles and the League was partly due to his tactics and his illness, and partly to domestic disquiet and a general American feeling for isolationism after the war. The Republican Party leaders took advantage of this and emphasised the danger of the League dragging the United States into European wars, and that Britain and her Dominions would have a total of six votes in the League Assembly. Wilson can still take credit for many of the achievements at Paris, even if he could not deliver his own country to Versailles and the League.

In looking at other contemporary views, *The Round Table* in March 1918, while supportive of the proposals for the League, expressed caution in saying that 'it is important, however, to realise clearly the essential limitations of the League of Nations idea. For the chief danger to it is that it should become discredited through its inability to live up to the expectations which have been formed of it'⁸ and six months later that 'it is in the first few years, perhaps in the first few months, after the war that the possibilities of international co-operation will be most severely tested.'⁹ British politicians said the

⁴ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements 1919-1925* (London: Pearson Longman, 2002), p.35.

⁵ The International Labour Organisation, which was established under the auspices of the League actually met before the end of 1919, before the League came into effect; it uniquely continued as a United Nations agency.

⁶ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (London: Collins, 1972), volume 2, p.80, diary 12 April 1919.

⁷ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers : The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London : John Murray, 2001) p.102.

⁸ *The Round Table*, Number 30, March 1918, p.224.

⁹ *The Round Table*, Number 32, September 1918, p.681.

right things in public, such as Curzon in early 1920 telling the Lords that ‘the League of Nations is an absolutely essential structure, not only as a guarantee and security against the repetition of the horrors which already, perhaps, are beginning to fade from our minds, but as a guarantee of the peaceful settlement which we are trying to set up.’¹⁰

Two other bodies were set up by the Allies in Paris, outside the League, to follow up issues from Versailles. The ‘Conference of Ambassadors of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers’ was also effective from January 1920, based in Paris, and consisting of the French foreign minister, the ambassadors from Britain, Italy and Japan, with the United States ambassador as an observer. This ongoing conference, which reflected continuity from the Paris Conference, was concerned with problems of interpretation or enforcement of the peace treaties which were not dealt with at top level Allied conferences. The other new body was a military ‘Inter-Allied Military Control Commission’ which had specific responsibilities to supervise German disarmament and conformity to the terms of Versailles.¹¹

The League had an annual assembly for all members each September, a small council which met quarterly, and a supporting secretariat; there were initially 42 members and this number rose to 54 by 1925.¹² There were some examples of success for the League in the years to 1925, including the resolution of the 1920 dispute between Finland and Sweden about the Åland Islands; the setting up of the International Refugee Organisation in 1921 under Fritjof Nansen; involvement in 1921 and 1922 in settling the German-Polish frontier in Upper Silesia; and the assistance given with regard to the so-called ‘Corfu Incident’ in 1923 between Greece and Italy. After the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the question regarding the status of the Mosul region, which affected Britain directly, was referred to the League and eventually awarded to Iraq, and this was accepted by Turkey in a treaty in 1926.

¹⁰ *Hansard*, House of Lords Volume 39, 10 February 1920, column 25.

¹¹ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed : European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005) p.430, confirms the Conference of Ambassadors dissolved the IMCC with effect January 1927.

¹² The first secretary general who served from 1920 to 1933 was a British diplomat, Sir James Drummond.

The detailed history of the League has been covered by a number of historians including Walters,¹³ Henig,¹⁴ Scott¹⁵ and Northedge.¹⁶ More recently Pedersen reviewed the historiography about the League; this did not greatly relate to British policies, but concentrates on an analysis of the achievements of the League in the different areas of its contribution to contemporary peacekeeping, its work in stabilizing new states and running the minorities protection and mandates systems, and its efforts to regulate cross-border trafficking.¹⁷ The analysis shows a slow and detailed development of the new organization, having some successes. In the years up to 1925 the peacekeeping roles often had to operate in parallel with the major powers' conferences either because some of the key powers were not members, or because some powers, primarily Britain and France, thought the matters were too important to be handed over to the League. Efforts to reinforce the Covenant of the League included Cecil's independent, and unsuccessful, initiative for a draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee in 1922¹⁸ and then importantly the drafting of the Geneva Protocol in 1924 which is discussed in the next chapter.¹⁹

One potentially difficult outcome from Versailles for Britain was that the League had a continuing involvement with the former German colonies and Ottoman territories which had been assigned under the concept of 'Mandates.' The three levels of mandates established, were category 'A' covering former Ottoman territories such as Syria and Lebanon for France, and Palestine, Transjordan and Mesopotamia for Britain; 'B' covering mainly countries in Africa such as Tanganyika; and 'C' covering mandates mainly in the Pacific but also South West Africa. While 'A' mandates reflected much more developed national institutions, 'C' mandates were hardly distinguishable from old-fashioned colonies. The term 'sacred trust' of civilized nations had been written into the League's covenant in respect of mandated territories, but the problems that Britain had in

¹³ F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

¹⁴ Ruth Henig, *The League of Nations* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1973).

¹⁵ George Scott, *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations* (London: Hutchison, 1973).

¹⁶ F. S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: its Life and Times 1920-1946* (Leicester: University Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Susan Pedersen, 'Review Essay: Back to the League of Nations', *American Historical Review*, Volume 112/4, October 2007, pp.1091-1116.

¹⁸ Cecil was later lord privy seal May 1923-January 1924; and chancellor of duchy of Lancaster November 1924-October 1927. Cecil was also the representative of South Africa to the League from 1920 to 1922.

¹⁹ Some countries including Canada were already apprehensive of the powers agreed at Versailles; as indicated above in the section on the Dominions.

mandated territories, particularly in the Middle East, were not the result of them being mandates, or because of interference from the League.²⁰

The overall attitude of the different British governments to the League during its initial six years can only be described as ambivalent. Walters, who had been deputy secretary-general of the League, wrote thirty years later, more specifically about the Lloyd George government, that 'The British Government was indifferent; a foreign policy based on the Covenant might appeal to the nation, but it had no charms for the sentimental adventurousness of Lloyd George or the old-fashioned imperialism of Curzon.'²¹ This was despite Curzon's positive message in 1920, but Curzon does not even appear in the indices of Henig or Northedge.²² Curzon did not get involved in the workings of the League, but Balfour was Britain's representative at the League from 1920 to 1922. Henig argued that the mood within British politics was that 'Britain stayed in the League not out of conviction but rather out of cowardice. The public believed in it, and to disavow it might be to court electoral disaster.'²³ She also saw Cecil being included in Conservative cabinets as a kind of guarantee to supporters of the League that the policy they so much desired was safe.

A contemporary foreign office analysis by Nicolson emphasises the difference between minor and major international issues when he wrote in that 'as a clearing-house for international disputes, the League of Nations is a wholly admirable institution. In many minor questions, it has already played a most useful part, but at present, and probably for many years, it will be unsafe to count upon its authority being sufficient to restrain a great power in any case in which that power considers its vital interests to be at stake.'²⁴

During the first six years of the League's existence, from its first meeting in January 1920, it is then possible to distinguish a number of features about the League and its relationship

²⁰ Susan Pedersen *The Guardians : the League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2015) described the work of William Rappard, Director of the Mandates section; this emphasises the effect of the absence of the United States from all the detailed implementation of the Versailles Treaty.

²¹ Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, p.116. The Cabinet Office dealt with all the League papers till the Foreign Office took over these responsibilities in November 1922.

²² There was also, for example, no reference to the League in the index of a biography of Prime Minister Bonar Law. R. J. Q. Adams, *Bonar Law* (London: John Murray, 1999).

²³ Henig, *The League of Nations*, p.15.

²⁴ *Documents*, Volume XXVII, No. 205, 20 February 1925, p.315.

with British foreign policy. The League was slowly getting established during these years even though the successes were mainly on the less important international problems. The British governments were ambivalent as to support for the League; they did not go far to help it develop but they did nothing to undermine its work and Balfour was a senior figure to attend the Geneva meetings. The key international conferences, including Washington, London and Locarno, took place outside the League's direct auspices either because Germany and America were not members or because Britain and/or France were determined to keep the main negotiations within their own control. The draft Geneva Protocol was both the League's major initiative and its major failure during these years.

France: Britain's Wartime Ally

A much quoted statement of Curzon was his observation in 1921 that

the Foreign Office is only too painfully aware that in almost every quarter of the globe, whether it be Silesia or Bavaria or Hungary or the Balkans – Morocco or Egypt or Turkey or Mesopotamia – the representatives of France are actively pursuing a policy which is either unfriendly to British interests or, if not that, is consecrated to the promotion of a French national interest which is inconsistent with ours.²⁵

This extract was from a much wider review of Anglo-French relations whose overall implications will be discussed below with regard to the Locarno negotiations. The French could be equally bitter on such matters as, for example, when Clemenceau remarked privately late in 1919 that 'England is the lost illusion of my life! Not a day passes that I do not receive from one of our agents abroad reports indicating veritable hostile acts. I had hoped that the fraternity of arms...would suppress the old traditional prejudices.'²⁶

Despite the signing of the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904, and the common sacrifices of the war, there was an underlying theme that Britain and France still had a degree of enmity

²⁵ *Documents*, Volume XVI, No.768, 28 December 1921, p.860.

²⁶ Andre François-Poncet, *de Versailles à Potsdam* (Paris: Flammarion, 1948), p.65.

and a lack of understanding, and that the closest neighbours were not closest friends.²⁷ One of the most perceptive quotes on the relationship between Britain and France was from D'Abernon, who commented in 1929 that there was 'No real hatred even when enemies – no real comradeship even when Allies.'²⁸ At the beginning of the Great War, the foreign minister Sir Edward Grey had said the appropriate diplomatic words in the Commons when he declared that 'for many years we have had a long-standing friendship with France...when the late Government made their agreement with France – the warm and cordial feeling resulting from the fact that these two nations, who had perpetual differences in the past, had cleared these differences.'²⁹ The war produced tensions between two allies with different languages, traditions and military systems; as Bell observed 'it is a notorious fact in the history of warfare that alliances are subject to many strains, and it is remarkable that in 1914-18 France and Britain held so well together at all these different levels.'³⁰

It would be assumed that the mutual sacrifices of the war would have bound the countries together, but the relative sacrifices may not have been appreciated by either the French or the British public. The estimated figures of those killed, missing or who died of wounds were for Britain 743,000 and for France 1,384,000, but it is further estimated that France also suffered 200,000 civilian deaths, 600,000 war widows, and 1,100,000 men left with permanent disabilities, 56,000 of them amputees.³¹ France lost 350,000 men in the battles at Verdun during 1916, and Kedward recorded that 'two thirds of those killed at the front were from rural occupations. Peasant communities were decimated. Arriving at a village *Monument aux Morts*, it is still a traveller's first reaction to find the number of names inscribed there unbelievable.'³²

²⁷ See also book titles such as Jonathan Fenby, *On the Brink: The Trouble with France* (London: Little Brown, 1998), Alastair Horne, *Friend or Foe: An Anglo-Saxon History of France* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), and P. M. H. Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940 Entente and Estrangement* (London: Longman, 1996).

²⁸ Lord D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace: Pages from the Diary of Viscount D'Abernon* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), Volume II, p.11.

²⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 65, 3 August 1914, column 1815.

³⁰ Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940*, p.64.

³¹ Benjamin F. Martin, *France and the Après Guerre 1918-1924* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), p.17.

³² Rod Kedward, *La Vie en Bleu: France and the French since 1900* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p.91.

Following the German offensive into Belgium and France in 1914, it was fortunate that Britain and France did not have to openly agree on war aims; Britain would have emphasised the restoration of Belgium's independence, the destruction of the German fleet, and the preservation or enhancement of the British Empire. France had the direct motivation to ensure the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine; this enabled the maximum national unity within the *Union Sacrée*, and the objective of the permanent destruction of Germany's military ability to threaten France. French fears of Germany were based on memories of 1870, on the unfavourable comparisons with Germany in respect of economic power, and on the projected growth of populations.

At the height of the battle of Verdun in 1916, *The Times* published a very sympathetic editorial entitled 'The War Spirit of France' in which it observed that:

the battle of Verdun has utterly disappointed the confident expectations of the German General staff and has completely upset their carefully elaborated plans for the spring and summer campaign...the whole combination has been shattered by the skill and the dogged valour of our glorious French Allies...we wish that it had been our good fortune to share with her the labours and the glory of this immortal feat of arms.³³

Editorials in *The Economist* in 1916 sometimes concentrated on the possibilities of peace, but a main article recognising the start of the Battle of the Somme said that 'the Germans launched five months ago that terrific assault on Verdun, which has been sustained by the French with such incomparable heroism.'³⁴

During the war, there was increasingly closer working by British and French politicians, generals and civil servants, which led Bell to conclude that 'by 1918 the two countries had built up from nothing the institutions and working habits of an alliance. In four years of suffering, death and destruction, it was no small achievement.'³⁵ Britain and France must have felt more appreciative of each other in October 1918 when the exchange of diplomatic notes between Germany and the United States about a possible armistice excluded them both. However, MacMillan wrote of the Paris Conference that France's allies became exasperated with what they saw as 'French intransigence, French greed and

³³ *The Times*, 20 May 1916.

³⁴ *The Economist*, 8 July 1916.

³⁵ Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940*, p.77.

French vindictiveness'³⁶ and Kedward concluded that the process which led to Versailles was 'a secret, difficult, and at times acrimonious compromise between the Allies, unable to agree on how to control the power of Germany.'³⁷ As the Allies were released from the wartime bonds of necessity, the different priorities of Britain and France reflected their wartime aims, as France was primarily concerned with punishing Germany, destroying Prussian militarism and ensuring that Germany could not invade France again, while Britain was most concerned with its own imperial position. However, France's secondary interests, for example in Greater Syria, touched a nerve of Britain's imperial interests and added to tensions regarding the main issues in Europe.

The Economist's correspondent based in Paris during the negotiations wrote, with an understanding of the French position, 'if, as seems possible, Russia and Germany form a solid block in the future, the financial situation of the Allies will be dangerous in the extreme, unless the Rhine frontier and the other necessary military safeguards are provided for,'³⁸ and just after the treaty was signed, the correspondent discussed the effect of the destruction of the fleet in Scapa Flow, the fact that France with all its financial concerns had actually seen those ships as a means of replenishing its own navy and that the German admiral who sunk the ships had forced the French to embark on a large shipbuilding programme which it could not afford.³⁹ Lloyd George said in the Commons on returning from Versailles, and with understanding of the history since 1870, 'France has a legitimate reason for feeling a nervous apprehension... France sees herself there with only the Rhine between her and this foe, which has trampled upon her ruthlessly and torn her flesh twice within living memory.'⁴⁰

Eventually the French Senate approved the treaty unanimously on 11 October,⁴¹ but Martin wrote that by the end of 1919, there was bitter resentment in France at the influence in Britain and the United States of Keynes' diatribe against Wilson, Clemenceau and Versailles in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, and to Lloyd

³⁶ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p.36.

³⁷ Kedward, *La Vie en Bleu*, p.97.

³⁸ *The Economist*, 26 April 1919.

³⁹ *The Economist*, 28 June 1919. These effects of Scapa Flow on France are not normally emphasised; Britain had acquired 1,653,000 tons of German merchant shipping. See Bell, *France and Britain: 1900-1940*, p.137.

⁴⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 117, 3 July 1919, column 1224.

⁴¹ France still had 900,000 men under arms in July 1920, and 850,000 a year later, of whom 100,000 were in Germany. J.F.V. Keiger *France and the World since 1870* (London : Arnold Hodder, 2001) p.55.

George's remarks to the Commons that an American refusal to conclude the defensive pact with France meant that Britain need not do so either.⁴²

John Maynard Keynes is automatically associated in history with the inter-war years because his great contribution to economic theory and practice, written during the years and normally referred to as 'Keynesian Economics' had such a major effect on economics and politics in the second half of the century. However, his major work, *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* was not published until 1936, and Peden emphasised that even 'when in 1924 Keynes first advocated public works as a cure for unemployment, he too believed that the nation's supply of capital was limited, and his proposals involved only a diversion of existing funds.'⁴³

However, Keynes' influence on the years from 1919 to 1925, was ironically not as an academic economist, but rather as a result of that book about Versailles entitled *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* published in December 1919.⁴⁴ This was within only six months of his resigning from the Treasury in June 1919, following his frustration at the leaders in Paris not adopting the more sympathetic attitudes to the German economic situation, which he was advocating in his role as chief treasury representative in the British delegation. He therefore took this opportunity of his new independence from the Treasury to write this extremely critical book of the Paris negotiations and the terms of Versailles, particularly on those 'economic consequences' for Germany and therefore for the international economic system. Keynes wrote of Clemenceau: 'he felt about France what Pericles felt of Athens – unique value in her, nothing else mattering' but his theory of politics was Bismarck's believing that from the position of France 'you must never negotiate with a German or conciliate him; you must dictate to him.'⁴⁵ Keynes' biographer commented that it was not surprising that reception to the book was least enthusiastic in Paris and he lists the various French critics.⁴⁶

⁴² Martin, *France and the Après Guerre*, p.44. Lloyd George said, 'If there should be such a possibility as the United States not ratifying that compact, undoubtedly we are free to reconsider our decision', *Hansard*, Volume 123, 18 December 1919, column 762.

⁴³ G.C. Peden *Keynes, the Treasury and British Economic Policy* (London : Macmillan, 1988) p.27.

⁴⁴ J.M.Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London : Macmillan, 1919).

⁴⁵ *Ibid* p.29.

⁴⁶ Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes Volume 1* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p.397.

There was no doubt that his book was highly successful commercially as by April 1920, as many as 18,500 copies had been sold in Britain, 70,000 in the United States and was then translated into eleven other languages including French, German, Russian, Japanese and Chinese. There was, not surprisingly, great enthusiasm about his book amongst his various colleagues in the Bloomsbury Group, and amongst his Liberal and Labour political friends. In reality the book was more like a modern political memoir where the politician re-expresses his views soon after a political or diplomatic event, and tends to reinforce the different attitudes taken by different parties at that event, such as the Paris Conference. Keynes' criticisms were in fact aimed at most of the participants in Paris, rather than only at France, but the book clearly had an effect on Franco-British relations.⁴⁷

However, although Keynes sold all those copies and the publication made him famous, it should not be assumed that his views were widespread in Britain. *The Times*, in a stinging editorial after the book was published, argued in a lengthy three column leading article, not only about Keynes' economic criticisms of the reparations policy but also more personally by asking 'how, unless his bias had been throughout akin to that of a conscientious objector, could he place the Allies persistently on the same moral level as Germany in regard to the war?'⁴⁸

Keynes' *Economic Consequences* was followed by the publication of his *A Revision of the Treaty* in 1922.⁴⁹ As Skidelsky pointed out, the main British criticisms were not about his economic arguments, but about priorities of the key statesmen, and he quoted R.W. Seton-Watson who said that 'the revision of political frontiers was an absolutely vital preliminary to the world of building a New Europe.'⁵⁰

In discussing the effects of the war, Keynes wrote of 'exaggeration by the French, and argued that 'not above 10 per cent of the area was effectively occupied by the enemy, and not above 4 per cent lay within the area of substantial devastation.'⁵¹ However, Martin was more convincing, when he emphasised that unlike Britain, a considerable proportion

⁴⁷ Gordon Wright argued that the British outlook 'was deeply influenced by John Maynard Keynes's best-selling book...which denounced the Versailles settlement as the product of France's unreasoning thirst for revenge.' Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times* (New York: Norton, 1981), p.332.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, editorial 5 January 1920; *The Spectator* was also critical of Keynes on 20 December 1919.

⁴⁹ J. M. Keynes *A Revision of the Treaty* (New York : Harcourt Brace, 1922).

⁵⁰ Skidelsky *John Maynard Keynes* p.394

⁵¹ J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p.60.

of French land had been fought over and occupied, and wrote that ‘although a mere 7 per cent of the nation’s land area, and inhabited by only 10% of the population, these Departments were an industrial giant, in 1913 accounting for 60% of French coal mining, 66% of textile production, and 55% of metallurgical production,’⁵² and Kent emphasised the same point when saying that the ten Departments were the centre of France’s iron, coal, woollen and cotton industries, with 20,000 factories partially or totally destroyed.⁵³ During the war, the French increased their national debt by 177 billion francs, equal to roughly two-thirds of its gross national product in 1913;⁵⁴ private capital in France was reduced by 25% during the war, of which two-thirds was the result of war damage and one-third the result of losses on investments in Russia in 1917.

Versailles was not expected to lead easily to reconciliation between the former combatants, but what was less predictable was that it led to considerable disharmony and bitterness between Britain and France, as they struggled with the problems of implementing the treaty. Dutton wrote that the major failing of Versailles was:

its inability to settle the question of Franco-German relations on other than a temporary basis. The war left Germany still potentially the strongest nation in Europe but embittered beneath the more punitive clauses of the peace settlement. By contrast France sought desperately to perpetuate the essentially artificial verdict of 1919, seeking the guarantees of her future security which only a major ally could ensure.⁵⁵

Some problems were inherent in the treaty, while others were in the failure to implement; Bennett emphasised that ‘Clemenceau had been persuaded to drop his demand to annex the west bank of the Rhine in exchange for an Anglo-American guarantee of French security, but the failure of the United States Senate to ratify the guarantee left France without the security of either the guarantee or a frontier along the Rhine.’⁵⁶ The Rhineland area between the River Rhine and the German western borders with France and Belgium, was occupied by the Allies with provisions that a small area near Cologne would be evacuated after five years, an area near Coblenz evacuated after ten years and the rest

⁵² Martin, *France and the Après Guerre*, p.18.

⁵³ Bruce Kent, *The Politics, Economics, and Diplomacy of Reparations 1918-1932* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.20.

⁵⁵ David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: Gentleman in Politics* (London: Ross Anderson, 1985), p.238.

⁵⁶ G. H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period 1919-1924* (London: St. Martin Press, 1995), p.13.

occupied for fifteen years.⁵⁷ Fortifications within the Rhineland were forbidden in perpetuity; and the land on the eastern bank of the Rhine was demilitarised to a distance of fifty kilometres. Lloyd George had been determined at Paris that the Rhineland should not become an 'Alsace-Lorraine in reverse' and create another ongoing problem in the heart of Western Europe.⁵⁸

The relationship between Britain and France was described by Sharp as there being the British dilemma as to whether there 'should there be an alliance with France in the hope of providing France with the stability and confidence to offer generous treatment to Germany, or would such an alliance only encourage French intransigence, secure in the knowledge of British support.'⁵⁹ Later in the twentieth century, British diplomats and historians could look back on two world wars when Britain and France had been allies against Germany, but in the 1920s Britain could look back on one war in that situation, and one when France and Germany fought the war of 1870-71 with no British involvement. Arthur Ponsonby, emphasised this point in the Commons in June 1925, saying that 'we have got to face the fact that this Pact...means that there can never be a dispute between France and Germany, there can never be a recurrence of this thousand-year-old quarrel between those great peoples, without Great Britain being brought in. The attitude we adopted in 1870 and 1871 will be impossible in future.'⁶⁰

Versailles may have been flawed, but the parties were dealing with a number of very difficult problems, and it was not surprising that there were major problems of implementation. French attitudes on the importance of reparations from Germany were even built into the national budget, which after the war was divided into a *budget ordinaire* for current expenses, a *budget extraordinaire* for expenses of an exceptional nature, and a *budget des dépenses récupérables* for war pensions, interest on loans and

⁵⁷ Paul W. Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (Manchester: University Press, 1998), p.38.

⁵⁸ Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940*, p.120. Lloyd George used the Alsace and Lorraine argument in different instances, as he also was reported to use it about Danzig and Poland. Bell is helpful on the problems of the Anglo-French Entente although his statement that 'Anglo-French cooperation survived the making of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. It was not to survive the problems of applying that Treaty in the 1920s' takes the conclusion too far in view of the achievements in 1924 and 1925. Bell, p132.

⁵⁹ Alan Sharp, 'Adapting to a New World? British Foreign Policy in the 1920s' in Gaynor Johnson (ed.), *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.83.

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 185, 24 June 1925, column 1604.

reconstruction costs, which it was assumed would be recovered from reparations.⁶¹ Although it is easy to produce quotes very critical of the French, it is more difficult to get below the surface and assess whether British politicians genuinely appreciated the problems. *The Times* appeared to show appreciation in wartime and peace, and *The Economist's* editorials in London were also not unsympathetic to the French point of view.

The discussions on the Channel Tunnel exemplified the suspicions of the Anglo-French relationship. The project had been talked about for over a hundred years, and in 1919 there was pressure in France to progress the project for strategic and commercial reasons. Lloyd George was initially enthusiastic, but nothing came from these proposals as the opponents in Britain including Hankey ensured that the project was not progressed; the most common argument against the project was that a tunnel would compromise British national security. In 1922 the rivalry with France was so great that the British air staff considered that war with France was the most likely threat to Britain, and the Foreign Office argued against the possibility of a tunnel because relations with France ‘never have been, are not, and probably never will be sufficiently stable and friendly to justify the construction ... it is almost certain that we shall have conflicts with France in the future.’⁶²

There were also continuing difficulties between Britain and France in the Middle East; for example, France negotiated secretly with Atatürk, and then Poincaré pulled the French forces out of Chanak in 1922 leaving the British on their own close to the Turkish forces. Ongoing suspicions on issues in the Middle East were clearly illustrated by Barr who, writing of Britain’s decision to make Amir Feisal King of Iraq, indicated that Britain’s decision to support a man who had just been kicked out of Syria quickly raised hopes of self-government elsewhere; as an angry former Secretary-General of *Comité de l’Asie Française* reacted, ‘Traitor and perjurer, assassin of French soldiers: this is the man whom our British Allies have just raised to the throne.’⁶³

⁶¹ William Laird Klein-Ahlbrandt, *The Burden of Victory: France, Britain and the Enforcement of the Versailles Peace 1919-1925* (London: University Press of America, 1995), p.103.

⁶² *Documents*, Volume XII, No.14, 1 May 1920, p.39.

⁶³ James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle for the Mastery of the Middle East* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011), p.127.

While the suspicions continued in many areas of diplomatic contact, the majority of the differences continued to relate to Franco-German disputes. The 1923 occupation of the Ruhr was not a sudden or surprising event.⁶⁴ Adamthwaite, commenting on the twenty-four conferences including Britain and France during three years said that they ‘often met without adequate preparation’ and he quoted Nicolson who wrote that the conclusions of the conferences ‘were inevitably inconclusive, intangible, specious, superficial and unreal.’⁶⁵ Bell was right when he said that ‘France had one overriding anxiety, security against a German danger, which the British thought was exaggerated or unreal. Britain had a series of problems which had little to do with Europe, and in which Germany only figure as part of the solution.’⁶⁶

On 11 January 1923 French and Belgian troops occupied the industrial Ruhr, which was adjacent to the Rhineland, to seize German industrial output because they believed that Germany had not met their commitments on reparations. The area occupied was only sixty miles deep and thirty miles wide, but covered eighty per-cent of German coal and steel production. However, for France the reparations were still not forthcoming, the occupation was costly and the franc was declining in value. The conference in London in December 1922 had led to a careful study of the differences between the two countries in *The Economist* on 6 January; there was a full explanation of the British and French positions and a balanced editorial in London wrote of the ‘steps we are prepared to take in helping to lift from France the nightmare of insecurity, but...we can have no part even to the extent of benevolent spectator in course of action which is likely to plunge Europe into deeper economic chaos.’⁶⁷

The Times, in a not unsympathetic editorial of 8 January 1923, also said that ‘the question of how best to induce a reluctant debtor to honour her signature has produced a profound

⁶⁴ Although the major occupation of the Ruhr was in 1923, there had been a short incursion in April 1920, when the French and Belgium forces seized Frankfurt and Darmstadt in reprisal for the Germany army entered the Ruhr to crush a communist uprising. See Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period*, p.17.

⁶⁵ Anthony Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France's Bid for Power in Europe 1918-1940* (London: Arnold, 1995), p.71.

⁶⁶ Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940*, p.134.

⁶⁷ *The Economist*, 6 January 1923. A week later the Paris correspondent gave a lengthy explanation of the problems of the French coal and steel industries, and why France should feel aggrieved owing to the destruction of her northern collieries during the war. He emphasised that a larger proportion of German furnaces were working because of that destruction and the lack of German reparations. *The Economist*, 13 January 1923.

difference of judgement between his principal creditors'...but dwelling on the common sacrifices of the war, ended by concluding that 'no political vicissitudes can change these symbols of unity, nor any statement destroy them.'⁶⁸ The occupation of the Ruhr took place during the Commons recess; Bonar Law, as the new prime minister, spoke in measured tones on the first day of the new session. He said he was disappointed with the French attitudes and quoted an anonymous source in Paris saying that 'many of us who are recommending the adoption of the proposal to occupy the Ruhr do not believe that we can get any money out of it, but we are satisfied that French public opinion will not accept the situation until this has been tried.'⁶⁹

Dutton, in emphasising Chamberlain's friendship with France, quoted him in the Commons in July 1924 saying that: 'we would make the maintenance of the Entente with France the cardinal object of our policy.'⁷⁰ However, a closer look at *Hansard* shows that Chamberlain, speaking from the opposition front bench regarding the meeting between the prime ministers at Chequers, actually spoke of three underlying principles for a future Conservative government:

we would accept and uphold the Versailles Treaty and its subsidiary or collateral Treaties...we would make the maintenance of the Entente with France the cardinal object of our policy...and...we should make the observance by Germany of her obligations a not less cardinal feature of our policy in foreign affairs, and in return, if Germany frankly accepted and loyally fulfilled the obligations, as now presented, we should be prepared to respect the integrity of Germany and to welcome her back into the comity of nations.'⁷¹

Herriot was still saying to MacDonald, at that Chequers meeting, that 'common efforts, sacrifices, deaths in war, all that will have been useless if Germany can once more have recourse to violence...can we not try to find a formula of guaranteeing against a danger of such a sort.'⁷² The various cabinet debates on policies towards France during these years, would have been very conscious of views like Herriot's, but their thoughts should have been consistent with that Curzon document of December 1921, when his argument

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 8 January 1923.

⁶⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 160, 13 February 1923, column 43.

⁷⁰ Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p.238.

⁷¹ *Hansard*, Volume 176, 14 July 1924, columns 109.

⁷² David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), p.340. There were no telephones at Chequers and a messenger had to bring messages from the switchboard in the nearby village if the message was 'urgent'! Kleine-Ahlbrandt, *The Burden of Victory* p.157.

was that any formal alliance between Britain and France was unacceptable to Britain apart from ‘a narrowly defined and easily intelligible object, such as the defence of the eastern frontier of France.’ Curzon had added that, in view of the mistrust between the two countries, there would be a fear ‘that a treaty of alliance with France may drag us into a war in which direct British interests are not involved.’⁷³ It was that narrowly defined commitment, that was acceptable to Chamberlain at Locarno, and which was consistent with the earlier analysis by Curzon.

Germany : Britain’s Wartime Enemy

While France had been both a nation state and an enemy of Britain for centuries, Germany had only become a unitary state in 1871 and there had been no wars involving all the European powers since 1815.⁷⁴ However, in the years before 1914 antagonism developed between Britain and Germany; this antagonism was despite the close family, but greatly fluctuating, relationships between the German and British descendants of Queen Victoria. Not only were Victoria’s mother and husband German, but six of her ten children married Germans, and the Kaiser attended the funeral of Edward VII in 1910 and the unveiling of the Queen Victoria Memorial in 1911, and his son attended the coronation of George V also in 1911. Kennedy asked the key question, ‘why was it that the British and German peoples, who had never fought each other and whose traditions of political co-operation were reinforced by dynastic, cultural, religious and economic ties, drifted steadily apart in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?’⁷⁵

The growing antagonism between Britain and Germany had three main strands: these being industrial, diplomatic and colonial, and military especially naval. Since 1871 Germany had developed dramatically as an industrial power both in its own right, and in comparison with Britain, and particularly in military-related industries such as chemicals, engineering and steel. In 1871 Germany’s steel output was half that of Britain, but by

⁷³ *Documents*, Volume XVI, No.768, 28 December 1921, p.865.

⁷⁴ The Crimean War 1854-1856 and the Franco-German War 1870-1871 had not involved all the great powers.

⁷⁵ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), p.464.

1914 it was twice the size of Britain. The rapidly rising population of Germany can also be seen in the comparison with Britain; from 1891 to 1911 Germany increased from 49 million to 65 million and Britain from 38 million to 45 million, with the effects of a changing birth rate and net migration.⁷⁶ On the diplomatic and colonial front, direct colonial rivalry with Germany was limited, because of Germany's late and relatively low-key entry into the colonial race; however, between 1884 and 1914 Germany had belatedly secured various possessions in Africa and the Pacific,⁷⁷ had antagonised British opinion by support for the Boers in the South African War, and had established German concessions in China, in a country where Britain's informal empire accounted for considerable British exports.⁷⁸

The main diplomatic incidents during the Edwardian years, where France and Germany, and to some extent Britain were involved, were with regard to Morocco.⁷⁹ In the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904 Britain had recognised Morocco as being within France's sphere of influence, but between 1905 and 1912 there were three periods of high international tension with Germany about influence in Morocco; initially leading to the Algeiras Conference in January 1906, then in 1908 the Franco-German Casablanca dispute, and particularly in 1911 with the *Agadir Crisis* when the German naval gunboat *Panther* was dispatched to the area, before the Treaty of Fez confirmed Morocco as a French protectorate. Although it was France involved in the disputes with Germany, it had a strong effect on British concerns and it was in the aftermath of Agadir that Lloyd George, speaking at the Mansion House dinner, ventured with Asquith's agreement into international affairs. The speech was significant partly because of Lloyd George's Gladstonian and 'pro-Boer' past and partly because of the Kaiser's vigorous protest about the speech; Lloyd George had said, following stressing the importance to Britain of world peace:

but if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.292.

⁷⁷ Most importantly, Tanganyika, South West Africa, Cameroun and Togoland in Africa, and German New Guinea, Nauru, German Samoa and the Marshall Islands in the Pacific.

⁷⁸ Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p.166.

⁷⁹ T.G. Otte *The Foreign Office Mind: the Making of British Foreign Policy 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) refers to British attitudes at this time, when commenting that 'there was a clear understanding of the nexus between the constellation among the powers in Europe, and Britain's ability to defend her overseas interests' p.399.

by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of Nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.⁸⁰

Lloyd George had in fact been on a lengthy visit to Germany in August 1908, just after his appointment as chancellor of the exchequer; his itinerary was predominantly concerned with learning, as a Liberal politician, about the well-established German policies on social reform, but Morgan emphasised that he also had discussions with the German vice-chancellor Hollweg and therefore came into direct contact with the 'aggressive, intransigent outlook of the Prussian Junkers and the military caste.'⁸¹

The growing military competition between Britain and Germany was seen most clearly in the naval rivalry where Britain saw itself as the undoubted world power; the rivalry was particularly shown in the building and operation of the new class of Dreadnought battleships with new turbine engines and ten twelve-inch guns. They were named after the first of these British battleships which was launched in 1906 and which started the naval arms race. Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz followed suit with new legislation in 1908 with a target of four new Dreadnought battleships or battle cruisers a year, which then led to demands in Britain for eight Dreadnoughts a year within the 1909 naval estimates.

Kennedy added the further issues of the relative proximity of Germany, compared not with France but with the other more distant growing powers of the United States and Japan, and the ideological differences seen in Britain between 'liberal' England and 'reactionary' Prussia. He concluded that:

the Anglo-German antagonism basically arose from the fact that in the half-century under scrutiny Germany grew out of its position as a cluster of insignificant states under insignificant princelings; and...that this growth gradually threatened to infringe perceived British interest, and that these economic shifts increased the nervousness of British decision-makers already concerned about saving the Empire.⁸²

⁸⁰ Mansion House speech, 21 July 1911.

⁸¹ Kenneth O. Morgan *Ages of Reform : Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left* (London : Tauris, 2011) p. 81.

⁸² Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p.466.

Despite the growing antagonisms, there were many continuing close links between Britain and Germany. Bostridge recently emphasised that until the last decade of the nineteenth century, and the arrival of Jews from Eastern Europe, Germans had formed the largest foreign community in Britain.⁸³ However, with the background of the antagonisms before 1914, and the costs in both human and economic terms of the war itself, feelings towards anything German were extreme between 1914 and 1918. Prince Louis of Battenberg, of German-Polish ancestry, but a British citizen since childhood, and who had risen to be first sea lord from 1912 to 1914, had to resign after a press campaign concentrating on his Germanic background. In 1917 following rising anti-German feeling, the British royal family replaced the historic German name of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha with the very British 'Windsor', and the Battenberg family finally agreed to renounce their German titles and adopted the surname of 'Mountbatten'.⁸⁴

Germany was, not surprisingly, the centre of the wrath of British politicians in the 1918 election; Germany had been the main enemy throughout the war, except for the Turks at the time of Gallipoli. The calls during the election to 'hang the Kaiser' and 'make Germany pay' were not limited to the more extreme candidates. In the debate on the King's Speech, in February 1919, the message to Lloyd George was clear. Brigadier General Page Croft, who was elected as a 'anti-German Protectionist' MP in 1910, could be expected to speak his mind from the coalition benches, and he asked for very clear indications of government policies upon the indemnities, the punishment of the criminals responsible for the war, the treatment of all enemy aliens, and the safeguarding of the interests of the Dominions in the conquered German colonies.⁸⁵ However, Ronald McNeill, a more mainstream government MP, who was to be under-secretary at the Foreign Office under Curzon and Chamberlain, talked of the destruction by Germans of the famous library at Louvain in Belgium, and even suggested that the splendid library at Leipzig should be taken from Germany to make good the loss at Louvain.⁸⁶

⁸³ German numbers stood at approximately 47,000 in 1914. Germans were the largest body of foreign students at Oxford University with thirty-four Germans matriculating in 1913-14 compared with four Frenchmen, and the majority of honorary doctorates in 1914 were for Germans or Austrians. Mark Bostridge, *The Fateful Year: England 1914* (London: Penguin, 2014), pp.123, 124.

⁸⁴ Another example was the forced resignation of Lord Haldane, from the cabinet in 1915, because of alleged German sympathies; he had led an unsuccessful diplomatic mission to Germany in 1912.

⁸⁵ *Hansard*, Volume 112, 11 February 1919, column 85.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* column 136.

Some thinking during and after the war did show greater ambivalence in British attitudes towards Germany; in a submission to the cabinet in 1916 General Robertson argued that 'if the balance of power in Europe is to be maintained it follows that the existence of a strong Central European Power is essential, and that such a state must be Teutonic, as a Slav nation...would always lean towards Russia...it would be in the interests of the British Empire to leave Germany reasonably strong on land, but to weaken her at sea.'⁸⁷ Some British politicians realised that they did not need to like the Germans in order to be very concerned about the government of Germany. Churchill sat in the Commons with Page Croft and McNeill, but had a very different view of the support that should be given to Germany. Churchill's antipathy to the new Bolshevik regime in Russia, and his attempts to support the White Russian armies, were apparently encouraged by a genuine fear that Germany could be heading in the same direction. Writing to Lloyd George in March 1920 he said that 'Russia has gone into ruin. But Germany may perhaps be saved...You ought to tell France that we will make a defensive alliance with her against Germany, if and only if she alters her treatment of Germany...you should send a great man to Berlin to help consolidate the anti-Sparticist anti-Ludendorff elements into a strong left centre block.'⁸⁸ Sharp said that 'British policies towards Germany in the early post-war years veered between exasperation at its failure to execute the terms of the treaty and suspicions that some of the treaty clauses were impractical, if not actually wrong, and worse still, that Britain might be at fault.'⁸⁹

The attitudes of the German people themselves in 1919 were against the background that Germany had not been invaded during the war, and that most Germans found it difficult to believe that they had actually lost the war. Only the Rhineland was occupied after the war, which was very different from the unconditional surrender and the four-power occupation of Germany in 1945. Doerr pointed out that Germany lost 13% of its land area as a result of Versailles, and 10% of its population.⁹⁰ There was also no 'Hitler' to blame

⁸⁷ Staff memo from General Robertson to the cabinet, 31 August 1916, NA/CAB 41/18/10.

⁸⁸ Letter from Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 March 1920, cited in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill* (London: Heinemann, 1975), Volume IV, p.384. Churchill was the most outspoken voice on such matters, but Milner was saying much earlier in December 1918 that the most certain way of 'Bolshevising Germany would be to put an excessive burden on her.' NA/CAB 23/42 for 24 December 1918.

⁸⁹ Sharp *Adapting to a New World? British Foreign Policies in the 1920s*, p.80; he also points out, p.79, the continuity of personnel in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the German state in general, in Weimar Republic.

⁹⁰ Doerr, *British Foreign Policy*, p.41.

for the defeat, and there were immediate revolutionary pressures which threatened the establishment of a democratic state. Clark described the chaotic state of Germany in 1919 including the general strike and bitter internal fighting in Berlin in March 1919 when 15,000 armed Communists and fellow travellers seized control of police stations and rail terminals, and the authorities led by the Social Democrats brought in 40,000 government and *Freikorps* troops, with twelve hundred people dead before the fighting ended.⁹¹

It was against this background that the Weimar Republic was formally established in August 1919, after the national humiliation when the treaty had been imposed on the German representatives at Versailles. Although British foreign policies were not directly affected by the internal problems of the Weimar Republic, an understanding of those problems is relevant to how Germany was perceived in Britain. Looking at the effects of Versailles, Hinden wrote that it suited all shades of political opinion to be obstructive about the execution of the terms:

Hence the effective avoidance of the clauses demanding action against the Kaiser and war criminals, the defiant German propaganda to disprove the charges of war guilt, the temporising of German governments over the demands to dismantle the paramilitary organisations, and the outright hostility shown towards the various Allied control commissions watching over the implementation of the peace times.⁹²

Another German historian, Peukert, referred to the nationalistic frenzy of 1914, the harsh treatment that Germany had itself imposed on Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the terms of the armistice conditions of November 1918 and the subsequent Treaty at Versailles, and finally that the Allies in Paris were also affected by wars continuing in Russia, Turkey and elsewhere.⁹³ Peukert's view was that the substantive conditions imposed by the peace settlement were severe, but they were bearable, and on the eastern borders comments that 'the drawing of the boundaries with Poland caused particular indignation among Germans. Given the mixed national pattern of settlement over a wide

⁹¹ Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p.626. The new republic had an inheritance from the war of 2 million Germans killed, 4.2 million wounded including 2.7 million permanently disabled and a total of 11 million former members of the military that amounted to 25% of the electorate; there were 533,000 war widows and 1,192,000 war orphans; 45,000 civil servants were employed administering the war related benefits. Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.275.

⁹² John Hinden, *The Weimar Republic* (London: Pearson Longman, 1996), p.22.

⁹³ Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill Wang, 1989), p.42.

area of contiguous territory, any German-Polish frontier was bound to leave a sizeable minority on the wrong side, but whereas this fact had worked in the Germans' favour under the frontiers of 1815 to 1918, this time the Poles were the beneficiaries.⁹⁴ Although the terms at Versailles were not surprising, after the nature of the war and the harsh German terms on Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the terms were seen as unacceptable to nearly all German citizens.

D'Abernon saw the defects of Versailles under three headings: that it was imposed on Germany under duress; that it based Germany's responsibilities for reparations on the assertion that Germany was responsible for the war; and finally that large units in central Europe were broken into a number of smaller states.⁹⁵ When D'Abernon presented his credentials to the German President Ebert in July 1920, he commented that the situation which faced the different governments was one of 'unexampled difficulty' and Ebert himself also used this specific expression in his reply.⁹⁶ Writing in 1929, D'Abernon argued that there had been two alternatives for Britain after Versailles:

Either Germany could be regarded as a permanent enemy, against whom the forces which were allied in the Great War must be kept ranged in serried ranks, armed cap-à-pie, and maintained in wakeful suspicion by a continuance of war propaganda and war recrimination, or an attempt had to be made to include Germany in the Western European group. This could only be achieved by diminishing mutual suspicion between ex-enemies through the establishment of efficient safeguards for reciprocal security.⁹⁷

Although the new republic had a sympathetic friend in the British Ambassador, it could not expect much sympathy from the different British governments which were still living with the consequences of the war, together with other domestic and international problems. Therefore, British politicians' attitudes to Germany in this period are likely to be seen in degrees of hostility, as opposed to the complexity of the 'love-hate' relationship with France. The greatest sympathy for Germany arose from the rigid anti-German attitude of French politicians like Clemenceau and Poincaré. Moreover, unlike the more regular contact of the British politicians with their French counterparts, direct contact

⁹⁴ Ibid. p.44.

⁹⁵ D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, Volume I, p.25.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.54.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.3.

with German politicians was much more limited, with Germany not being represented at most international conferences and not being a member of the League until 1926.⁹⁸

A detailed study of D'Abernon's contemporary diaries, and his later comments in 1929, give a good feel to the problems present in diplomatic circles from 1920 to 1926, whether or not his influence in Berlin or in London was as great as he suggested. He had regular diplomatic and social access to all the major figures in the Weimar Republic and when he visited England he recorded his discussions with the prime minister of the day; commenting on Curzon's death, he happens to mention that they were schoolboys together at Eton. The main impressions of his accounts are to reinforce both the difficulties of the problems, and the extreme antagonism between France and Germany. In discussing the Ruhr invasion, he stated that the French had a mixture of reasons for the action including the punishment of Germany for failure to pay reparations, the seeking of the best way of getting reparations paid, and the belief that force was the only way of ensuring advantage in military and economic spheres, with the only safe frontier being the Rhine.⁹⁹ Regarding German attitudes, he felt that the German government appreciated that England had a more reasonable attitude regarding reparations, and were also more helpful regarding Upper Silesia, if both were compared with France.

There are a number of conclusions relevant for the assessment of British foreign policies from the factors affecting British relationships with Germany. British politicians of the post-war era grew up, or their careers developed, in a pre-war era in which there was growing rivalry and antagonism with Germany. After the war, the direct political contacts between British and German politicians were limited by the inheritance of war, the many changes in the Weimar governments, Germany's exclusion from the League and other diplomatic conferences, and with British priorities being elsewhere. British attitudes to the Weimar Republic were not particularly hostile, but there was reaction to the extreme views of French politicians, concern that Germany could suffer from the instability which

⁹⁸ Germany's deep seated suspicion of the League, arising from the terms of Versailles, was also consistent with attempted German friendship with Russia.

⁹⁹ D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, Volume 2, p.1. Writing in retrospect he says that the German authorities were 'fatalistic', believing that 'France is militarily supreme, the ruling clique in France is bent on occupation... Why make sacrifices in a vain endeavour to avoid the inevitable?' p.2. He says in August 1923 that 'there is still grave apprehension here that the Ruhr occupation may end in the French marching to Berlin,' p.232, 13 August 1923. He also wrote on p.167 on 7 February 1923, quoting an American observer, that the only people who had ever been able to bring about German unity were Bismarck and Poincaré!

had led to revolution in Russia, and of course Britain was still dealing with the very recent enemy.

Poland within Eastern Europe

The choice of Poland is partly because of its size and significance within the new or re-established nations of Eastern Europe, but also because one of the major criticisms of Locarno has always been the failure of Chamberlain, Briand and Stresemann to deal with the German/Polish border issues. There were over twenty million people who could claim to be of Polish extraction in Eastern Europe in 1919, and there were great expectations for the Polish leaders who travelled to Paris. The old Polish state had disappeared as long ago as 1795, and by an additional treaty in 1798 the major powers had even decided to abolish the very name of Poland. The Polish territories and population had been spread between the Russian, Austrian and German Empires and were greatly affected by the war, both by the military casualties in the different imperial armies, but also in that all the different main belligerents accepted the concept of some form of independent Poland, and therefore tried to influence that situation by supporting different factions within the Polish political establishment.¹⁰⁰

After the armistice on 11 November, Jozef Pilsudski had been declared head of state of a new Polish Republic just three days later, but Davies emphasized that at that date there were 'no frontiers, no established territory, no government, no constitution, and no international recognition.'¹⁰¹ The inclusion by President Wilson of a pledge regarding Poland as one of his 'Fourteen Points' in January 1918, was specific in proposing 'a united, independent, and autonomous Poland, with free, unrestricted access to the sea.' This ensured that this was firmly on the agenda in Paris, and that the discussions about Poland were about the details of an independent Poland and its boundaries, and not about

¹⁰⁰ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.112, Davies estimated that total Polish military casualties were more than one million, with 450,000 dead, and that civilian casualties were much higher.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.115.

the principles of independence and access to the sea. Polish factions all agreed that access to the Baltic was essential; the important city of Danzig was located at the mouth of the Vistula River and while the population of the city was ninety per-cent German, the surrounding rural land was overwhelmingly Polish. Goldstein indicated that the Eastern European settlement was dominated by the principles of the *New Europe*; it was presumed that frontiers as closely as possible on ethnic lines would help assure a stable future.¹⁰²

In Paris the different Polish factions looked to both Wilson and Clemenceau for support. Wilson was committed by his clear statement in the Fourteen Points and this was supported by the arguments for self-determination, the number of Polish sympathizers in his delegation and the large number of Polish-American voters. Clemenceau's support for Poland was also clear, as he saw a new strong Polish state as a significant balance to Germany in Eastern Europe. The Poles did not look to Britain for sympathy; the pattern at Paris was for Lloyd George to be much more sympathetic to German concerns, for example on not allocating Danzig to Poland and in the discussions about the allocation of land in Silesia.¹⁰³ British attitudes can be argued to have been motivated by Britain wishing Germany to have the resources to ensure payment of reparations, and more generally for Britain to give support for the new democratic German republic and for stability in Central Europe. MacMillan in analysing the discussions about East Galicia in Paris emphasizes Lloyd George's concern about Poland's attempt to take the territory, and quotes Lloyd George's statement that 'if they let Poland get away with it, they would have yet another Alsace-Lorraine' in Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁴

Most of the Polish territory and the new frontiers were established by force of arms by the Poles themselves, quite separate from the diplomatic negotiations in Paris. The diplomats were only responsible for the Polish western borders with Germany, with the award of West Prussia and the 'Polish Corridor' to Poland, the decision to make Danzig a free city, the commitments to plebiscites in East Prussia and Upper Silesia, and the

¹⁰² Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning and the Paris Peace Conference 1916-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.230.

¹⁰³ Lloyd George's position on Poland in Paris was complicated by him receiving very different advice from different factions within the Foreign Office specialists; see Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, pp.259-262.

¹⁰⁴ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p.236. She on the same page told the story that 'the cream of Warsaw society, who had been invited to a dance at the British Ambassador's house just before Christmas in 1919, showed their contempt by eating the dinner but refusing to take to the dance floor!'

decision to divide the Cieszyn in July 1920.¹⁰⁵ The Polish/Soviet war which began in February 1919 eventually ended in the Treaty of Riga in March 1921; this established an eastern border for Poland considerably further east of the 'Curzon Line' discussed in Paris, and brought millions of Ukrainians, Belarussians and non-Polish Jews within the new Polish state.¹⁰⁶

Davies estimated that the Polish gains in territory, predominantly on its Eastern borders, meant that only two thirds of the inhabitants of the new Polish state had Polish as their first language, with 15% being Ukrainian, 9% Jews, 5% Byelorussians, and 2% Germans. The Germans were mainly prosperous middle classes in the Western provinces; the Ukrainians and Byelorussians were in the Eastern provinces and overwhelmingly the poor peasants.¹⁰⁷ It was only in March 1923 that the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris, acting as the executive organ of the Allied powers, finally recognised Poland's Eastern frontiers.

Other local conflicts in Eastern Europe, including one between Poland and Lithuania, left Poland intact, but isolated without obvious allies in the region. Both Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia resented Poland's resurgence; the capture of Wilno left a very resentful Lithuania, and Poland's traditional sympathy with the defeated Hungary inhibited both the development of links with Romania and any Polish adherence to France's 'Little Entente'.¹⁰⁸ This diplomatic isolation was at same time as domestically 'there were six different currencies in circulation; five regions maintained separate administrations; there were four languages of command in the Army; three legal codes; and two incompatible railway gauges.'¹⁰⁹

During the discussions of the Upper Silesian referendum in 1921, France was seen to support Polish interpretations of the results, with Britain generally being supportive of German concerns. The Franco-Polish Treaty of February 1921 established a formal

¹⁰⁵ In August 1918 Balfour had suggested that they 'leave the difficult question of the western frontier of Poland open to deal with when we knew to what extent we had beaten Germany.' War cabinet minutes, 13 August 1918, NA/CB 23/7

¹⁰⁶ The Curzon Line was agreed by the Supreme Council in December 1919; the various Polish factions had no intention of accepting this, although it was to be the approximate eastern border for Poland after 1945.

¹⁰⁷ Davies *Heart of Europe* p.118.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid p.121.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.120.

relationship between the two countries in respect of 'Political, Economic and Military Co-operation.' According to D'Abernon, in personal discussions he had with the prime minister in March 1921, Lloyd George said of the discussions in Paris that it was 'entirely due to England that Germany has a chance of getting the whole or part of Upper Silesia. President Wilson was anxious to give the whole country to Poland, so were the French: the English were alone in resisting.'¹¹⁰

Lloyd George's attitude to Poland in 1919 and 1920 was examined by Davies as long ago as 1971, against a background of historical arguments ranging from that Lloyd George was attempting to save Poland from the Russian Bolsheviks, to alternatively that he was hostile to Poland and was always trying to limit Poland's ambitions. Davies went into great detail on the issues, but he did put this matter into context by pointing out that the Lloyd George file on Poland for the eighteen months contained only two documents; moreover, Poland only appeared once in the cabinet minutes between January and June 1920, and that was only in context of trade links with Russia.¹¹¹ Davies summarises the Polish views on Lloyd George when he wrote that:

There can be few countries in which Lloyd George was more heartily vilified than Poland. His actions at the Paris Peace Conference were deplored; his supposed opinions about the Poles being 'children who gave trouble', his confession that he had never heard of Cieszyn, the *lèse-majesté* of his remarks about Paderewski, were widely reported in Poland, where, it is no exaggeration to say, Lloyd George was in 1919-20 usually regarded as a public enemy.¹¹²

There was clearly an extremely volatile situation in Eastern Europe following the disintegration of the three imperial empires, the decisions at Versailles, the military fluctuations of the Russian civil war and the establishment of the new Polish state. In looking at the different British views, there was a general policy of not getting involved in Eastern Europe, especially after Churchill's policies towards Russia. It was difficult to conclude what was 'in Britain's interest' with the developments in Eastern Europe, especially with the concerns about the stability of democratic governments in Germany,

¹¹⁰ D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, Volume 1, p.139, 22 March 1921.

¹¹¹ Norman Davies, 'Lloyd George and Poland 1919-20' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 6/3, 1971, pp.132-154.

¹¹² *Ibid.* p.132.

and there was no discussion in Britain as to what would be in the interest of Poland itself. The key decision of the 'Ten Year Rule' in August 1919, assumed no European war in the next ten years, and there was certainly no reference or thought about Eastern Europe or Poland.¹¹³

The discussions about Poland in Paris illustrated the problems of moving from large multi-ethnic empires to smaller national states which have to establish frontiers and accommodate minorities. The importance of academics in general, and historians in particular, to these diplomatic negotiations were outlined by Goldstein; this included the academics in the *New Europe* group during the war, the most prominent of whom was R. Seton-Watson, with his particular interest in minority populations in the Habsburg Empire.¹¹⁴ Between the Upper Silesian plebiscite in 1921, and the discussions leading to Locarno in 1925, Poland did not feature prominently in British foreign policy issues. Curzon commented in his presentation to the Imperial Conference in 1923 that 'the Polish question, which took up a good deal of my time in 1921, has ceased to be acute.'¹¹⁵ Goldstein summarised Britain's attitude to Eastern Europe when he wrote that Britain was 'far less concerned about Eastern Europe, where stability was the key. Britain preferred Eastern Europe to remain stable and thereby avoid causing consequential disturbances to the Western European balance.'¹¹⁶

Chamberlain's famous words about Poland and the British grenadier were written in a private letter, about policy towards France, to Lord Crewe the British ambassador in Paris in February 1925, when he said that

a form of guarantee which is so general that we undertake exactly the same obligations in defence, shall I say of the Polish corridor (for which no

¹¹³ Hankey visiting Poland in 1920 wrote that we should trust 'to the mutual dislike of Germany and Russia, and the gradual improvement of our relations with both parties, to prevent a military combination against us. In the meanwhile, we should as far as possible avoid military responsibilities in Europe, and devote our main attention to developments of our overseas trade.' *Documents*, Volume XI, Number 381, 3 August 1920, p.434.

¹¹⁴ Erik Goldstein 'The Round Table and the New Europe', *The Round Table*, Number 346, April 1998, pp.177-189.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the Imperial Conference, 5th October 1923, p.3, NA/CAB 32/9. The annual reference indices in Hansard for subjects discussed in the Commons show a decline in headings for Poland from 66 in 1920, to 16 in 1921, 5 in 1922, 11 in 1923, and 3 in both 1924 and 1925. *Hansard*, from 1920 to 1925.

¹¹⁶ Erik Goldstein 'The British Official Mind and Europe' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Volume 8/3 1997 p.165.

British Government ever will or ever can risk the bones of a British Grenadier) as we extend to those international arrangements or conditions on which, as our history shows, our national existence depends, is a guarantee so wide and general that it carries no conviction whatever and gives no sense of security to those who are concerned in our action.¹¹⁷

Poland has been seen as the major loser at Locarno in that Germany made no movement towards accepting its eastern borders which had been imposed at Versailles, that France's eastern guarantees now had to be seen in the context of the Locarno agreements and that Britain was not prepared to get involved in Eastern Europe. Dutton quoted personal correspondence from Chamberlain in December 1925 saying that 'with time and patience we might yet see some similar settlement as Locarno *mutatis mutandis* for the countries of Central Europe', but that 'the initiative must come from themselves.'¹¹⁸ Opening the Commons debate on the Locarno Agreements on 18 November 1925, Chamberlain identified criticisms that the agreements at Locarno had not taken steps towards general disarmament, that they had not secured Russia's membership of the League and that they had not included the Dominions. However, neither he, nor his critics, emphasised the position of Poland; in fact, Chamberlain went out of his way to emphasise that, contrary to any speculation to that effect in Locarno, the Polish government had not been a major obstacle to the agreements, and that any such stories were not correct and that 'some injustice was done to Poland and the distinguished representative of Poland in that conference' in this respect.¹¹⁹

Any analysis of Poland during these years shows the complexities of the Polish situation, with its many antagonistic neighbours and newly defined borders, and it is not surprising that Britain was anxious not to get involved. It was reasonable for Chamberlain to decide not to include German-Polish border issues in the Locarno discussions, because they would have been impossible to solve at that time. This would have been a positive reason for this type of inaction, rather than Britain's unwillingness to get involved in attempts to find solutions.

¹¹⁷ *Documents*, Volume XXVII, No. 200 16 February 1925, p.303.

¹¹⁸ Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p.260.

¹¹⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 188, 18 November 1925, columns 419-542, and specifically column 424.

The examples of France, Germany and Poland show the difficulties that Britain and the other powers faced in Europe in the years after Versailles. Franco-German problems were the most immediate, and 1923 started with the further complication of the French occupation of the Ruhr. In the next chapter, a chronological study of events becomes more appropriate in the run-up to the London and Locarno Conferences.

Chapter Six: The European Road to Locarno: 1923-1925

Events in 1923 and 1924 eventually led to the Treaties of Locarno, also known as the 'Locarno Pact,' which were formally signed in London on 1 December 1925. The treaties, which could be described as the four treaties, or the seven treaties, were:

- A treaty of mutual guarantee of the Franco-German and the Belgian-German frontiers, with Britain and Italy as guarantors;
- German-Belgian and German-French arbitration treaties;
- German-Czechoslovak and German-Polish arbitration treaties;
- Treaties of mutual assistance, in the event of German aggression, between France and Poland, and between France and Czechoslovakia.

The contemporary euphoria about the treaties was excessive, but the diplomatic situation had greatly improved compared with the situation at the fall of Lloyd George in October 1922, or at most times during 1923, where any assessment would indicate a clear deterioration since Versailles. 1923 had seen the French-led occupation of the Ruhr, the German hyper-inflation and consequent unemployment, and the extremist political threats to the Weimar Republic. However, later in 1923, there were indications of possible recovery and stability, with Stresemann's economic and political actions in Germany, and the growing diplomatic effort that was going to lead to the Dawes Report and the London Conference in 1924. The statesmen then met under the auspices of the League in Geneva in September, and Macdonald played a leading role in drafting the Protocol; the election, however, brought Baldwin back to power, and his government was not going to support the Protocol, even if a final decision was not taken until the spring of 1925.

In this chapter, the chronology of events is more relevant, during the two years from the difficulties of 1923 through to the Locarno Conference in October 1925. The analysis of the problems of the Anglo-French relationship, and the various views expressed in the Commons, shows the context of the achievements at both the London and the Locarno Conferences. After looking at the details of Locarno, there is some further reference to historiography and to why Locarno should be seen positively when viewed from the circumstances of 1925.

1923: A Turning Point?

The year of 1923 marked both the nadir of the problems in Western Europe and also, in retrospect, showed the first signs of possible optimism, which can then be traced through to the success of the London and Locarno Conferences. The centre of both the pessimism, and at the end of the year, possible optimism, was in Germany. Attempts to resolve the post-Versailles issues, particularly on German reparations, had not been successful during the Lloyd George government, despite all the diplomatic effort. The three years from the fall of Lloyd George in October 1922 to Locarno involved four different British governments. Domestically, 1923 was a year when politicians were getting used to both a return to traditional party politics after the wartime and peacetime coalitions, and to the growth of the Labour Party in the elections of November 1922 and December 1923. To assess the temperature of the political feeling towards foreign affairs, just before and during 1923, it is helpful to look in detail at the debate in the Commons on the King's speech in November 1922, and to a further debate on a second King's speech in February 1923.¹ The analysis gives a wide view of feelings in the Commons, with the lengthy debates before and after the Ruhr invasion in January 1923.

The most significant theme from the debate in November 1922 was the concentration on the domestic problems of unemployment and the possible solutions. Of the six days allocated for debate, two days were allocated to issues concerning unemployment, but even on the day allocated to foreign policy, the linkages to unemployment were strong. To take examples from each of the main parties, William Pringle, a Liberal but a fierce critic of Lloyd George, said that 'if the Treaty of Versailles in respect of reparation is not fundamentally revised, there will be no economic recovery of Europe, there will be no revival of trade in this country, and there will be no diminution of unemployment.'² Aubrey Herbert, a back-bench Conservative, criticised policy in the Middle East and emphasised that the Allies had 'partitioned the whole of the Ottoman Empire...and the Ottoman Empire was an economic unit...when you divide economic units you destroy

¹ There was a King's speech for the first session of the 32nd Parliament and a full six-day debate, in November 1922; this session was adjourned on 15 December and a new King's speech for a second session led to a further six-day debate from 13 February, which was after the occupation of the Ruhr.

² *Hansard*, Volume 159, 23 November 1922, column 150. Asquithian Liberal MP for Penistone, Yorkshire.

the possibility of economic life.’³ Edmund Morel, for Labour, said that reparations had destroyed trade, and that ‘apart from restoration of the devastated areas in France, upon which we are all agreed, we ought to wipe out reparations altogether as a mere cash transaction.’⁴

There was therefore a heavy concentration on the difficulties of unemployment; Pringle had referred to the new depression and he emphasised that the current rate of unemployment was about 15% compared with a pre-war average of 5%; he talked of the burdens of war aggravated by all the failures, and follies and blunders of the peace. During discussions on foreign policy issues, there was wide support for the process with Greece and Turkey that would lead to the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, considerable debate about links with Russia raised by Labour MPs who saw this as both politically important but also as possible help to the unemployment situation, and then back to the economy and unemployment including criticisms of reparations along the lines that reparations were in practice self-defeating for Britain’s economy. The unemployment levels in these years may not seem unreasonable in retrospect, especially compared with the levels that were to follow in the 1930s, but contemporary views were very critical, bearing in mind both the comparison with the pre-war levels, and the expectations raised by the sacrifices in the war.

The problems about German reparations had not been resolved during 1922, despite much effort, including attempts at the Genoa Conference. Poincaré as France’s prime minister had then appeared to be looking for the next occasion when Germany failed to make a reparations payment, and this situation arose on 26 December 1922, when the Reparations Commission resolved by three to one, with Britain dissenting, that Germany had not made required deliveries of timber. Germany was therefore technically in default and subject to sanctions under the terms of Versailles, but the matter had to be referred to the four governments, who met in Paris on 2 January. France, Belgium and Italy accepted the Commission’s report and agreed with France’s proposal to occupy the Ruhr which went ahead on 11 January; the majority of troops were French, but with some Belgian troops and some Italian technical support. Bonar Law voted against the proposal in Paris, and he

³ *Hansard*, Volume 159, 23 November 1922, column 189. Conservative MP for Yeovil.

⁴ *Ibid.* column 221. As Labour candidate, Morel had just defeated Churchill for one of two seats in Dundee.

disassociated Britain from the occupation. To occupy the Ruhr, the French and Belgians moved their troops through, or from, the Rhineland which was the area, under the terms of Versailles, where Germany was 'forbidden to maintain or construct any fortification either on the left bank of the Rhine, or on the right bank to the west of a line drawn fifty kilometres to the east of the Rhine.' It was this arrangement, linked to the proposed, but unfulfilled, United States and British guarantees to France, which had persuaded France to compromise in 1919 rather than press for an independent Rhineland state.

The Ruhr Crisis has been considered in depth in a number of modern secondary sources; for example, it is arguable that Poincaré and the French Government were not as intransigent as traditionally seen, especially in the months up to September 1923,⁵ or that the whole episode did irreparable damage to the new Weimar Republic.⁶ However, in the context of this thesis, these considerations only re-emphasise the difficulties of the European diplomatic climate in 1923, and the achievements in 1924 and 1925.

The Commons debate in February 1923 was to some extent a repeat of the November debate, but the invasion of the Ruhr brought more immediacy to the foreign policy discussions. The fourth and fifth days involved critical amendments from the Labour Party and the Liberal Party respectively, which the government voted down by 277 to 180 and then by 305 to 196. It was relatively easy for the opposition parties to put down and argue critical amendments, given the gravity of the situation, with the Labour amendment⁷ giving more emphasis on economics and unemployment, and the Liberal one⁸ more on international diplomacy; both of the amendments were critical of the Conservative Government, but much more critical of the French Government.⁹

What is more interesting is the government's arguments against the amendments, given the strength of the government's own feelings against the French action. On the 16 February Baldwin spoke of a common approach to security and economics but that 'we are more likely to attain those ends by maintaining our friendship with an old ally, in the

⁵ For example, in arguments in Elspeth O'Riordan 'British Policy and the Ruhr Crisis 1922-1924' in *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Volume 15 2/2004 pp. 221-251.

⁶ Conan Fischer *The Ruhr Crisis 1923-1924* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷ *Hansard*, Volume 160, 16 February 1922, column 495.

⁸ *Ibid.* column 665.

⁹ See discussion of those amendments, in chapter two above, on party political differences.

hope and belief that the time may come when our services as mediator and helper may be possible, and may be effective,’¹⁰ and the next day Bonar Law summing up the debate said that ‘though we differed from the French, we did not think that either our own interests or the interests of the world would be helped by taking up an attitude antagonistic of the French.’¹¹ A different view was taken by Smuts at the Imperial Conference in 1923 when he said that ‘this may be loyalty to France, but it is not loyalty to Europe, or the great ideals for which we fought the Great War.’¹²

While the emphasis in the Commons in the debate on the February King’s Speech was on domestic economics and unemployment, concerns which were surely reflected in the electorate, the Foreign Office had to deal with the continuing problems in Europe and particularly with reparations. At least with the new team of Bonar Law and Curzon there was reversion to the normal Foreign Office role, as Bonar Law did not replicate Lloyd George’s attempts to lead foreign policies from Downing Street. However, the Foreign and Colonial Offices had to manage the situation, while trying to recover from the effects of Chanak on relationships with both France and with the Dominions, and the new diplomatic crisis in the Ruhr.¹³

The Ruhr crisis was just one part of the range of major problems that the German governments had to deal with during 1923. D’Abernon saw the years that he was in Berlin from 1920 to 1926 split into two distinct periods; 1920 to 1923 being characterised by extreme international demands for reparations, repeated conferences, sanctions and short-lived settlements, giving a picture of confusion and exasperation; and a more positive period starting later in 1923.¹⁴ D’Abernon’s diary entry on the last day of 1923 brings home the breadth of the problems that the Weimar Republic had faced during 1923 when he emphasises not only the Ruhr Invasion but the communist rising in Saxony and

¹⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 160, 16 February 1923, column 554.

¹¹ *Hansard*, Volume 160, 19 February 1923, column 766.

¹² Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Imperial Conference, 8 October 1923 p.7, NA/CAB 32/2.

¹³ The next debate on a King’s Speech was to be in January 1924, *Hansard*, Volume 169; this was unusual because Baldwin had stayed in office after losing his majority in December 1923. The Government then fell and Ramsay MacDonald’s minority Labour government was sworn in after the debate on the King’s Speech, which started on 15 January, and which concluded with a vote of censure on 21 January.

¹⁴ Lord D’Abernon, *Ambassador of Peace: Pages from the Diary of Viscount D’Abernon* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), Volume 1, p.26. German governments were mainly from the centre-left from 1919 to 1923 and from the centre-right from 1924 to 1929, but the possible significance of this is a different matter.

Thuringia, Hitler's attempted putsch in Bavaria, the unprecedented financial crisis, and the separatist movement in the Rhineland.¹⁵

The major threats to German democracy from the occupation of the Ruhr, the hyper-inflation and the activities of extremists on the right and left, are relevant to the analysis of British foreign policies, in showing the extremity of the problems facing Germany, and therefore Western Europe in general during 1923. The threats were separate in origin, but were clearly interlinked and fed off each other. The passive resistance in the Ruhr and the imposition of French military rule contributed to a very confrontational situation; apart from the economic effects, the Ruhr crisis led to 188,000 people being expelled from their homes, and 132 Germans killed.¹⁶ Carr indicated that the 'Ruhr occupation was the last straw for the German economy...the new burden of paying wages and salaries to workers and officials on strike in the Ruhr proved too great.'¹⁷ The political agitation on the extreme left and right took advantage of the problems in the Ruhr and in the economy.

The conference of Imperial prime ministers in October 1923, like the previous one in 1921, is again interesting more for its review of world affairs than for any decisions. While Baldwin had replaced Lloyd George as chairman, Curzon continued his key role, as the foreign secretary, as the prime reviewer of the international scene. At the opening meeting, Baldwin said that the 1921 meeting had ended on a moderately hopeful note but that 'contemplating Europe as we do today and comparing with what we had hoped for three or four years ago, we can find little to encourage us in our labours.'¹⁸ The experienced Smuts, tried to draw an optimistic note, saying that 'two years ago...the state of affairs in Ireland was about as black as anything which exists in Europe today; but the difficulties were resolutely grappled with and as a result we have the Irish Free State represented here at this great conference.'¹⁹ It is doubtful that the British governments would have drawn the same optimism from the example of Ireland, and the Irish delegation was an uncomfortable member of the imperial conference.

¹⁵ Ibid. Volume II, p.290, 31 December 1923.

¹⁶ Paul W. Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (Manchester: University Press, 1998), p.141.

¹⁷ William Carr, *A History of Germany 1815-1990* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p.273. The value of the mark to the American dollar had moved from 4:1 in 1914, to 9:1 at the end of the war, and then to 19:1 in January 1922, 18,000:1 in January 1923 and with hyperinflation in 1923 to four billion to one by November. Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements 1919-1925* (London: Pearson Longman, 2002), p.83.

¹⁸ Minutes of 1st meeting of the Imperial Conference, 1 October 1923 pp.2 and 7, NA/CAB 32/9.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.10.

When Curzon gave his overview of problems, he was positive about the Washington and Lausanne Conferences but looking across Europe he felt that with the exception of Scandinavia, there was scarcely a single state where there was not some unrest, and where British interests were not actively and sometimes perilously involved.²⁰ Speaking just after the ending of German passive resistance in the Ruhr, Curzon was scathing both of the French, who in their dealing with Britain had an almost chronic lack of loyalty, though he admitted their ‘blood is still boiling with the memories of the war’ and of the Germans who were ‘burning with an unslaked wrath and thinking of future revenge’ and were ‘absolute children in diplomacy...they make every conceivable blunder in dealings with France.’²¹ Although Curzon was pleased with the ending of passive resistance he was not sure if the parties were any nearer a settlement. At a subsequent meeting it was agreed to support an approach to the United States regarding involvement in the mooted ‘Expert Committee on Reparations.’²²

Nineteen Twenty-Three is unlikely to feature strongly in the historiography of either British domestic politics or for the developments in British imperial history. The debt agreement with the United States in January was important but initially split the new Conservative cabinet, and the significance of the Halibut Treaty between Canada and the United States was part of a longer-term evolvement of the Dominions. The positive signs for foreign policies in 1923 would have been difficult to appreciate at the time, but in retrospect they were the resolution of the issues between Greece and Turkey at Lausanne,²³ the ending of German passive resistance in the Ruhr and the successful establishment of the *Rentenmark*, both the German examples under the very brief premiership of Stresemann. In addition to these developments, following a meeting with Baldwin in Paris in September, Poincaré surprisingly agreed in October to that idea of a

²⁰ Minutes of 3rd meeting of the Imperial Conference, 5 October 1923 p.2, NA/CAB 32/9.

²¹ Ibid. pp.4 and 26.

²² Minutes of 13th meeting of the Imperial Conference, 29 October p.6, NA/CAB 32/9. The final meeting of the conference was held on 8 November.

²³ Although Lausanne was correctly seen as a diplomatic success, and the conclusion of a major problem outstanding from Versailles and Sèvres, it should be recorded that from a Greek point of view it was the confirmation of a national disaster for Britain’s wartime ally. Greece had a larger territory in 1923 than before 1912, but it was still a bitter settlement for Greece. As a diplomatic achievement, it did not leave any obvious problems except for Cyprus, which was not included in the discussions, and ongoing issues regarding the Kurds.

committee of economic experts including those from the United States, which was to lead to the Dawes Report in 1924.²⁴

1924 : The Dawes Report, and the London and Geneva Conferences:

After all the problems in 1923, the successful London Conference in July and August 1924, which adopted the Dawes Report, had its origins in that meeting of experts in January 1924 which specifically included the United States experts who were officially acting in their individual capacities, but were strongly supported informally by Washington. The Americans were led by the Chicago banker and former director of the budget, General Charles Dawes, who had served in Paris in 1918 on the Military Board of Allied Supply and had good contacts amongst the Allies, as well as being appointed a *Commander of the Legion of Honor*.²⁵ Also on the American team were the Californian banker, Henry Robinson, and Owen Young, the Chairman of General Electric, who was to play the central role with the 'Young Plan' in 1929, in the lead up to the Hague Conference.

Despite the diplomatic isolation of the United States after Versailles, the Americans had already shown at the Washington Conference that they were prepared to be fully involved on international problems, outside the League, when they thought it was in the interests of the United States. After the political and economic in Europe, and especially Germany, in 1923, they now felt that it was in the United States' interest to bring its influence to bring economic, and hopefully greater political stability. Therefore in completely different circumstances, the Washington Conference, the Dawes Report and the London Conference all showed the Americans willingness to take diplomatic initiatives even in a period of isolationism.

²⁴ But Anne Orde, after studying all the background papers, concludes that 'Poincaré had done his best to limit their field of enquiry' *British Policy and European Reconstruction after the First World War* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.245.

²⁵ Dawes received the Nobel Peace Prize with Chamberlain in 1925; Briand and Stresemann had to wait until 1926.

The principles arising out of the Dawes Committee, which led to the 'Dawes Report' in April, and which were incorporated as the 'Dawes Plan' into the agreements at the London Conference in August, were a complex mixture of economic and political national commitments. In essence, the United States made a large financial loan to Germany to assist her recovery and restore confidence; France accepted that it could not repeat its military occupation of the Ruhr, and that there should be a programme that would lead to the evacuation of French troops by August 1925; and finally there was a rescheduling of the previously agreed total of Germany's reparation payments.

In economic terms, the Dawes Plan set the German reparation payments at one billion marks in the first year, and then increasing annually to two and a half billion marks after five years. Various mechanisms were proposed and agreed on matters such as how the reparations would be collected and paid, and it was agreed that Germany would receive loans amounting to eight hundred million marks, mainly from the United States. Detailed accounts such as in Steiner and Marquand showed the complexity of the financial problems, mainly dealt with by the American and European experts.²⁶ The Dawes Plan did have the intended positive effect on the German economy, in respect of confidence, the currency and a fall in unemployment.

In diplomatic terms the main challenge was to get France's acceptance that there must be an agreed timetable for its troops to be withdrawn from the Ruhr, and that there must be an ongoing acceptance of Germany as an equal, as for example in membership of the League, and not as the defeated power at Versailles. The problems were best exemplified by the tortuous negotiations that MacDonald, who was both prime-minister and foreign secretary, had initially with Poincaré and then with Herriott from May 1924.²⁷

In the widest political terms, the economic and diplomatic progress made between January and August 1924, provided the basis for the signing of the London Agreement. These efforts ensured greater stability than had been possible at the Paris Conference in

²⁶ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.240-248 and David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), pp.333-351.

²⁷ Carolyn J. Kitching 'Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary : the Dual Role of James Ramsey MacDonald in 1924' *Review of International Studies* Volume 37/3 2011 pp. 1402-22, correctly emphasises MacDonald's achievements in 1924, which should not be diminished with any domestic reputation established after 1931.

1919, and provided the basis that made the Locarno Agreements possible, a year later. As Schuker emphasised, 'the political distinctions between the victors and the vanquished in the First World War did not disappear at once...but the London Conference marked a decisive turning point.'²⁸ The Dawes Plan was a necessary condition for the wider diplomatic success in 1925, but it was not a sufficient condition, as much more diplomatic work remained to be done.

The analysis by Cohrs emphasised the 1924-1925 Anglo-American context in the longer-term developments of the twentieth century, and closely links the twin successes of the Dawes financial settlement at the London Conference in 1924 and the Locarno diplomatic settlement of 1925.²⁹ However, he over-emphasises the American influence in 1925, and he does not analyse the change of key diplomatic players between 1924 and 1925, particularly Chamberlain for MacDonald and Briand for Herriot. The Dawes Report was indeed a necessary condition for diplomatic success in 1925, but it was not a sufficient condition. Therefore, Cohrs' emphasis on the Dawes Report as being the key backcloth to Locarno, is not pursued in this thesis; firstly, although he makes a good case for Dawes being that necessary pre-condition before Locarno, it does not appear to have overlapped with the 1925 diplomatic negotiations, and secondly contemporary thinking appears to have been linked much more specifically with the discussions of alternatives to the Geneva Protocol. It may also be significant that although Steiner listed Cohrs' work, she did not appear to discuss his arguments.

While the American contribution was therefore vital to the Dawes Report and the London Conference, they were not involved a month later at the next international conference in Geneva as it was held under the auspices of the League. Although the resulting Geneva Protocol was never ratified, it is nevertheless important because much of the discussion on European security during 1925, leading to Locarno, took place against the backcloth of the Protocol. MacDonald, as both prime minister and foreign secretary, was one of those leaders who agreed to the draft Protocol, which would have committed the countries both to a disarmament conference in 1925, and crucially to be bound by a new system of

²⁸ Stephen Schuker *The End of French Dominance in Europe* (North Carolina : University Press, 1976) p.383.

²⁹ Patrick O. Cohrs, 'The First Real Peace Settlements after the First World War', *Contemporary European History*, Volume 12/1, 2003, pp.1-31.

arbitration to settle international disputes, in addition to the existing powers and procedures of the League. MacDonald was a most unusual figure in the meetings of statesmen of the ex-Allies, in that he had been consistently opposed to the Great War. MacDonald's approach in Geneva was in line with the Labour Party general election manifesto in 1923 which said that the party stood 'for a policy of international co-operation through a strengthened and enlarged League of Nations; the settlement of disputes by conciliation and judicial arbitration...and disarmament.' MacDonald had appointed Lord Parmoor as his minister in charge of League affairs; he was a distinguished lawyer, a former Conservative MP, and a founder member of the British League of Nations Society in 1915. Walters was however very critical of him, writing that he 'was a man of ability, an eminent lawyer, devoted to good causes. But his views on foreign affairs and on the working of the League were those of religious pacifism,' and he added that 'the officials of the Foreign Office, with few exceptions, continued to treat the work of the League as having no essential connexion with the practical business of their profession.'³⁰

Marquand described in detail MacDonald's visit to Geneva, and the first speech by a British prime minister to the assembly of the League, on 4 September 1924.³¹ MacDonald emphasised that 'what was needed was a system of arbitration to remove grievances and unmask would-be aggressors, an early but well-prepared disarmament conference and, above all, a steady extension of the influence and authority of the League.' After various difficulties, a joint Anglo-French resolution was adopted two days later, and after three weeks of detailed negotiations, a draft agreement, designed to prevent aggressive war, and known as the Geneva Protocol, was unanimously recommended on 2 October to all League members. In view of the later discussions on the difficulties of arbitration, it should be clear that MacDonald was up-front on the principle of arbitration, and it was not something that just arose in the detailed negotiations.

The provisional agreement on the Protocol was overtaken in Britain by the dissolution of parliament and the general election on 29 October, which was won by the Conservative Party with a clear overall majority, with Conservatives winning 415 seats, Labour 152

³⁰ F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p.264.

³¹ Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, pp.352-356.

and the Liberals 42. There was also a substantial break from the past at the Foreign Office; significantly Baldwin did not reappoint Curzon,³² who had been foreign secretary from 1919 to 1923 under Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin himself, and instead appointed Chamberlain.³³ Apart from being in the Commons, Chamberlain's appointment was important for a number of reasons: it helped to reunite the Conservative party as Chamberlain had been the most prominent member of the pro-coalition MPs during the last months of the Lloyd George government, Chamberlain also did not have the imperial and allegedly Francophobe background of Curzon, and finally he brought to the Foreign Office a very experienced politician who could look afresh at long-standing problems.

MacDonald's commitment to the Protocol was not accepted by the new Conservative government who set up a review by the CID; the new committee was chaired by Curzon, presumably as some compensation for no longer being foreign secretary. The role of the CID was demonstrated in the minutes of 4 December 1924. While it looked at the Protocol from all the political and military aspects, it is clear that the most contentious issue was that of compulsory arbitration. Curzon summarised the main objections as being the probable impartiality and competence of the court, the risks and perils that may be involved in this system, the attitude which the Dominions would be expected to take up towards it, and finally the unwillingness of both the British and the Dominion parliaments to accept the decisions of such a court. He gave recent examples, on which Britain would not agree to arbitration, as the position in Egypt, the status of the Sudan, and the provisions to be adopted for the security of the Suez Canal.³⁴ Much of 1924 could be seen as a period of uncertainty between the crises in Europe in 1923 and what turned out to be the achievements at Locarno in 1925. Ironically, the success of the London Conference in August and the apparent failure of the Protocol after September 1924 both contributed in their different ways to the achievements of 1925.

³² Michael Hughes *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World* (London : Routledge, 2005) p.35 writing about Curzon said 'it is certainly possible to mount a convincing defence of British foreign policy during the years following the Paris Peace Conference, on the grounds that Britain contributed to the maintenance of peace in Europe, while simultaneously managing to defend its imperial interests across the globe.'

³³ Ronald McNeill MP was reappointed to the position of under-secretary of state at the Foreign Office, which he had held from 1922 to 1923; McNeill was appointed Baron Cushendun in 1927.

³⁴ Minutes of the 190th meeting of the CID, 4 December 1924, NA/CAB 2/3. Unusually, Baldwin was present, while Chamberlain was absent on urgent diplomatic business. The attendance list shows the full range of senior cabinet ministers and chiefs of staff. Clearly departments gave high priority to the meeting, and assumed that conclusions would be ratified by the cabinet.

The Twelve Months Leading to Locarno

The Treaties of Locarno in 1925, which superseded the defunct Geneva Protocol, did represent a watershed in the diplomatic relationships in Western Europe.³⁵ Although Churchill was very much in the anti-Chamberlain faction of the cabinet in the spring of 1925, he wrote in 1929 that 'the Treaty of Locarno can be regarded as the old world counterpart of the Treaty of Washington...twin pyramids of peace, rising solid and unshakable on either side of the Atlantic.'³⁶ Although the treaties can be seen as only partly successful, as they only dealt with German relations with its western neighbours, and they were to be swept away in the 1930s, they represented a considerable achievement at the time. The thirteen months from the drafting of the Protocol in September 1924 and the agreements at Locarno in October 1925 were particularly interesting in respect of the changing or non-changing British diplomatic attitudes towards France, and also in the content and feelings of the Commons discussions on foreign and imperial affairs in the first year of the second Baldwin government.

The treaties were the culmination of diplomatic processes resulting from pressures in Britain, France and Germany. Chamberlain was the new British foreign secretary, Briand succeeded Herriot as French foreign minister in April 1925 and Stresemann was already looking for a solution to Germany's outstanding problems, at least on Germany's western borders. In December 1924, the Allied Conference of Ambassadors accepted the French view that Germany's record on disarmament justified delay in the evacuation of the allied troops from the Cologne area of the Rhineland due in January 1925. However, the German diplomatic initiative, initiated with the British on 20 January and with the French in February, eventually led after months of diplomatic activity to the conference in Locarno in October. This was a classic example of diplomatic manoeuvring, including full use of the ambassadors in key countries regarding the possible reaction to different

³⁵ Although only one of the agreements related to the Rhineland, they were often referred to as the 'Rhineland Pact'. Chamberlain indicated, *Hansard*, Volume 185, 24 June 1925, column 1657, the additional complications that language brings to diplomacy when he pointed out that the French for 'covenant' was 'pacte'!

³⁶ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (London: Macmillan, 1941), p.459.

ideas. The British understood that the major work needed to be done with the French; looking back in January 1926, the Foreign Office official Sterndale Bennett put the French problem into perspective by saying of 1925 that ‘the first five months were spent in overcoming the suspicions of the French Government and in dissuading them from postulating conditions which might have wrecked the chances of agreement with Germany or which might have made impossible the co-operation of his Majesty’s Government.’³⁷ There was still work to be done in Locarno, but it was a very different process to that of either the Paris or the Washington Conferences.

While the position of the Dominions was diplomatically left on one side, and the demise of the Protocol agreed but not announced, the British relationship with France was central to British thinking early in 1925. Narizny concluded that in the years after Versailles ‘with the empire secure, the Conservatives no longer had any compelling reason to make further sacrifices on behalf of the French. They were willing to guarantee the border between France and Germany, but they refused to enter into any other diplomatic commitments.’³⁸ Nicolson opened the discussion in February 1925 in a Foreign Office document, which Chamberlain forwarded to the cabinet, and argued why a pact involving guarantees to France could now be in Britain’s interest.³⁹ He reminded his colleagues that the proposed 1919 guarantee to France from the United States and Britain, had only very reluctantly been accepted by France as the alternative to the considerable pressures from Foch and others that German territory must be restricted to the east of the Rhine. Nicolson accepted that it had been, and still was, difficult for France to agree to evacuate the Rhineland, without some compensating security guarantee.

If Nicolson’s analysis was correct, it must be clarified why Britain had been so reluctant to enter a pact with France, after the United States and then Britain withdrew from the proposed Versailles. A document written by Hankey, a central figure and a leading sceptic, in January 1925, partly explains why he and many others had previously objected to a pact with France before 1925. Hankey wrote that he had objected to a pact because it could have led to the guarantee being invoked when France was not threatened, it could

³⁷ *Documents*, Series 1A, No.1, 10 January 1926, p.12.

³⁸ Kevin Narizny ‘The Political Economy of Alignment : Great Britain’s Commitments to Europe 1905-39’ *International Security* Volume 27/4 Spring 2003 p.205.

³⁹ *Documents*, Volume XXVII, No.205, 20 February 1925, p.311. Harold Nicolson, diplomat, politician, historian and biographer, served in the Foreign Office from 1909 to 1929.

encourage France to maintain what he refers to as a continuously provocative and over-confident attitude towards Germany, and that it could lead to the risk of greater military commitment.⁴⁰

However, Hankey went on to say that a pact would now be in Britain's interest, because if Britain was at loggerheads with France, Britain could suffer in that imperial communications would be jeopardised in respect of both the Channel ports and the Mediterranean ports used by the Royal Navy. He also considered that as the Protocol was now part of all diplomatic discussions, and a pact with France would be much less detrimental. Finally, Hankey was reassured by the wording of a draft document which had been produced by Crowe. Hankey's conclusion was that there should now be an attempt to agree a pact, subject to the use of Britain's forces remaining entirely within the discretion of the British government, that there would be no increase in British armaments, and that there should be some periodic review.

Moreover, a closer examination of that Curzon Foreign Office document of December 1921 shows a comparable distinction to Hankey's, between a limited and a comprehensive commitment to France. Curzon had stated that a proposal:

to commit this country to go to war again – not for a narrowly defined and easily intelligible object, such as the eastern frontier of France, which is also the external frontier of Britain – but for objects which it will be difficult to define in words, and in contingencies which, though unlikely to arise, cannot be described as impossible, will I think, excite in many quarters the gravest disappointment and alarm and concern that this will be enhanced by the fear that a treaty of alliance with France may drag us into a war in which direct British interests are not involved, and which might have been avoided had not our ally been encouraged to take an unbending attitude in regard to a particular matter.⁴¹

There was then a common distinction between narrow diplomatic agreements related to specific commitments, as opposed to an all-embracing Anglo-French treaty. However, in the cabinet discussions early March, when Chamberlain's attitude was one of being relatively pro-French, and in favour of some form of agreement, he was challenged by a

⁴⁰ *Documents*, Volume XXVII, No.191, 26 January 1925, p.286.

⁴¹ *Documents*, Volume XVI, No.768, 28 December 1921, p.865.

number of cabinet members, including Churchill, who were not convinced of the need for any commitment to the French. Both before and during Chamberlain going to Paris to confirm Britain's misgivings, and to Geneva to say that Britain would not sign the Protocol, Baldwin had considerable difficulty, including a resignation threat from Chamberlain, before obtaining a cabinet consensus to support Chamberlain. Once the decision was taken, and Baldwin had ensured backing for Chamberlain, the following months concentrated on intense diplomatic activity.⁴²

Locarno was then preceded by months of diplomatic activity, not only between Britain, France and Germany, but also with Italy, Belgium and Poland. All the key documents are recorded in *Documents*; there are many interesting examples of diplomatic correspondence to Chamberlain from British, for example from D'Abernon from Berlin on 15 March saying 'the German Government have practically made up their minds that they must come into the League of Nations. The reserves (sic) that they made... appear to have been adequately taken into account in the reply of the League which is published in the German papers this morning. Provided Luther has the desire to come into the League, he can agree to the conditions formulated. I regard this question as nearly settled';⁴³ or Crewe from Paris on 29 May clarifying French foreign office reactions to particular wordings of the draft text⁴⁴ or Graham from Rome on 19 June saying that he attached 'the text of the reply of the Italian Government to the French communication of the French answer to the German note on the question of security.'⁴⁵ There is also a letter from Drummond to Tyrrell on 6 May, offering the assistance of the League wherever it would be helpful.⁴⁶ The point of these citations is to demonstrate both the complexity and the professionalism of the diplomatic processes. The detailed documents also show the ups and downs of the negotiations during these months; confidence in one part of the proposed agreements being agreed with one of the parties, was no guarantee of it being finally

⁴² Apart from such cabinet discussions, Baldwin left most foreign policy issues to Chamberlain. Jenkins wrote of Baldwin that, despite his regular relaxing visits to a hotel in Aix-Les-Baines, 'he never made the seventy-mile journey from Aix to Geneva, which was then the centre of the international world.' Roy Jenkins *Baldwin* (London : Collins, 1987) p.89.

⁴³ *Documents* Volume XXVII, No. 250, 15 March 1925, p.387.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* No. 351, 29 May 1925, p.557.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* No. 387, 19 June 1925, p.625.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* No. 312, 6 May 1925, p.483.

agreed with all the parties, especially with the political complexities in France and Germany.⁴⁷

The debates within the cabinet in March appear to be often more vigorous than those between the parties in the Commons.⁴⁸ Within the total time that the Commons spent on foreign and imperial matters, there were eight significant debates between the start of the session in December 1924 and the start of the recess on 7 August 1925. The first debate in the new parliament was on 15 December 1924, during the customary day allocated during the debate on the King's Speech.⁴⁹ Chamberlain was complimented on having attended the quarterly meeting of the Council of the League, and there was some discussion of the European security situation, but the debate was dominated by the position in the Sudan. That was top of the agenda because of the assassination of the governor general, Sir Lee Stack, and the immediate blame laid on the Egyptian government by the British government. The Labour Party, while very critical of the assassination, was also critical of the government's response to Egypt. Therefore, because of Sudan, the European security situation did not play a major part in this debate.

The first debate of 1925 on European security was on 5 March.⁵⁰ The initial speaker was Herbert Fisher MP; his main concern was the situation in Germany and specifically the Allied decision, led by the French, not to evacuate Cologne on 10 January. MPs appreciated that, as Chamberlain was about to set off for Paris and Geneva, he could not speak openly in advance of the diplomatic negotiations, and there was no vote. Concerns were expressed about Cologne, the Saar, Danzig and European security in general. A week later there was a private members motion on foreign policy but this was concerned

⁴⁷ Kitching emphasised that in July, 'Cecil raised questions of disarmament during discussions on the proposed pact, but Chamberlain refused to discuss any question of reduction, until security was achieved' Carolyn J. Kitching *Britain and the Problem of International Disarmament 1919-34* (London : Routledge, 1999). p.91.

⁴⁸ The debates did become somewhat more partisan after the 1924 election, than at most times between 1919 and 1924. This was partly due to the decisive result of the election, partly because, unusually, foreign policy matters had become an issue in the election with regard to Russia and the publication of the Zinoviev letter, and partly because of the development of the Labour Party as the main opposition party.

⁴⁹ *Hansard*, Volume 179, 15 December 1924, columns 647-754.

⁵⁰ *Hansard*, Volume 18, 5 March 1925, columns 690-804.

with the principles of parliamentary control of foreign policy, and not of substantive issues.⁵¹

The final debate on European security in advance of Locarno took place on 24 June on the 'Proposed Security Pact.'⁵² There was detailed discussion on the Pact including Chamberlain and Lloyd George and also MacDonald who was still extolling the virtues of the Protocol. Ponsonby, speaking for Labour, returned to the issue of Russia, and what he saw as the government's refusal to draw Russia into the family of nations.⁵³ Questions in the debate included whether the Pact was necessary, and whether any responsibilities that were involved were too great to assume. The importance of the debate was not reflected in members attending, as there had to be a roll-call to confirm that forty MPs were still present for the debate to continue. Chamberlain knowing that there would be no vote, went out of his way to agree with MacDonald on the key issues that no one power should dominate Europe, that there should not be an alliance against other powers, that no great nation can be permanently held in subjection, and that British policy should have the objectives of security, arbitration and disarmament.

The last two debates on foreign affairs before Locarno, were devoted to imperial matters.⁵⁴ The debate on 27 July was specifically on the proposed split of the Dominion and Colonial Offices.⁵⁵ Amery's comments on the different roles towards Dominions and the colonies have been quoted above, but he also used interesting wording about of the work of the department, when he said that forty telegrams had been sent to the Dominions in the last eight months regarding the European security situation, and that the department had made real efforts to keep the Dominions fully informed.⁵⁶ An outline of possible future direction of Labour Party colonial policies can be seen in the discussions on India,

⁵¹ *Hansard*, Volume 181, 11 March 1925, columns 1430-1474. China took priority in an adjournment debate on 18 June when Trevelyan argued that the lives of foreigners were in considerable danger.

Hansard, Volume 185, 18 June 1925, columns 906-956.

⁵² *Hansard*, Volume 185, 24 June 1925, columns 1555-1670.

⁵³ *Ibid.* column 1603.

⁵⁴ The tone of the debate on the India Supply Day on 9 July can be judged by Colonel Wedgwood who led for Labour and tried to balance the past and the future by emphasising that in urging self-government, he made 'no judgement upon those great men who have built up our Indian Empire, and made its history something of which Englishmen could be proud.' *Hansard*, Volume 18, 9 July 1925, columns 632.

⁵⁵ *Hansard*, Volume 187, 27 July 1925, columns 65ff.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* column 72.

with the distinction between the honourable past with the need now for self-government, and on China, Egypt and the Sudan.

The Locarno Conference

After the Commons rose for the recess on 7 August, the diplomatic processes continued and the Locarno Conference commenced on 5 October. It was attended by delegates from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Poland and Italy.⁵⁷ The priority in the discussions can be seen in Article 1, which started:

The High Contracting Parties collectively and severally guarantee, in the manner provided in the following articles, the maintenance of the territorial status quo resulting from the frontiers between Germany and Belgium and between Germany and France, and the inviolability of the said frontiers as fixed by or in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles on June 28, 1919.

The most important issues resolved were the confirmation of Germany's western borders, the commitment of Britain to the security of France's eastern borders, and the opportunity for Germany to become a full member of the League with an assumed seat on the Council. Steiner gave the best account of the achievements or satisfaction that the different countries obtained from the agreements at Locarno and these can be summarised as follows.⁵⁸

Germany made a major step towards international respectability by freely accepting the Versailles verdict on its western frontiers and the demilitarised Rhineland. They yielded nothing on their eastern frontiers and, with France's eastern guarantees now linked to the League, Stresemann felt he had weakened the Franco-Polish Alliance of 1921. Germany had prevented a wider Anglo-French Alliance and the Allies had agreed to reconsider the Versailles provisions for German disarmament and to a review of the terms and length of the occupation of the Rhineland.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Italy's delegation was led by Mussolini, who made a typically flamboyant, but unimportant, contribution.

⁵⁸ Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, pp.397-410.

⁵⁹ Locarno confirmed the Versailles arrangements, but crucially with German agreement. The first withdrawal, deferred in January 1925, was implemented as part of the Locarno Agreements. The final withdrawal, due in 1935, was in fact implemented by 1930. The plebiscite on the separate area of the Saarland was held in 1935, with a large majority voting to return to Germany.

France was satisfied that she had ensured the ending of her fear of isolation, by associating Britain with the defence of France, and securing that formal British guarantee which had been absent since the collapse of the Franco-British-American Versailles commitments; the critical point about Locarno for Briand was his anxiety that British participation in the new security arrangements would prevent Germany looking to Russia for a German-Russia Alliance. There was also satisfaction from the financial and commercial leaders in France who favoured an accommodation with Germany.

Britain achieved, at little cost, a détente in western Europe after the six-year diplomatic struggle between the victors and the vanquished from the war; Britain's new responsibilities were confined to the Rhine frontier; with the hope for peaceful change in Europe, Britain could concentrate on its domestic and imperial issues; by minimising the danger of war and restricting her military obligations should peace collapse, Britain distanced itself from commitments in Eastern Europe, and anchored Germany to the League, to the Western powers, and away from Russia.⁶⁰ Although Italy and Belgium were participants in Locarno, they were not important players; the big losers of the participants were Czechoslovakia and particularly Poland.⁶¹

The Commons' recess lasted until 16 November 1925, and therefore parliament was not sitting during the negotiations in Locarno. After parliament reconvened, Chamberlain led the debate to approve the agreements, and there was some considerable debate on this occasion and a Labour amendment, while agreeing to the Locarno agreements, concentrated concern on both the need for 'real disarmament' and the need to 'secure the adhesion of Russia to the League of Nations and its participation in European

⁶⁰ Although Richardson pointed out that 'the problem of disarmament was barely considered during the security negotiations of March – October 1925' that was understandable, given the other major challenges of the process. Dick Richardson *The Evolution of British Disarmament Policy in the 1920s* (London : Winter, 1989) p.42.

⁶¹ *The Round Table*, as an independent contemporary commentator, pointed out the issues that Locarno had not solved such as that it did not shorten the occupation of the Rhineland, it did not alter the terms of Versailles in respect of the Saar, it did not deal with the issue of what was the realistic armaments policy for a country of the size and importance of Germany, and it had not been able to deal with the problems of Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the writer in the December 1925 edition welcomed the agreements and concluded that Britain had not taken on any extra responsibilities. *The Round Table*, Number 61, December 1925, pp.1-28.

agreements.⁶² The government defeated the amendment by 332 to 130, and won the main vote by 375 to 13, with the opposition coming from a few on the Labour benches, and not from any Diehard MPs in the Conservative Party.⁶³

Chamberlain was central to the Locarno process, and assessments of Chamberlain during the first twelve months of the second Baldwin government emphasize his pragmatism. Douglas Johnson said that 'Chamberlain was careful to point out that he did not go to the Foreign Office with any ready-made policy' and that he said he needed time 'to form at any rate some first impressions of the many problems with which I have now to deal.'⁶⁴ The personal relationships that were built up between Chamberlain, Briand, and Stresemann appear to have been genuine, and clearly helped the diplomatic processes in 1925. The obvious comparison is with the relationships at The Hague Conference in 1929, on the Young Plan on reparations, where according to Jacobson, the relationships were very difficult, when the new Labour government was represented by Snowden, rather than Henderson the foreign secretary.⁶⁵

The Locarno diplomacy can certainly be defended because it was both successful and it was suitable for its time. The more idealistic aspirations of the League and the Protocol had not been realised, and the League's role was still strictly limited.⁶⁶ The Locarno diplomacy did in some ways relate back to pre-war diplomacy, but was certainly more open and objective than the Versailles process with the carving up of problems and territories by Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George. The Foreign Office, and the relevant ambassadors, were fully involved in the months leading up to Locarno; the post-

⁶² *Hansard*, Volume 188, 18 November 1925, columns 419ff. These were the specific parts of the treaties that needed formal parliamentary approval.

⁶³ Marquand confirmed that MacDonald did welcome 'the Locarno Pact on the grounds that it removed the remaining obstacles to the Protocol, and hence to disarmament.' Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p.467.

⁶⁴ Douglas Johnson, 'Austen Chamberlain and the Locarno Agreements', *University of Birmingham Historical Society*, Volume 8, 1961, p.64.

⁶⁵ Jon Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy, Germany and the West 1925-1929* (Princeton NJ: University Press, 1972), p.309.

⁶⁶ Whether Locarno was consistent with the principles of the League has been a debated; Walters who had been deputy secretary general of the League wrote later that 'Every line of the pacts was based upon the Protocol or the Covenant. Every provision for their application depended in the last resort on action by the Council. What had been planned at Locarno could be fulfilled nowhere else than at Geneva.' Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, p.291. However, Northedge, referring to this statement, argues that 'there can be little doubt that, on the contrary, the general drift and purport of the Locarno accords were totally at variance with the League system, and went far to destroy it.' F.S. Northedge, *The League of Nations – Its Life and Times 1920-1946*, (Leicester: University Press, 1986), p.96.

war diplomacy was no simple extension of pre-war diplomacy, but the politicians and diplomats had grown up and learnt their trades in the late Victorian and the Edwardian years. Goldstein, in reviewing the six years, wrote that:

for Britain, 1919 had marked the apogee of empire, the end of the age of expansion and the beginning of a period of consolidation...the years 1919-25 saw a slow drift in the maintenance of a coherent diplomatic strategy...the move to develop a focussed and coherent foreign policy was driven by the combined forces of the new foreign secretary, Austen Chamberlain, and his dying permanent under-secretary, Sir Eyre Crowe.⁶⁷

Writing at the outbreak of the Second World War, E.H. Carr argued from a wider historical perspective that the reason that international treaties might seem 'disreputable' and/or 'morally invalid' could be that treaties had been signed under duress, that they were inequitable treaties or that they were treaties that were instruments of power.⁶⁸ However, Carr also emphasised that while such accusations could be made about the Treaty of Versailles, the situation at Locarno was very different both on the process used and the agreements made.

The twelve months between the discussion on the Protocol and the new Baldwin government in 1924, and the agreements in Locarno in October 1925, were marked by these important developments in both the diplomatic and the parliamentary areas. The diplomatic processes picked up from January 1925 and they carefully prepared for the formal conference in October; although there was still then work to be done, the groundwork had been well prepared. The analysis of the foreign affairs debates in the Commons shows the importance of both European and imperial affairs, the general consensus in the discussion on the 'Pact' and the first signs of a different agenda for Labour which was to be significant in the longer-term, but not in 1925.

In looking back at Locarno in the context of the whole period from Versailles, it has been argued that there were far less differences between the political parties, than expected,

⁶⁷ Erik Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Locarno Pact, 1924-1925' in Michael Dockrill and B. J. C. McKercher (eds.), *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.115.

⁶⁸ E.H. Carr *The Twenty Year Crisis, 1939-1939* (London : Macmillan, 2016 Edition) pp.172-174.

when in government. This relative continuity of policies might suggest that the policies could have been driven by civil servants/foreign office officials, rather than politicians from different parties. There is no evidence of this; the analysis of foreign office documents above just indicated close and correct working between politicians, officials and ambassadors. Moreover, Sharp who has probably studied more foreign office documents of this period than most historians, does not identify this as one of his conclusions in his recent writing on ‘Adapting to a New World? British Foreign Policy in the 1920s.’⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Alan Sharp, ‘Adapting to a New World? British Foreign Policy in the 1920s’ in Gaynor Johnson (ed.), *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London : Routledge, 2005).

Chapter Seven : Unfinished Business : 1926 and Beyond

The events in Locarno in October 1925, and the formal signing of the agreements in what is still known as the Locarno Room at the Foreign Office in London in December, were significant dates in post-war diplomacy, but in concentrating on those dates, it is reasonable to explore the unfinished diplomatic business at the end of 1925. Although the main problems for the British government in 1926 were to be domestic issues regarding the coal-mining industry and the General Strike in May, there were also important imperial and European foreign policy priorities and problems in 1926.

As far as imperial matters are concerned, and particularly the Dominions, the more obvious closing date for the thesis could be argued to be the next Imperial Conference in October 1926. While the Dominions continued to acknowledge their historical links to Britain, their wish to keep their traditional markets in Britain, the investment by the City of London in their countries and, in the cases of Australia and New Zealand, the protection of the Royal Navy, the questions about their independence, in the broadest meaning of the word, were never far away. The subject had not been seen as a priority at the Imperial Conferences in 1921 and 1923, but the 1926 meeting was successful in reaching agreement, when the representatives of South Africa and the Irish Free State helped Balfour to produce a report on 'Inter-Imperial Relations' and propose a definition of a new relationship between the Dominions and the Britain.¹ This stated that Britain and the Dominions were agreed to be 'autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.'²

¹ This has sometimes been known as the 'Balfour Definition'; not to be confused with the 1917 'Balfour Declaration' regarding the Allied Powers commitment to a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Balfour replaced Curzon as lord president of the council in April 1925, and was now seen as the elder statesman in the cabinet.

² Chamberlain, writing in 1930, said of the Dominions that 'we are partners in a new experiment in government to which neither our own history, nor the example of other empires, ancient or modern, afford a parallel' 'Great Britain as a European Power' *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* Volume 9 1930 p.182.

The implementation of legislation following the agreements at the 1926 conference varied considerably, with the Statute of Westminster being passed into British law in 1931, and, for example, the New Zealand national legislation not being finally passed until 1947.³ The different delays in implementation do not detract from the significance of the 1926 settlement, but the new relationship had already been established in practice, by default, in the Chanak crisis of 1922, in the negotiations at Lausanne without the Dominions in 1923, and more specifically with the non-involvement of the Dominions in the process leading to, and agreements at, Locarno in 1925.⁴ This all tends to reinforce the significance of Locarno, and the year of 1925.

The main European diplomatic issues in 1926 were the arguments on the implementation of one of the matters agreed at Locarno, that Germany would join the League and become a permanent member of its Council. The problems were with regard to the Council, because other major powers who did not have seats on that Council, such as Spain, Brazil and Poland, took advantage of the initiative regarding Germany to argue that they too should be permanent members. This was compounded by right-wing journalists in France, arguing provocatively that Poland should be treated the same as Germany, and the early arguments about Poland were not helped by Chamberlain's initial ambivalent attitude. In the discussions leading to Locarno, the membership of the Council had not been identified as a major problem; for example, in a Foreign Office memo in March 1925 there was reference both to Germany's desire for a permanent seat on the Council and to a concern arising from article 16 of Versailles about the position of a state 'disarmed to the extent that Germany was disarmed,' but all the subsequent discussion was about the latter.⁵ Moreover, in Sterndale Bennett's Foreign Office summary of issues in January 1926 the membership of the Council is not referred to as a problem.⁶

Walters, who might have been expected to argue from a League perspective that the Locarno negotiators should have anticipated the problem, did not do this and in commenting on this subject, openly admitted that 'there suddenly arose formidable

³ The Statute of Westminster also replaced the 'Colonial Laws Validation Act 1865' which had explicitly licensed the British parliament to legislate for any part of the empire and forbade the Dominions from passing laws 'repugnant' to a British Imperial Act.

⁴ Given the Australian and New Zealand casualties at Gallipoli, their absence at Lausanne was significant.

⁵ *Documents*, Volume XXVII, No.219, 3 March 1925, p.334.

⁶ *Documents*, Series 1A, Volume 1, No.1, 10 January, 1926.

political complications, unforeseen till then by either the German Government or the Secretariat.⁷ The arguments led to delay in resolving the issue, from the March Assembly meeting till the September meeting.⁸ Germany did then became a permanent member of the Council, and Spain, Brazil and Poland were offered 'semi-permanent' seats on the Council; Brazil carried out her threat to resign in protest, and Spain also initiated a resignation process but was eventually persuaded not to leave. This unfortunate process was the result of inadequate diplomacy in 1926, rather than any fault in the Locarno agreements. There were no major new European diplomatic issues in 1926; the other matter outstanding from Locarno was the need for agreement on the reduction in occupying troops in the Coblenz and Mainz regions. After various figures were proposed by Germany and France, the issue was finally resolved by France offering a reduction of 6,000, or about 10%, in August 1926.

The diplomatic situation in 1926 does link with a further criticism of Locarno, for example by Bell, that Britain did not implement the military planning and follow-up in 1926 and beyond, to ensure that the guarantees given at Locarno could be implemented;⁹ and Bond pointed out that it was the chief of staff's view that the Locarno Treaties:

greatly simplified the problems of Imperial defence because, with a friendly France, the Rhine becomes in fact...the strategic frontier of Great Britain on land. There was therefore less urgent need to prepare home defences against either a sea or air attack, and the Territorial Army could be reduced. More men, money and material could be devoted to the defence of the main line of communication from Britain through the Mediterranean to Singapore and the Far East.¹⁰

⁷ F.P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1952) p.317.

⁸ The Assembly meeting on 14 September was the occasion when the national ratifications of the Locarno Treaties were exchanged, and with their registration with the League, came formally into effect.

⁹ P. M. H. Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe* (London: Pearson Longman, 2007), p.40. Bell did point out that there were wider attempts between France and Germany to encourage co-operation after Locarno as he said that 'The diplomatic relationship was accompanied by the activities of various private bodies, for example the Franco-German Committee, which originated with a small group of writers, politicians, and businessmen; and the *Action Catholique de la Jeunesse Française*, which threw itself into the work of reconciliation with German Catholics. In economic terms, French and German industrialists (with others from Belgium and Luxembourg) signed in September 1926 an agreement for an iron and steel cartel.' Ibid, p.36.

¹⁰ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.81.

The Foreign Office reminded the chiefs of staff in 1926 of Britain's commitments after the Locarno Treaties, but the chiefs did not draw the same conclusions. Howard quoted them as being clear that the size of the British forces was:

governed by various conditions peculiar to each service, and is not arrived at by any calculations of the requirements of foreign policy, nor is it possible that they ever should be so calculated. Thus, though the Expeditionary Force, together with a limited number of Air Force Squadrons, constitute the only military instruments available for immediate use in Europe or elsewhere outside Imperial territory in support of foreign policy, they are so available only when the requirements of Imperial Defence so permit.¹¹

It appears that there was no direct Foreign Office reaction and Howard pointed to repeated reminders by the Chiefs that there were no plans for implementing Locarno guarantees and no instructions on this.¹² This though is not a fair criticism of the content of the Locarno agreements themselves, and it has not been argued that the agreements provided commitments which could not have been implemented for political, military or financial reasons.

Howard also was one of those historians who have argued in different ways that Britain's imperial responsibilities had a negative effect on British policies towards Europe, or that the effects of the Great War accelerated imperial decline. Howard wrote that 'in 1925, in fact, as in 1900, Britain's imperial responsibilities rendered her impotent to bring serious influence to bear on those developments in Europe on which her security ultimately depended,'¹³ and Vinen commented on the imperial responsibilities that:

for the British, the war had been essentially defensive. It had been designed to preserve the status quo. Since they had nothing to gain, even victory was bound in the long run to seem like the beginning of decline. This was particularly true in terms of overseas empire. Britain commanded even larger areas after 1919 than she had before 1914, but the war sapped her economic capacity to maintain such a position.¹⁴

¹¹ Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of Two World Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), p.94.

¹² *Ibid.* p.95.

¹³ *Ibid.* p.95.

¹⁴ Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.71.

Some of these arguments depend on there being identified commitments in Europe which could not be undertaken because of those wide imperial responsibilities. In such arguments there would need to be a clear over-concentration on imperial issues, in costs or in time, to the detriment of a defined European commitment or thinking; for example, that priority for the Royal Navy within the total military budget had led to cutbacks in army numbers which affected commitments in Europe made, or wished for, by British governments. However, this was not the case during these years as direct commitments to Europe in general, and the Rhineland in particular, were already limited both by the terms of Versailles, and by the extreme caution of British politicians of getting further involved in European commitments.

Writing in 1939, E. H. Carr argued with regard to Locarno that the British guarantees to France and Belgium, and to Germany were an ‘ingenious device’ to allay mutual fears, but that Locarno ‘also guaranteed a state of affairs that could not be maintained indefinitely once Germany became strong – the demilitarisation of the German Rhineland.’¹⁵ This viewpoint, written just at the start of the Second World War, again emphasises the questions of the work done, or not done, in the years after 1925, rather than deficiencies in the Treaties of Locarno themselves.

In reviewing government thinking and priorities during and after 1926, it is appropriate to refer to three key Foreign Office documents which give the substance and the feel for British government views of the world after Locarno. Initially there was the ‘Foreign Office Memorandum respecting the Locarno Treaties’ by Sterndale Bennett in January;¹⁶ then a ‘Memorandum on the Foreign Policy of His Majesty’s Government’ in April;¹⁷ and most importantly the public ‘Statement made by Sir A. Chamberlain to the Imperial Conference’ in October.¹⁸ The January document was specific to Locarno and related matters; the April and October documents covered the whole world, and had much in common, and were no doubt originated in the same section of the Foreign Office.

¹⁵ E.H. Carr, *Britain, A Study of Foreign Policy from the Versailles Treaty to the Outbreak of War* (London : Longmans Green, 1939) p.127

¹⁶ *Documents*, Series 1A, Volume 1, 10 January 1926, pp.1-17.

¹⁷ *Documents*, Series 1A, Volume 1, 10 April 1926, pp.846-881.

¹⁸ *Documents*, Series 1A, Volume II, 20 October 1926, pp.919-958.

There was a common theme of looking back at the difficulties and increasing friction in Western Europe between January 1920 and the time in October 1923 which coincided with the last Imperial Conference, and emphasising the great progress made in the two years since October 1923. Bennett recorded the difficulties in the Locarno process of the British commitments to France, the German eastern borders, and the German reluctance to be fully involved in the League because of the links to the extremely unpopular terms of Versailles. Bennett said that 'Locarno is but a first step' but believed that the new international spirit could help in troubled areas such as the Balkans, Russia, co-operation between the United States and Europe, and possibly general disarmament.¹⁹

The April document highlighted the differences between the aspirations of the various losers in the war, as opposed to Britain who had 'no territorial ambitions, nor desire for aggrandisement.'²⁰ However, the writer argued that the spread of British trade and finance meant that any threat to peace anywhere in the world was a threat to Britain. On Germany, he did highlight the unresolved Central European problems, when he said, significantly with regard to Danzig and Upper Silesia, that despite the arbitration treaty between Germany and Poland at Locarno, Germany would 'never rest until her present wrongs, as she considers them, have been righted.'²¹ On Britain's attitude he went on to say 'it is hardly possible at the present time to suggest what line it will prove in our interest to take, but as a matter of history it may be recalled that this country has never in the past taken up arms to resist the dismemberment of Poland, even in days when we not so crippled by a colossal war debt.'²²

The wording of Chamberlain's speech to the Imperial Conference in October 1926 reflected many of the arguments, and some of the Foreign Office wording, of the April document, but was able to report that agreement with Turkey regarding Mosul had been reached in July through the good offices of the League.²³ Chamberlain said that the 'spirit

¹⁹ *Documents*, 10 January 1926, p.16.

²⁰ *Documents*, 10 April 1926, p.846.

²¹ *Ibid.* p.857.

²² *Ibid.* p.857.

²³ The April paper had expressed concern about northern Iraq, where the writer felt that the Turks might attempt to recover Mosul by military means. *Documents*, 10 April 1926, p.860. Chamberlain was therefore announcing positive news on this; the April paper also identified the problems in the New Hebrides, where there was a tense situation in the territory involving a joint responsibility between France and Britain since 1914.

of Locarno as more important than the Treaties themselves,’ and explained why it had not been possible to make progress to resolve the issues of German’s eastern borders at Locarno, and indicated the ongoing political thinking in Germany by saying:

the severance of East Prussia from the main German body by means of the Polish Corridor, and the partition between Germany and Poland of the industrial and mining areas of Upper Silesia, are regarded as wrongs in which it is impossible permanently to acquiesce, and these practical grievances are aggravated by the hatred felt by the Poles for their former oppressors and by the contempt for the Poles as men of an inferior race and culture openly expressed by the Germans.²⁴

He said that he hoped that the example set by Locarno could be followed elsewhere in Europe to settle differences but he argued that ‘any attempt by the Western Powers to impose this policy would be doomed to certain failure – its whole value lying in its voluntary nature and spontaneous adoption.’²⁵

While recognising that the choice of dates for historical research is arbitrary, this analysis of the significant diplomatic events in 1926 reinforces the appropriateness of taking Locarno in 1925 as the key date after Versailles and the end of the era of the Great War. It is also clear that the British did understand the seriousness and difficulties of solving of the German-Polish border issues which were not included in the Locarno settlements. Chamberlain and the Foreign Office could, with good reason, repeat that it would have been impossible to make progress on solving these issues at Locarno, apart from the signing of the German Polish Arbitration Treaty, and that they did recognise in 1926 the dangers of the situation, but there was a strong feeling in public and in private that it was not Britain’s job or responsibility to get involved in Eastern Europe. It recalls Chamberlain’s famous quote in 1925, mentioned above, when he wrote that no British Government would risk the ‘bones of a British Grenadier’ for an objective in Poland.

The inconsistency in the Chamberlain and the Foreign Office arguments was not in respect of the attitudes and conclusions in 1925; rather that while they emphasised the ‘spirit of Locarno’ on an on-going basis, this implied further consistent and painstaking diplomacy after 1925. The references to Central Europe in 1926 indicated that it was up

²⁴ *Documents*, 20 October 1926, pp.921 and 923.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.940.

to the nations concerned to take any initiative, which was highly unlikely given the German and Polish views listed, and that no British blood could be spilt in that area of Europe. The latter, however, was not being suggested, and a prospect of serious diplomacy does not assume military solutions. Goldstein wondered what might have been achieved after 1925, if Sir Eyre Crowe had not died in April 1925, and said of the Chamberlain approach to Locarno, and his rejection of advice from Headlam-Morley on Eastern Europe, that he adopted much of the advice he was given

but he rejected that on the significance of Eastern Europe as integral to the overall European balance. Strong arguments were made that to have included Eastern Europe in the Locarno arrangement would have prevented any meaningful result being achieved. Eastern Europe was therefore decoupled for later consideration. Chamberlain, however, during his remaining tenure of office never evinced any real interest in moving to the implicit second phase of negotiating an Eastern Locarno. Indeed, the remaining period of his foreign secretaryship is but a pallid reflection of those first energetic months.²⁶

Looking in more detail at those remaining years of Chamberlain at the Foreign Office up to 1929, the traditional picture is that of his regular informal meetings in Geneva with Stresemann and Briand. In some senses, these reinforced the League, in that the three of them were in Geneva for League meetings, but they also emphasised their separateness, and raises the wider question of what was achieved in those years after Locarno, to build on the achievements of 1925. Doerr commented that Chamberlain's 'remaining years of office were marked by a curious lassitude or passivity' but partly in his defence Dutton recorded his ill-health, especially during 1928.²⁷

A full assessment of Chamberlain's total years at the Foreign Office would clearly be the subject of a separate thesis.²⁸ After the events of 1926, Chamberlain or the wider British

²⁶ Erik Goldstein, *The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Locarno Pact*, in Dockrill Michael L. and McKercher B.J.C. (eds.) *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890-1950* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996). p.135. Dutton, as the prime biographer of Chamberlain wrote that 'even in the greatest years of *Pax Britannica* Britain had not had the means effectively to intervene in the affairs of Central and Eastern Europe' and 'many had misunderstood Locarno to mark the start of active British participation in the affairs of Western Europe... it represented the limit and extremity of British involvement.' David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain – Gentleman in Politics*, (London: Ross Anderson, 1985), p.259.

²⁷ Paul W. Doerr *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (Manchester : University Press, 1998) p.93. Dutton *Austen Chamberlain* p.281.

²⁸ This would take into account not only Doerr and Dutton but also Richard Grayson *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe 1924-1929* (London : Routledge, 1997) who looking at his overall role as politician concludes that 'his record as foreign secretary must go a long way to rescuing his reputation,

Government including the colonial secretary, certainly faced difficult problems in 1927, in different parts of the world. There was the diplomatic breach with Russia in May 1927, over the alleged spying from the Soviet Trade Delegation in London. There were anti-colonial movements in China and Egypt; the British concession in Hankow was occupied in 1927 by Chinese nationalists; in Egypt although Britain had transferred internal affairs to an Egyptian Government in 1922, Chamberlain had to send naval forces and additional troops to Egypt also in 1927 to deal with nationalist pressures. The appointment by the government of the Simon Commission in November 1927, to review progress since the Government of India Act of 1919, insensitively did not include any Indian members, and the Indian National Congress quickly resolved to boycott the Commission.

On the Chinese issues, Britain was not going to get sympathy from the United States for the results of Britain's colonial history. Generally, British relationships with the United States had improved between the rejection of Versailles and the end of 1925; the agreement in Ireland, the settlement of the war debts issues, the success at Washington including both the naval agreement and the avoidance of the problem of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the co-operation on the Dawes Plan and the London Conference had all been positive developments.

However, in 1927, relationships with the United States became more strained especially on the issue of naval disarmament. President Coolidge took the initiative for a conference in Geneva on possible limitations on cruisers involving United States, Britain and Japan, but with France and Italy declining to attend. However, the initiative was anyhow unsuccessful because the United States ideas of parity on cruisers would have led to limitations on British cruisers that the Admiralty saw as quite unacceptable in view of Britain's worldwide commitments. McKercher, wrote that 'in the two years following the failure of the Coolidge Naval Conference in the summer of 1927, Anglo-American relations fell to the lowest point in this century.'²⁹

despite his lack of success as a domestic politician' p.283. McKercher in article 'Austen Chamberlain and the Continental Balance of Power : Strategy, Stability and the League of Nations' in *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Volume 14/22003 defended Chamberlain by writing that 'not once in that period was Europe subjected to the equivalent of the Ruhr Crisis that had the potential to undermine the new international order' p.227 and his conclusion that Chamberlain was an 'able practitioner of the balance of power' p.230.

²⁹ B.J.C. McKercher *The Second Baldwin Government and the United States 1924-1929 : Attitudes and Diplomacy* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.1.

In Western Europe, in late 1926, Briand and Stresemann had made a wide-ranging cooperation agreement at the French village of Thoiry, but this fell apart during 1927. Also in 1927, Briand took an initiative with the United States, regarding a joint declaration renouncing the use of warfare; this led to the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928, but this only amounted to a statement of intent, but with no clear enforcement mechanisms, and British reservations added to confusion. In mid-1928 Anglo-French negotiations on disarmament were not only unsuccessful but also involved Chamberlain offending not only Germany but also the United States. Johnson concluded that 'the first tests of the unity of the Locarno powers revealed a still fragile relationship between Britain and France that had not entirely overcome or forgiven the tensions of the first years of peace.'³⁰

As far as the League was concerned, Chamberlain saw it as just one of the means of resolving diplomatic problems. Certainly, the diplomatic wrangling in 1926 about Germany's appointment to the Council and those 'tea parties' in Geneva detracted from the main roles of the League. Britain's relationships with the League were also not helped by Cecil's separate cabinet responsibility for League's matters up till his resignation in 1927, which often led to discord with Chamberlain. Walters, as the former insider, saw these years as the 'years of stability' for the League but can only point to success in the Greco-Bulgarian crisis of October 1925 and the Mosul settlement in 1926, and Northedge later put this into perspective by pointing out that the League decision in December 1925 to set up the 'Preparatory Commission for the (world disarmament) Conference...remained the principal instrument of all the League's work on disarmament until the conference met in Geneva in 1932,' when it was to be unsuccessful.³¹

These examples of foreign policy issues during Chamberlain's later years at the Foreign Office, when Baldwin continued to leave most of these issues to Chamberlain, indicate a number of complicated problems, and no great progress on the main issues. On Franco-German relationships, and those clearly known unsolved issues of Germany's eastern borders, Jacobson made the point that whilst German affairs received close attention between 1924 and 1926 in London, that between December 1926 and September 1928 the

³⁰ Gaynor Johnson 'Austen Chamberlain and Britain's Relations with France, 1924-1929' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Volume 17/4 2006 p.766.

³¹ Walters *History of the League of Nations*. F.S. Northedge *The League of Nations : Its Life of Times 1920-1946* (Leicester : University Press, 1986) p.120.

British cabinet only once had matters referring to Germany on the agenda; Chamberlain left the German question to Briand, and in so doing, risked little political opposition at home.³² The Young Plan, and the Hague Conference later in 1929, were successful follow-ups to the Dawes Plan and the London Conference in 1924, but the process and the diplomatic relationships in 1929 did not give much hope for further diplomatic progress.

The detailed look at 1926 has reinforced the significance of Locarno, and the choice of the period chosen for this thesis. The brief look at the years from 1926 to 1929 has indicated a number of foreign policy failures, or at the very least a lack of planning or enthusiasm to build upon the foundations laid at Locarno. The death of Stresemann on 3 October 1929, and the crash on the New York Stock Exchange on 29 October 1929 highlighted in retrospect a new era in European and world problems. The following two years had significant dates in inter-war history; for example, the final evacuation of the Rhineland by Allied forces in June 1930, the National Socialists' achievement of 107 seats in the German Reichstag in September 1930 and Japan's invasion of Manchuria in September 1931.

It is correct to say that the failure to get any agreement about Germany's eastern border issues in the years after Locarno was a major reason for the events that led to the Second World War, and that the principles of the Versailles and Locarno Agreements collapsed with Hitler's military occupation of the Rhineland in 1936. However, Locarno did achieve what was possible in 1925 in two crucial respects; firstly, to confirm Germany's western borders written down at Versailles, but now accepted by Germany, and secondly to establish a diplomatic rapport or understanding between the three big European powers, as equals, which could be built on, with further efforts. The reason that the causes of the Second World War could be linked back to Locarno and Versailles, is not that Locarno was a failure, but that Locarno was not built on after 1925.

No-one can know what might have thwarted German nationalism after say 1929, but it was not the fault of the negotiators when they were at Locarno. Chamberlain, Briand and

³² Jon Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy, Germany and the West 1925-1929* (Princeton : University Press, 1972), p.127.

Stresemann did resolve the issues of Germany's western borders, and Britain and France did accept that Germany must be accepted as a full member of the international community. There was no possible solution in 1925 of the long-term issues regarding Germany's eastern borders, so it is quite wrong for criticism of Locarno in that respect; the two major successes were correctly achieved, and those successes would not have prevented greater efforts after 1925 to address the outstanding problems for Germany and her neighbours about those eastern borders.

Chapter Eight : Conclusions

In the introduction to this thesis it was made clear that this was an attempt to reassess the conduct and success of British foreign policy between 1919 and 1925. It was emphasised that it was necessary to justify why this period has been chosen, to give a definition of success as the criterion against which to assess the conduct of policy, and to provide a methodological discussion about the ability of individuals, in this case, of politicians, diplomats or civil servants to affect the policy decisions. These issues were addressed in turn, followed by a discussion of the sources for this thesis, both primary and secondary, involving a review of the relevant literature and an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and suitability of these sources in relation to the objectives of the thesis.

Within the main chapters of the thesis, the various areas of British foreign policy during these years have been described and analysed. The questions regarding the appropriateness of the choice of those years, the achievements within those policies and the roles of the key individuals have been covered. The 'recurrent patterned arrangements' in both European and imperial matters have been clearly identified, but the influence of individuals such as Lloyd George, Churchill, Balfour or Chamberlain, and also Briand and Stresemann, have been clear in the different events leading up to December 1925. Within this concluding chapter an assessment will be made, in summary, of the different areas of policy to reach an overall conclusion.

The Great War and the Treaty of Versailles provided examples of 'discontinuities', most obviously in the demise of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and the Ottoman empires, but 'continuities' in respect of the continuity and reinforcement of the British and French Empires. In retrospect, the clearest diplomatic continuity was the growth of the power of the United States during and after the war. This was demonstrated in the military contribution in 1917 and 1918, the role of Woodrow Wilson in Paris, and despite the growth of 'isolationism', the positive United States role it played at the Washington Conference and its involvement in 1924 in the Dawes Report and the London Conference.

The American Governments were prepared to be involved in international diplomacy when they felt it was in American interests. Britain's views on relationships with the

United States were ambivalent, as to whether the United States should be viewed as a friend, or as a rival global power. The United States was not directly involved in the Locarno process, or the Locarno Conference.

A positive assessment of the British foreign policies during these six years is dependent not just on Locarno, but on a wider assessment of the achievements and stability achieved by the end of 1925. Versailles had provided imperfect solutions to many of the problems that faced the Allied leaders in Paris; it inevitably left some mistaken decisions and many unresolved issues for the European statesmen to tackle in the post-war years. Locarno was also not a perfect solution to outstanding European problems, especially as it only dealt with Germany's western borders, but, taken together with the Lausanne Agreements in 1923 and the London Conference in 1924, the British political establishment could look back with a considerable sense of achievement and stability in Europe at the end of 1925.

Versailles set the agenda for most of the diplomatic activities during these years, and the Locarno agreements did provide a conclusion to the years of apparently unsuccessful or inconclusive diplomatic initiatives to settle the outstanding issues of reparations and the acceptance of Germany's western borders. After four years of total war, and seven years of uneasy peace, both former enemies and former allies eventually found a constructive way of managing the peace after the terms agreed or imposed at Versailles. Britain invested a large amount of diplomatic effort in 1925 to achieve a more permanent settlement in Western Europe and, despite all the suspicions towards France, the British came round to the view that it was in everyone's interest and especially that of Britain to find a mutual accord with both France and Germany.

At the same time, the increase in the size of the British Empire at Versailles, primarily by the acquisition of new territories in the Middle East, brought a new dimension to the empire, and to Britain's overall foreign commitments. Before the war the different territories in the empire fitted comfortably into the definition of either the Dominions or the colonies, except for the unique situation of India and the position in Egypt which was still formally part of the Ottoman Empire. The acquisitions of Mesopotamia, Palestine and formally of Egypt were very different, not because of any League of Nations mandates, but rather because they, unlike the Dominions, had no history of links to Britain

and no British settlers, and unlike the colonies, had an established and increasing political class with an understanding of the goal of independence. Palestine had a particular mix of problems, but Egypt and Mesopotamia had some similarities with India, in respect of the aspirations for independence. The British also found it difficult to come to terms with the challenges of the Middle East, whether this was due to an ignorance of Islamic countries, the lack of a paternalistic or other cause as in Africa, or that the territories just did not fit into those traditional imperial definitions.

In the traditional Dominions, these years marked a pause before their independence was clarified at the successful 1926 Imperial Conference. The growing evidence after Chanak that there could be no assumptions about the attitudes of the Dominions to foreign policy issues, especially with regard to commitments in Europe, came to a head in 1925 when the British government studiously avoided getting the views of the Dominions about a European Security Pact during the nine months of diplomacy. Chamberlain's policy towards the Dominions in these matters was most unusual, but diplomatically successful. It contributed to the likelihood of success at Locarno because there was no way that all the traditional Dominions, let alone the new Irish Free State, would have been able to commit themselves to the Locarno Treaties.

India always has to be discussed separately from the traditional Dominions. The political, military and economic position in India was very difficult from 1919 to 1922, with the Amritsar massacre, the subsequent political consequences in London, and then the growth and the decline in 1922 of Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns. The relative calm in India from the end of 1922 until after 1925 must have left the governments in London with an understandable feeling of satisfaction with regard to their policies. As far as the colonies were concerned there were no significant issues during this period, except for the racial issues in Kenya which resonated in India, and again the governments in London could not have seen any reasons why their colonial policies were not appropriate. Although it is arguable whether Ireland is domestic or imperial history, the 1922 settlement and the creation of the Irish Free State, did provide a pragmatic solution to the centuries-old problem. The settlement in Ireland, the acceptable compromise with the United States at the Washington Conference, and the evolvement of the Dominion status to real independence, were all successful in the short to medium-term, but in the long-term were all examples of Britain's decline as a global imperial power.

Britain's responsibilities as a major imperial power did not compromise Chamberlain's commitment to a diplomatic solution in Western Europe. There is no convincing evidence that there was an over-concentration on imperial issues, to the detriment of a defined European commitment. During these years, direct commitments to Europe in general, and to the Rhineland in particular, were already limited both by the terms of Versailles, and by the extreme caution of British politicians of getting further involved in European commitments.

Within Western Europe, it was the relationships with, and between, France and Germany that were central to most of the diplomatic problems in these years, whether in respect of Europe itself, or in the competition between Britain and France as imperial powers. The analysis of Britain's relations with France was perhaps best summed up by the D'Abernon quotation that there was 'no real hatred even when enemies - no real comradeship even when Allies.' The anti-German attitudes in France, and the continuing attempts by French governments to impose different solutions to what they saw as threats to their national security, provided major problems for British diplomacy. However, closer examination of some of the primary sources, especially those of Curzon and Chamberlain, has shown greater consistency in British foreign policy towards France than often described. Analysis must distinguish between British reluctance to be involved in a comprehensive treaty with France, which could involve Britain in supporting unreasonable French demands in Europe or aspirations outside Europe, as opposed to a limited commitment to Franco-German issues, as was agreed at Locarno.

Britain's relationship with Germany was also complicated; many of the international conferences were between the Allies on how to deal with Germany, and did not involve Germany itself, and the British policies were partly affected by the obvious remembrances of the war, partly by the complicated details of reparations, security and relations with France, and partly by concern whether the German political fabric might collapse like that in Russia. What was crucial at Locarno was that France and Britain accepted Germany as a fellow major European power, and Germany accepted the western borders imposed at Versailles and Germany's place in international diplomacy, including membership of the League.

The concentration of historiography on the totality of the inter-war years has affected the ability of historians to give appropriate consideration to the difficulties and the achievements during the years of 1919 to 1925. This historiography is appropriate when taking a wider look at issues leading to the Second World War; however, it does not recognise the significance of Locarno, and the reasons to look separately at the years from 1919 to 1925. It is not reasonable to look back from after 1945, and simply see the inevitability of the Second World War being rooted in Versailles and the 'illusion' of Locarno. Choices of dates for assessments are arbitrary, but the London and Locarno conferences did bring to a conclusion a succession of different conferences. Britain's imperial policies do not point to a different date, and the look forward into 1926 and beyond has reinforced the significance of Locarno and 1925, both in respect of subsequent events and in the policy thinking of the Foreign Office.

The attention of many historians to the whole of the inter-wars years has also contributed to the apparent reluctance to appreciate the difficulties facing the governments after the Great War. Although the different governments did have certain advantages in dealing with these problems, most obviously that Britain had emerged on the winning side in the war, these advantages were clearly outweighed by the difficulties faced. These included the personal and national feelings of exhaustion after four years of total war, that the responsibilities of empire had increased as a result of Versailles at the same time as the economic costs and the total debts of the war hit the peacetime economy, that there were immediate problems in 1919 with the demobilisation of up to four million military personnel, that the complexity and difficulties of the Irish negotiations would have been a burden for any government, and finally that, while a comprehensive Peace Treaty had been signed in Versailles, many foreign policy problems remained unsettled, especially the ongoing antagonism between France and Germany.

Historians also sometimes forget the relative stability in Britain's domestic situation, excluding Ireland, compared with many of the major powers in Europe. The revolution in Russia, the near-revolution in Germany immediately after the armistice, the communist and fascist movements in Hungary, and the fascist success in Italy in 1922 are just some examples of developments on the continent of Europe which were far from the continuing liberal democracy in Britain, including the acceptance of the first Labour government in 1924. Despite some radical trade union activity after the war during the Lloyd George

government, the political and industrial scene in Britain then remained relatively stable until the General Strike in May 1926, and the politicians must have contributed to this domestic stability. Although it could be argued that this relative domestic stability made foreign policy decisions easier, it would be fairer to give the governments and politicians some credit for this domestic stability.

In contrast to the eight years of continuous Liberal government before the war, and the solid Conservative majority through to 1929, the six years from 1919 saw five different governments, and a mixture of a coalition, minority governments and an absolute majority in the Commons. Despite all these variations, there were fewer major differences than might have been expected between the political parties with regard to both imperial and European policies. The general acceptance of the benefits of the British Empire, and the suspicion and caution in relation to Europe, could be applied in different degrees to all the parties and to all the governments, including the Labour Party in government for the first time. The other possible domestic constraints on foreign policy were also less than might have been expected. Financial constraints affect all governments to some extent; in this post-war period, there were considerable financial and economic problems, especially in the light of conventional economic thinking that applied to all parties. However, although all governments put restrictions on military spending, there is no evidence that there was any direct effect on military capability or on foreign policies except in the case of Mesopotamia.

Therefore, it can be concluded that after June 1919 Britain faced a variety of foreign policy issues, including the need to reduce Franco-German animosity and to prevent any new conflict in Western Europe without further British military commitment; in imperial matters to absorb the new territories, especially in the Middle East, without putting unreasonable financial demands on the Treasury, to clarify a new status for the Dominions and to move to some form of resolution of the Irish problem; on wider diplomatic issues, that the United States, Germany and possibly Russia should either join the League, or be associated with the League in a positive way; and finally to resolve the problems between Greece and Turkey, without any threat to old and new British territories in the Middle East. On the basis of such a list of problems Britain had made considerable progress by the end of 1925; if Versailles had included some or all of those achievements, historical views of that treaty would surely have been far more positive.

The three Foreign Office policy documents in 1926, while not providing a specific foreign policy strategy after Locarno, do clearly show such priorities as the need to reinforce the newly established relationship between France and Germany, the need to aim to consolidate the functioning of and contribution to the League without restricting British rights of independent action, and the need to make progress about Germany's eastern borders, or at least go some way to defusing them as obvious flashpoints where such moves would not be contrary to the principles and spirit of Versailles. Finally, with Ireland accepted into a clearer definition of Dominion status, there was the need to consolidate the imperial role, and deal with the unresolved nationalist pressures particularly in India, Egypt and Mesopotamia. There were no new obvious hostages to fortune, such as could be seen in the Versailles settlement of Germany's eastern borders, or in the subsequent Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey.

Therefore, although Locarno had provided the possibility of a new period of greater stability, there was much diplomatic work to be progressed after 1925. The assumption that not enough was achieved in the following years, except for the 1926 Imperial Conference, is not a criticism of Locarno, but raises serious questions about the diplomatic efforts after 1925. Any assessment of success in foreign policies must take into account the complexity of the existing diplomatic problems, the other difficulties faced by the governments, the achievements made during the period and that no new hostages to fortune were left for succeeding governments. In retrospect, Britain and the British Empire can be seen as being in long-term decline, but given the range of problems that faced the British governments during these six years, that long-term decline does not detract from the success, and the relative stability, that had been achieved by the end of 1925.

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