

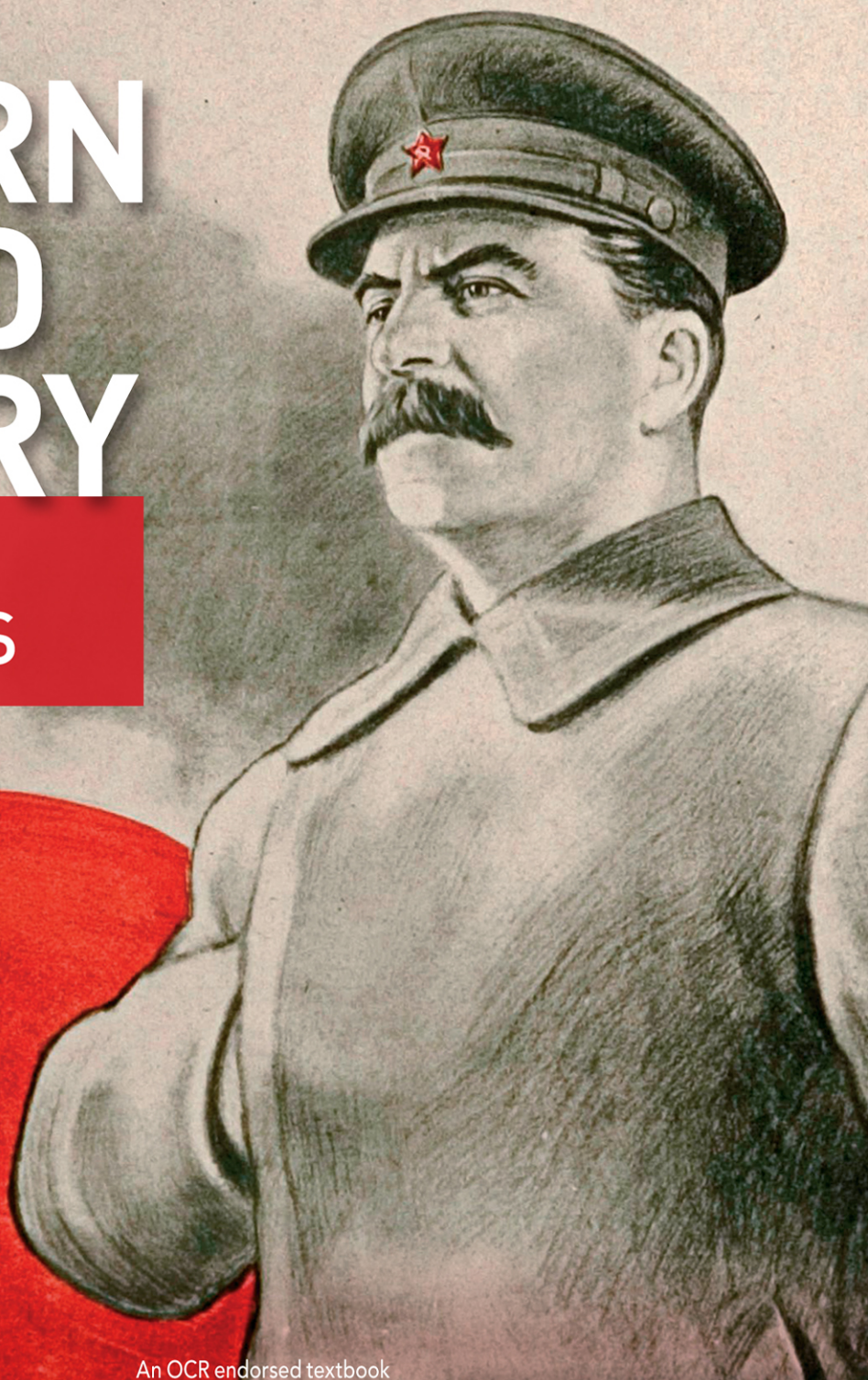
**OCR**  
GCSE  
HISTORY

**EXPLAINING THE MODERN WORLD**

**BEN WALSH**

# MODERN WORLD HISTORY

**PERIOD AND  
DEPTH STUDIES**



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EXPLAINING THE MODERN WORLD

# MODERN WORLD HISTORY

Period and  
Depth studies

BEN WALSH



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## Prologue: The historian's mind-set

### How historians work

If you think that history means reading a lot of information from a textbook and then memorising it, you are wrong. If you try to learn history in this way, you will probably end up feeling a bit like the picture above! Even historians get overwhelmed by the amount of historical information to be found in books, archives and other sources. They use a range of techniques to help them make sense of it all.

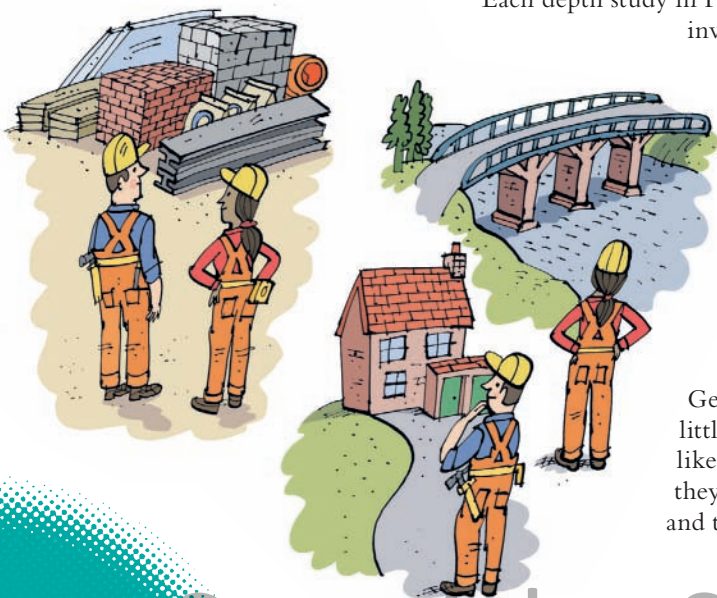
### Focus

No historian can study every aspect of a period of history. To make the subject manageable, historians focus on particular areas. This book does the same – each of the studies focuses on selected parts of the story. The period study (Part 1) covers almost a century of history and focuses on political events and the relationships between countries. Each depth study in Part 2 focuses closely on a particular country at a particular time, investigating the lives of ordinary people.

### Ask questions

Historians are investigators rather than just collectors of information. They search for new information about the past in order to tackle important questions.

Historians have different interests. They do not all investigate the same questions. So when studying the Vietnam War, for example, Historian A may be most interested in why the Americans could not win the war, while Historian B concentrates on the war's impact on the USA. Historian C, investigating Nazi Germany in the 1930s, might want to know why the Nazis faced so little opposition, while Historian D may be interested in what life was like for ordinary Germans at that time. A bit like two different builders, they use the same or similar materials but they ask different questions and tell different stories.



# Features of this book

## Sources

These help you understand the story more clearly because they reveal what events and ideas meant to people at the time – what they said, did, wrote, sang, celebrated or got upset about. You will not be asked source-based questions in the period-study assessment, but sources are still an important element when studying the history of a period. In the depth study, sources are a key part of the assessment.

## Activity

Activities are designed to help you think through a particular question or issue. The thinking you do in these tasks is usually a building block towards your answer to a Focus Task.

## Focus task

Focus Tasks are the main tasks for really making sure you understand what you are studying. They will never ask you to just write something out, take notes or show basic comprehension. These tasks challenge you to show that you know relevant historical information and can use that information to develop an argument.

**1.2 The hinge years: The impact of the Depression on international relations 1929–34**

**Source 1: Keynes on the League of Nations, 1934**

Source 1 is a speech given by John Maynard Keynes, a leading British economist, in 1934. It is a critique of the League of Nations, which was established in 1919 to maintain world peace. Keynes argues that the League is a 'house of cards' and that it is unlikely to last. He also criticizes the League's structure and its ability to enforce its decisions.

**Did internationalism triumph in the 1920s?**

Internationalism was a movement that sought to promote peace and cooperation between nations. It was a response to the horrors of World War I. However, the League of Nations, which was the main institution of internationalism, failed to prevent the outbreak of World War II. This suggests that internationalism did not triumph in the 1920s.

**Factor 1: Global economic depression and economic nationalism**

The global economic depression of the 1930s was a major factor in the failure of internationalism. It led to a rise in economic nationalism, which was a policy of protecting a country's economy from foreign competition. This led to a breakdown of the international system and the outbreak of World War II.

**Figure 1: A graph showing the impact of the Depression on international relations 1929–34**

The graph shows the number of international treaties signed between 1929 and 1934. It shows a sharp decline in the number of treaties signed in 1930, followed by a steady increase in the number of treaties signed in the following years. This suggests that the Depression had a negative impact on international relations.

**1.1 Hope for the future? The Treaty of Versailles and nationalism and internationalism in the 1920s**

**Source 1: A cartoon from the British newspaper Punch, 1919**

The cartoon shows a man in a top hat, representing the British, standing over a man in a military uniform, representing the French. The man in the top hat is saying, 'I have just signed the Treaty of Versailles. It is a masterpiece of diplomacy. It will bring peace to the world.' The man in the military uniform is saying, 'It is a masterpiece of stupidity. It will bring war to the world.'

**Reactions to the Treaty**

The Treaty of Versailles was a peace treaty that ended World War I. It was signed in 1919. It was a controversial treaty, as it placed the blame for the war on Germany and imposed heavy reparations on it. It also created the League of Nations, which was intended to maintain world peace.

**How should we judge the peace-makers at the Paris Peace Conference?**

The peace-makers at the Paris Peace Conference were the leaders of the Allied powers. They were responsible for negotiating the Treaty of Versailles. They were criticized for imposing a harsh peace on Germany, which led to the outbreak of World War II.

**Source 2: A cartoon from the British newspaper Punch, 1919**

The cartoon shows a man in a top hat, representing the British, standing over a man in a military uniform, representing the French. The man in the top hat is saying, 'I have just signed the Treaty of Versailles. It is a masterpiece of diplomacy. It will bring peace to the world.' The man in the military uniform is saying, 'It is a masterpiece of stupidity. It will bring war to the world.'

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## Topic summary

This appears at the end of every topic. It condenses the topic into a few points, which should help you get your bearings in even the most complicated content.

## Margin questions

These useful little questions are designed to keep you on track. They usually focus in on a source or a section of text to make sure you have fully understood the important points in there.

## Practice questions

These questions come at the end of major sections. They are designed to help you think about the kinds of questions you may come across in your exam. We do not know the exact questions you will be asked, but we know the style of question. Usually we have shown you the marks that might be available to give you a sense of how much time to spend on it. The question types are explained in the Assessment Focus sections.

## Factfile

Factfiles are more or less what they say – files full of facts! These give you important background information to a story, without interrupting the narrative too much.

## Assessment focus

This section takes you through the types of questions in the exam paper, how they are assessed and possible ways to answer them.

## Glossary and Key Terms

Glossary terms are highlighted LIKE THIS and defined in the glossary on pages 338–39. Key Terms are listed at the end of each chapter.

**1.1 Hope for the future? The Treaty of Versailles and nationalism and internationalism in the 1920s**

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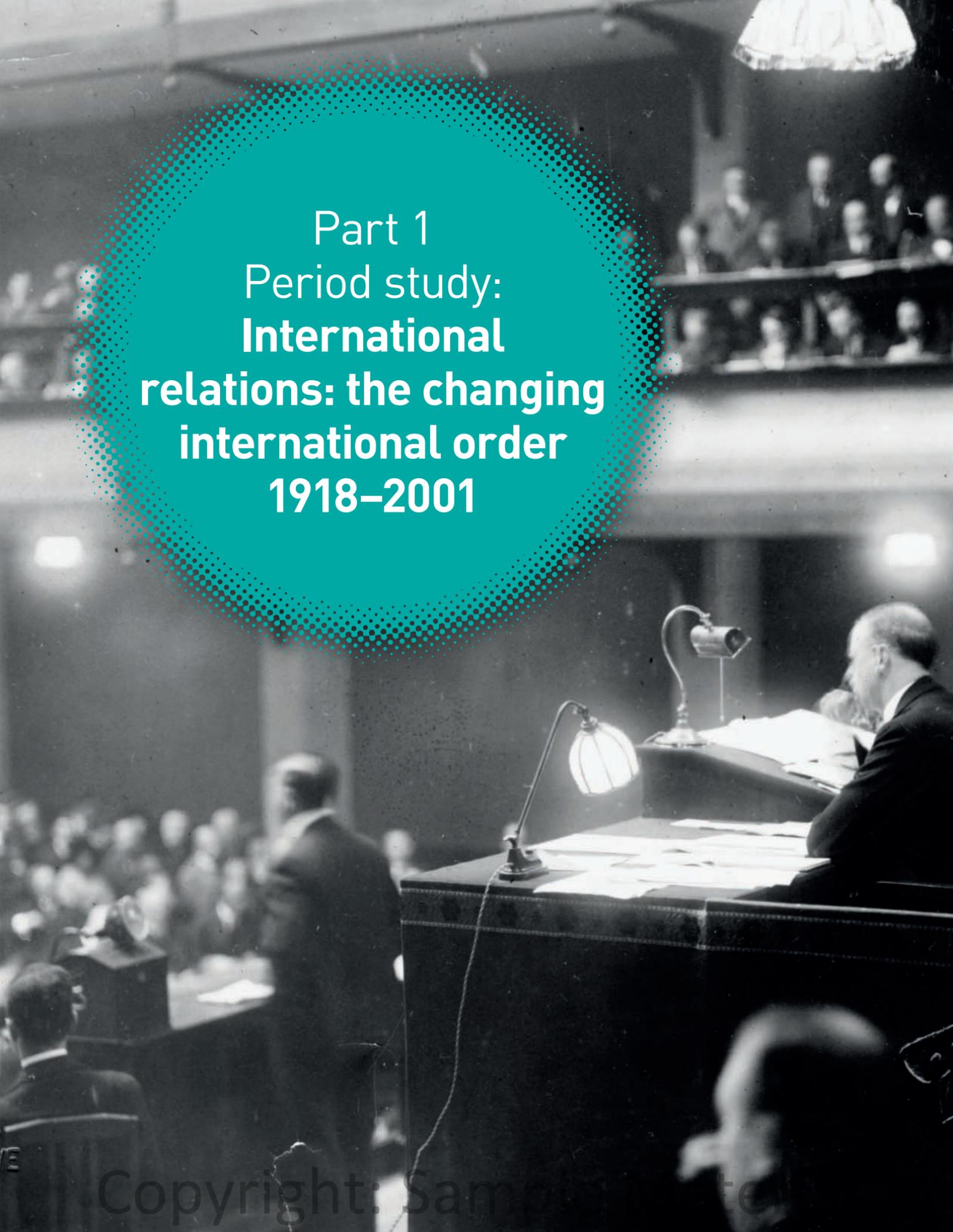
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## Profile

Profiles are essentially factfiles about people, summarising the key facts about a historical figure.



Part 1  
Period study:  
**International  
relations: the changing  
international order  
1918–2001**

# Explaining the modern world

The modern world is a big and complicated place, so explaining it is a pretty tall order! In this course we cannot really explain every aspect of everything that is happening around the globe today. However, right now the world is facing many problems, and almost all of these can be better explained and understood if we know where they came from – their history. The map below highlights some of the most significant issues at the present time and how the history in this book can help you understand them.

## Nationalist feeling in Europe

There are concerns that groups of people in some countries have developed a negative view of immigrants and are supporting nationalist anti-immigrant organisations. This is particularly strong in Britain, France and Germany – countries in which large numbers of migrants from eastern Europe have settled in the hope of finding work. Tension has also arisen over the huge numbers of refugees fleeing to Europe from the war in Syria and Iraq. Many Europeans are concerned by the rise in nationalist feeling that these events are causing. Nationalism was a key cause of both world wars (see Topics 1.1 and 1.3).

## Russia

Russia's oil and gas reserves have made it a wealthy and influential country. It is becoming increasingly powerful on the world stage. In recent years, Russia has intervened in the affairs of neighbouring Ukraine, taking control of the region of Crimea and supporting anti-government rebels in eastern Ukraine. Russia has also shown it will not be ordered around by the USA or any other country. We can trace the roots of this attitude back to Russia's rivalry with the USA in the Cold War (see Chapters 2 and 3).



## The USA

The USA is the world's greatest power – the wealthiest and most influential nation on Earth. However, at the moment it is struggling to recover from an economic depression, and history shows that economic depression often causes political problems (see Topic 1.2). The USA has also become bogged down in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, just as it did in Vietnam in the 1960s (see Topic 2.2).

## Crisis in Syria and Iraq

In recent times Syria and neighbouring Iraq were both war zones, torn apart by different factions. There are many different armed groups but the largest and most powerful is Islamic State. This group has taken over from al-Qaeda as the main radical Islamist organisation. The roots of these problems can be found in two places. The first is the way that the Middle East was divided up after the First World War (see Topic 1.1). The second is the role of Afghanistan in the Cold War (see Topic 2.2) and in the years that followed. The crisis in Syria and Iraq has created millions of refugees, many of whom are fleeing to Europe.

## China

China was referred to as a 'sleeping giant' in the first half of the twentieth century, but today it is a great global power. We can see the roots of China's rise in its relationship with the USA in the 1970s and 1980s in particular (see Topic 3.1). China now has the world's second-largest economy and it may soon overtake the USA to become number 1. How will the USA respond?

## 1.1

# Hope for the future? The Treaty of Versailles and nationalism and internationalism in the 1920s

## FOCUS

The First World War was a traumatic event. It left 40 million people dead or injured. By the time the war ended in 1918, political leaders and ordinary people alike were determined that nothing like it should ever happen again. Many believed that the only way to achieve a lasting peace was to replace nationalism (states acting in their own interests) with internationalism (international co-operation). In this topic, you will investigate the attempts to achieve this in the post-war years:

- Was nationalism or internationalism the driving force behind the Treaty of Versailles in 1919?
- How successful was the League of Nations in encouraging international co-operation through the 1920s?

## Preparing for peace

The First World War left a legacy of destruction and hatred, but despite this there were sincere hopes for peace and recovery. In the past, peace treaties had rewarded winners and punished losers (for example, the winners took land or money from the losers). This time it would be different.

The post-war treaties were to be agreed at the PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE in 1919. As DELEGATES prepared for their task one of the British officials at the conference, Sir Harold Nicolson, wrote in his diary: 'We were preparing not just for peace but Eternal Peace. There was about us the halo of divine mission.'

### Source 1 US President Woodrow Wilson, speaking in 1918.

*The day of conquest and self-interest is gone. ... What we demand is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us.*

## PROFILE

### Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924)

- Became a university professor.
- First entered politics in 1910. Became president of the USA in 1912 and was re-elected in 1916.
- An idealist and a reformer. People said that once he made his mind up on an issue he was almost impossible to shift.
- As president, he campaigned against corruption in politics and business. However, he had a poor record with regard to the rights of African Americans.
- From 1914 to 1917 he concentrated on keeping the USA out of the First World War.
- Once the USA joined the war in 1917, he drew up his Fourteen Points as the basis for ending the war fairly and to ensure that future wars could be avoided.



**FACTFILE****Wilson's Fourteen Points**

- 1 No secret treaties.
- 2 Free access for all to the seas in peacetime or wartime.
- 3 Free trade between countries.
- 4 All countries to work towards disarmament.
- 5 Colonies to have a say in their own future.
- 6 German troops to leave Russia.
- 7 Independence for Belgium.
- 8 France to regain Alsace-Lorraine.
- 9 Frontier between Austria and Italy to be adjusted.
- 10 Self-determination for the people of eastern Europe (they should rule themselves and not be ruled by empires).
- 11 Serbia to have access to the sea.
- 12 Self-determination for people in the Turkish Empire.
- 13 Poland to become an independent state with access to the sea.
- 14 League of Nations to be set up.

**FACTFILE****The Paris Peace Conference 1919–20**

- The Conference took place in the Palace of Versailles, a short distance from Paris.
- It lasted for 12 months.
- There were 27 separate delegations at the Conference. None of the defeated nations was invited.
- Five treaties were drawn up. The main one was the Treaty of Versailles, which dealt with Germany. The other treaties agreed how Germany's allies would be treated.
- All the important decisions on the fate of Germany were taken by the 'Big Three': George Clemenceau (prime minister of France), David Lloyd George (prime minister of Britain) and Woodrow Wilson (president of the USA).
- The Big Three were supported by hundreds of diplomats and expert advisers, but the leaders often ignored the advice they were given.

**Woodrow Wilson and the Fourteen Points**

President Wilson set out his vision for the post-war world in his **FOURTEEN POINTS** (see Factfile). His talk of **DISARMAMENT**, open dealings (and therefore no secret treaties) between countries, justice for small nations and international co-operation struck a chord with the people of Europe. His proposed **LEAGUE OF NATIONS** sounded like exactly what Europe needed: a place for countries to resolve their disputes without resorting to war. This was what people wanted to hear.

When Wilson arrived in Europe for the Paris Peace Conference, he was greeted as an almost saintly figure. Newspapers reported how some wounded soldiers in Italy tried to kiss the hem of Wilson's cloak and, in France, peasant families knelt to pray as his train passed by.

Behind the scenes, however, experienced politicians such as David Lloyd George of Britain and Georges Clemenceau of France had serious reservations about Wilson and his ideas. They doubted whether a peace treaty could live up to his **RHETORIC**. They felt that Wilson was being naive, not idealistic, and that he simply did not understand how complex the issues facing Europe were. They also worried about their own national interest. What if Wilson's Fourteen Points meant that France or Britain had to give up some of their own overseas empires? That would not go down well at home! Clemenceau and Lloyd George were not alone: plenty of people were asking whether **INTERNATIONALISM** could really work.

**Source 2** A cartoon published in an Australian newspaper in 1919, commenting on the Paris Peace Conference. ▼

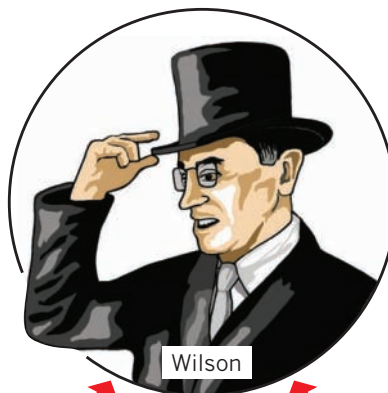


- 1 Look carefully at the features of the cartoon in Source 2. What is the cartoonist saying about disarmament?
- 2 Do you think the cartoonist favours nationalism or internationalism?
- 3 Would you say the cartoonist is optimistic or pessimistic about the prospects for peace? Make sure you can explain your answer with reference to details in the source.

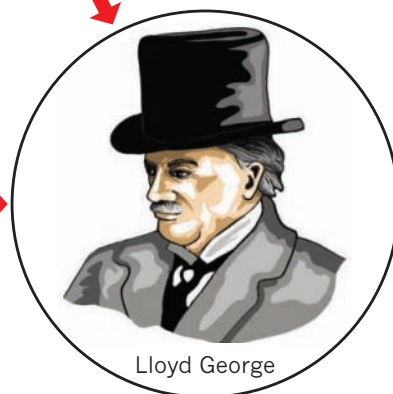
## Internationalism vs nationalism at the Paris Peace Conference

In Wilson's vision of the new world, all the delegates were supposed to discuss and agree major issues such as borders and REPARATIONS. In practice, this proved too complicated. Wilson quickly abandoned this principle and the BIG THREE ended up making the main decisions. However, even that proved difficult.

Clemenceau clashed with Wilson over many issues but particularly on **how to treat Germany**. Wilson wanted Germany punished, but not too harshly. He hoped to see a democratic state emerge there. He feared that a harsh settlement would leave Germany wanting revenge. But France shared a border with Germany and Clemenceau wanted to make sure his own country would be secure from any future German threat. Even in defeat Germany had a larger, younger population than France, and a stronger economy. The French people were also demanding that Germany be harshly punished for their pain and suffering. In the end, Wilson gave way to Clemenceau on many issues relating to Germany.



Wilson and Lloyd George did not always agree either. Lloyd George was particularly unhappy with point 2 of the Fourteen Points, which allowed **all nations access to the seas**. Similarly, Wilson's views on **self-determination** seemed a potential threat if such ideas were to spread to the British Empire.



Clemenceau also clashed with Lloyd George on **how to treat Germany**. Like Wilson, Lloyd George wanted Germany to recover swiftly from the war, although he had different reasons. He wanted an economically strong Germany so it could pay Britain compensation for war damage. Germany could also be a valuable trading partner for Britain in peacetime. However, Lloyd George did not want Germany to keep its navy and its colonies, as these would be a threat to Britain and its empire. Clemenceau felt that the British were inconsistent: generous to Germany when it suited them; tough when it was against their national interests.

### FOCUS TASK

Work in threes. Each one of you is one of the Big Three.

- Write a short paragraph about each of the other two showing what you think of them. Here are some words you might want to include: naive, arrogant, obstinate, idealistic, unrealistic, cynical, practical, confused.
- Now show your paragraphs to the other two members of your group and defend what you have said about them.

Clemenceau and Lloyd George did give Wilson what he wanted in eastern Europe, despite their reservations about self-determination. The worry here was that there were so many people of different ethnic origins in different regions, it was almost impossible to create a state that would not have some minority groups in it. This issue affected the other four treaties much more than it did the TREATY OF VERSAILLES.

**FACTFILE****The Treaty of Versailles**

The Big Three co-operated enough to draw up the Treaty of Versailles, but none of them was completely happy with the terms of the treaty. After months of negotiation, each of them had to compromise on some of their aims.

**1 War guilt**

Germany had to accept the blame for starting the war. The Germans felt this was extremely unfair.

**2 Reparations**

Germany was forced to pay reparations to the Allies for war damage. The exact figure was debated for some time and announced in 1921. It was set at £6.6 billion. If the terms had not later been changed, Germany would not have finished paying until 1984.

**3 Land**

Germany's European borders were changed so it lost land to neighbouring countries (see map). The result was that Germany lost 10 per cent of its land and 12.5 per cent of its population. The treaty also forbade Germany to form a union (*Anschluss*) with its former ally Austria.

A map showing the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the borders of Europe. ▼

Germany also lost its overseas empire. This had been one cause of bad relations between Britain and Germany before the war. Former German colonies became mandates controlled by the League of Nations (which effectively meant that they came under the control of France or Britain).

**4 Armed forces**

The size and power of the German army was a major concern, especially for France. The treaty reduced German forces to well below their pre-war levels:

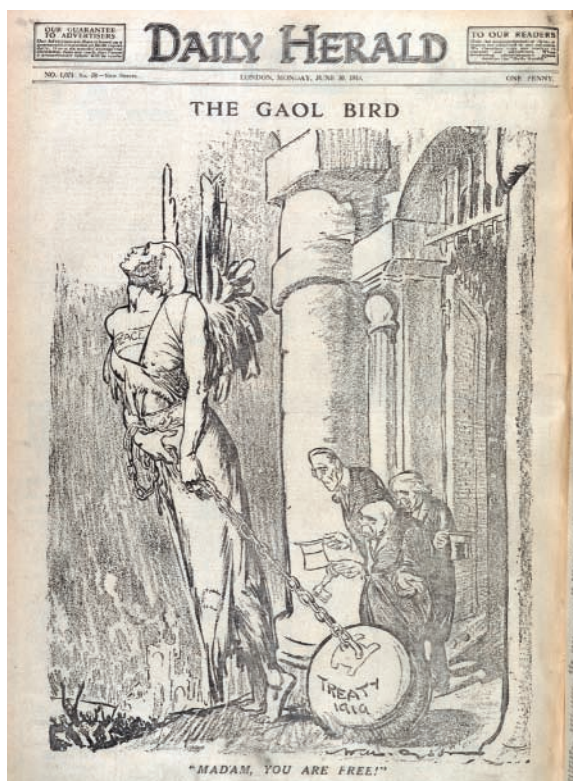
- The army was limited to 100,000 men and conscription was banned – soldiers had to be volunteers.
- Germany was not allowed armoured vehicles, submarines or aircraft.
- The navy could have only six battleships.
- The Rhineland (the border area between Germany and France) was demilitarised – no German troops were allowed there (see the pink area on the map).

**5 League of Nations**

Previous methods of keeping peace had failed and so the League of Nations was set up as an international 'police force'. Germany would not be allowed to join the League until it had proved its peaceful intentions.



**Source 3** A cartoon from the British newspaper the *Daily Herald*, 30 June 1919. ▼



1 Study Source 3. Explain the following features:

- a the figure with wings
- b the stance of the Big Three
- c the iron ball
- d the people in the bottom left corner.

## Reactions to the treaties

The Paris Peace Conference resulted in several treaties as well as the Treaty of Versailles (see Factfile). All the treaties were greeted with howls of protest from the defeated nations. In Germany, there was outrage when the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were announced:

- Many Germans did not believe that Germany had lost the war, it had simply agreed to an ARMISTICE (ceasefire). As such, they did not believe that they should be treated as a defeated nation. They were also angry that Germany had not been represented at the peace talks.
- The Germans felt that the WAR GUILT clause was unfair in blaming only Germany. They said that all countries should share the blame.
- The disarmament terms were also seen as unfair because none of the victorious countries reduced their own armed forces.
- Germans were appalled at losing land and population to neighbouring countries. They claimed that this was inconsistent with President Wilson's demand for SELF-DETERMINATION for the people of Europe.
- The huge reparations bill caused outrage. Reparations were blamed for the economic problems that devastated Germany later in the 1920s.
- Not being asked to join the League of Nations was humiliating for Germany. It also seemed hypocritical – the League was supposed to represent all nations, not just some of them.

The Treaty of Versailles was also criticised by people in France, who felt that it was not harsh enough. In Britain, some expressed concern that the treaty was *too* harsh. They felt that it would only breed hatred and discontent, giving rise to future conflict.

## FACTFILE

### Other treaties agreed at the Paris Peace Conference

The Treaty of Versailles is the best known of the post-war treaties, but these other treaties were also very important. The impact of many of them can still be seen today, especially in the Middle East.

#### Treaty of St Germain 1919 (Austria)

- Austria's army was limited to 30,000 men and Austria was forbidden to unite with Germany.
- The Austro-Hungarian Empire was broken up, creating a patchwork of new states in central and eastern Europe.
- Many of these new states contained large minority groups such as the many Germans who found themselves living in the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia.

#### Treaty of Neuilly 1919 (Bulgaria)

- Bulgaria lost land to Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia.
- Its army was limited to 20,000 and it had to pay £10 million in reparations.

#### Treaty of Trianon 1920 (Hungary)

- Hungary lost territory to Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.
- It was supposed to pay reparations but its economy was so weak that it never did.

#### Treaty of Sèvres 1920 (Turkey)

- Turkey lost lands to Italy and Greece.
- Its armed forces were severely limited.
- Turkey also lost much of its empire, mostly to France and Britain (which gained oil-rich Iraq).
- Turkey was dismayed at the treaty and used force to reverse some of its terms. These changes were set out in a new agreement, the Treaty of Lausanne, in 1923.

## How should we judge the peacemakers at the Paris Peace Conference?

On the whole the peacemakers have been judged harshly. Source 4 is a typical example of attitudes towards the leaders at the Paris Peace Conference. With hindsight, we can see that the Treaty of Versailles established the conditions for the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s. As such, it is often seen as a cause of the Second World War. However, not all historians believe this is true (see Sources 5 and 6).

### ACTIVITY

- 1 Study Source 4 on your own. Summarise the attitude shown towards the peacemakers in this commentary as though you were explaining it to someone who has not read it.
- 2 How far do you agree with the view expressed in Source 4? Make sure you can explain your decision.
- 3 Work in pairs. One of you study Source 5 and the other Source 6. List the ways in which your source either agrees or disagrees with Source 4, then report back to each other.
- 4 Decide whether Source 5 or Source 6 has most changed your view of Source 4.

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 1 Outline the views of President Wilson about peacemaking in 1919. (5)
- 2 Describe the main concerns of Lloyd George and Clemenceau at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. (5)
- 3 Explain why there were disagreements between the Big Three at the peace talks in Paris in 1919. (10)
- 4 Explain why there were protests against the Treaty of Versailles when it was issued in 1919. (10)

**Source 4** A comment from an online article published in 2009. The title of the article was 'The Treaty of Versailles – the Peace to end all Peace'.

*The Versailles Treaty was one of the most outrageous and predatory treaties in history. It was a blatant act of plunder perpetrated by a gang of robbers against a helpless, prostrate and bleeding Germany. Among its numerous provisions, it required Germany and its allies to accept full responsibility for causing the war and, under the terms of articles 231–248, to disarm, make substantial territorial concessions and pay reparations to the Entente powers.*

**Source 5** Historian Zara Steiner, writing in 2004.

*The Treaty of Versailles has been repeatedly pilloried, most famously in John Maynard Keynes' pernicious but brilliant 'The Economic Consequences of the Peace', published at the end of 1919 and still the argument underpinning too many current textbooks. ... The Treaty of Versailles was not excessively harsh. Germany was not destroyed. Nor was it reduced to a second rank power or permanently prevented from returning to great power status. ... The Versailles Treaty was, nonetheless, a flawed treaty. It failed to solve the problem of both punishing and conciliating a country that remained a great power despite the four years of fighting and a military defeat. It could hardly have been otherwise, given the very different aims of the peacemakers, not to speak of the multiplicity of problems that they faced, many of which lay beyond their competence or control.*

**Source 6** Historian Margaret MacMillan, writing in 2001.

*The peacemakers of 1919 made mistakes, of course. By their offhand treatment of the non-European world they stirred up resentments for which the West is still paying today. They took pains over the borders in Europe, even if they did not draw them to everyone's satisfaction, but in Africa they carried on the old practice of handing out territory to suit the imperialist powers. In the Middle East they threw together peoples, in Iraq most notably, who still have not managed to cohere into a civil society. If they could have done better, they certainly could have done much worse. They tried, even cynical old Clemenceau, to build a better order. They could not foresee the future and they certainly could not control it. That was up to their successors. When war came in 1939, it was a result of twenty years of decisions taken or not taken, not of arrangements made in 1919.*

### FOCUS TASK

#### Did nationalism or internationalism triumph at the Paris Peace Conference?

- 1 Look back over pages 10–15 and try to find:
  - a at least two events or developments that you think show internationalism at work
  - b at least two events or developments that show nationalism at work.
- 2 Compare your findings with a partner. Between you, decide whether you think nationalism or internationalism was more powerful in shaping the peace treaties. Make sure you can support your decision with at least two examples.

## The League of Nations: internationalism in action in the 1920s

The most significant method of international co-operation in the post-war world was the League of Nations. The idea of an organisation like this had been around for some time, but it was President Wilson who really championed it. The single most important aim of the League was to solve international disputes without going to war. This was reflected in the COVENANT signed by all members (see Source 7).

- 1 Study Source 7. Explain why the covenant would have been popular and made people optimistic.
- 2 Imagine you are living in 1920. You are wondering how the League will perform. Using Source 7 and the Factfile, what would you say were its strengths and weaknesses?

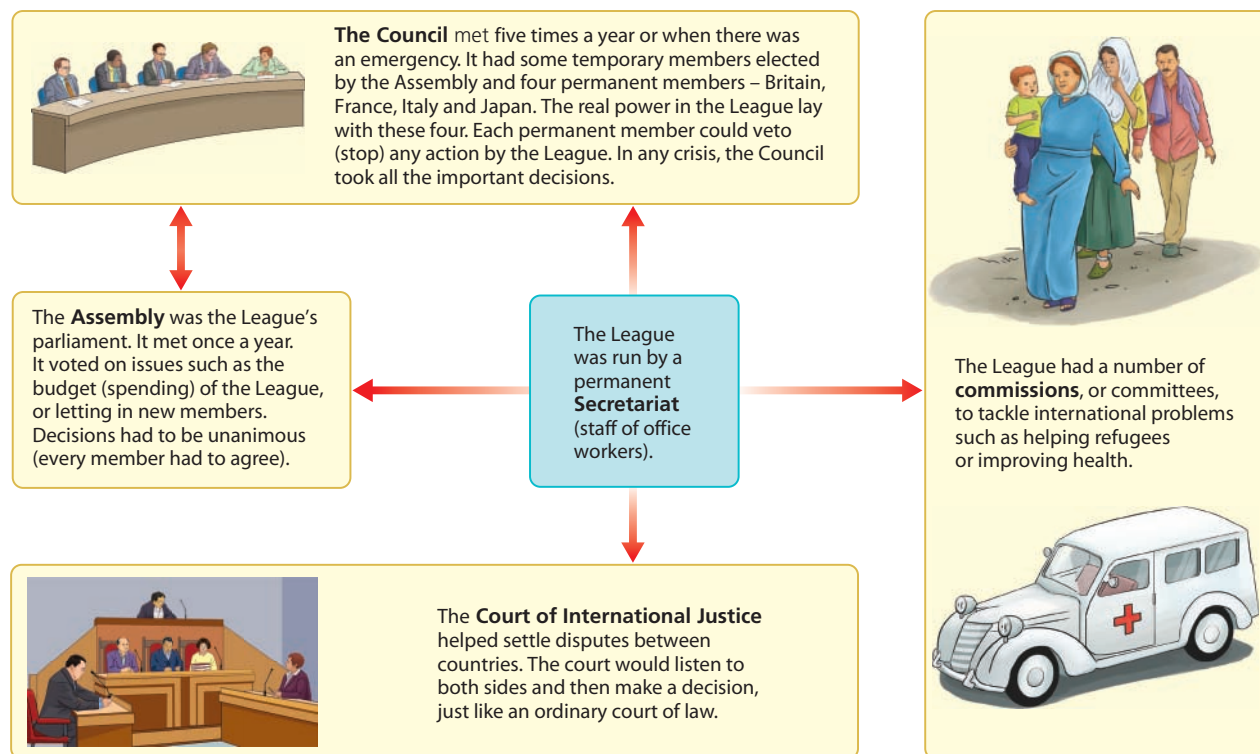
### Source 7 The introduction to the Covenant of the League of Nations.

*THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES, in order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security, agree to this Covenant of the League of Nations*

- by promising not to go to war
- by agreeing to open, just and honourable relations between nations
- by agreeing that governments should act according to international law
- by maintaining justice and respect for all treaty obligations.

### FACTFILE

#### How the League of Nations was organised.



The League began with 42 member nations. By 1939, there were over 50 members. But some powerful nations left the League and others, most notably the USA, never joined. The strongest influences were:

|         |      |   |      |
|---------|------|---|------|
| France  | 1919 | → | 1945 |
| Britain | 1919 | → | 1945 |
| Italy   | 1919 | → | 1937 |
| Japan   | 1919 | → | 1933 |
| Germany | 1926 | → | 1933 |
| USSR    | 1934 | → | 1939 |

## Wilson's vision

Once again Wilson raised expectations. He wanted the League of Nations to be like a world parliament, where representatives of all nations met regularly to solve problems. This was what people wanted to hear after the horrors of the war. All the major countries would join, binding themselves to the League's covenant. They would disarm. If they had a dispute with another country, they would take it to the League and accept its decisions.

League members would also promise to protect one another if attacked (this was called **COLLECTIVE SECURITY**). If any member broke the covenant and went to war illegally, other members would impose **ECONOMIC SANCTIONS** (i.e. they would stop trading with that country). Supporters of the League were particularly excited by this new weapon of economic sanctions. They believed it could be a powerful way of containing aggression without waging war. As a last resort, the League could take military action against an aggressor nation.

- 3 Match these visions for the League of Nations to each of the Big Three (Wilson, Lloyd George or Clemenceau):
  - a a strong body with its own army
  - b a world parliament with regular meetings
  - c a simple group to meet when there was an emergency.
- 4 Study Source 8. How can you tell that the cartoonist had doubts about the League?
- 5 How do you know that the cartoonist who created Source 9 is hostile to the League of Nations?

## Doubts and reservations

Not all the leaders of the major powers were convinced by Wilson's vision for the League of Nations. Lloyd George wanted a simpler organisation that met only in emergencies. In fact, a body like this already existed, called the Conference of Ambassadors. Lloyd George was also determined that membership in the League would not commit Britain to take certain actions in emergencies – he wanted Britain to be free to act in its own interests. Clemenceau was also sceptical about the League. Like Lloyd George, he wanted his country to be free to act independently. The French leader also thought that the League needed its own army to achieve anything.

Although the League of Nations had been the US president's idea, the United States could not join it unless the US Congress agreed. In March 1920, after almost a year of debate, Congress refused. By that time, however, the League of Nations had officially opened for business, so it was left to Britain and France to take the lead in trying to make it work.

**Source 8** A cartoon from the magazine *Punch*, March 1919. ▼



**Source 9** A Russian cartoon from 1919, commenting on the plans for the League of Nations. The caption reads: 'The League of Nations: Capitalists of all countries, unite!' ▼



## The work of the League's commissions

The League's commissions worked hard to solve problems left over from the war. They were driven by a desire to make life better for ordinary people, but also by the belief that social problems and poverty were a cause of international tension. If these issues could be solved, future wars may be prevented.

The League did not employ its own experts. Instead, lawyers, trade unionists and financial experts from member countries came together and co-operated under the 'umbrella' of the League's organisation. This was internationalism in action to improve people's lives.

In the 1920s, the League's commissions made several important achievements:

- The **Refugee Committee** helped an estimated 400,000 people who had been displaced by the war or made prisoners of war return to their homes.
- The **International Labour Organisation** successfully campaigned for workers' rights – especially for women and children – in all countries.
- The League brought in the first **Declaration of the Rights of the Child**, which is still in force today.
- The **Health Committee** funded research into deadly diseases, developing vaccines against leprosy and malaria. The League also fought successful campaigns against DRUG TRAFFICKING and slavery. For example, it was responsible for freeing the 200,000 slaves in British-owned Sierra Leone.
- Another area of achievement was in finance. For example, in 1922–23 the ECONOMIES of Austria and Hungary collapsed. In response, the League's **Financial Committee** came up with an economic plan to raise loans and help these two economies recover.

### A place to talk

The League also became a meeting place for experts in science, finance, law and health care, and for activists for women's and children's rights, working conditions and anti-slavery. Today, these groups might share information and ideas using the internet, but in the 1920s the League's commissions provided an important place for people to exchange ideas and introduce improvements.

### Legacy

Even after the League was replaced by the United Nations in 1945, several of its commissions were kept on because they were so valuable. For example, the International Labour Organization still operates today. The League's Health Committee is now the United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO) and the financial planning done by the Financial Committee was the basis for the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

**Source 10** The League Committee on Economic Questions, meeting in the 1920s. This was an official League of Nations' photograph. ▼



**Source 11** The celebrations marking the opening of the League of Nations, January 1920. ▲

- 1 Study Source 11. This photograph was published in different newspapers in many countries. Do you think the different newspapers would have put the same caption on the picture? Explain your answer.
- 2 Compare Sources 10 and 11. If you were producing a booklet promoting the League of Nations, which of these two images would you choose for the cover? Explain your answer.

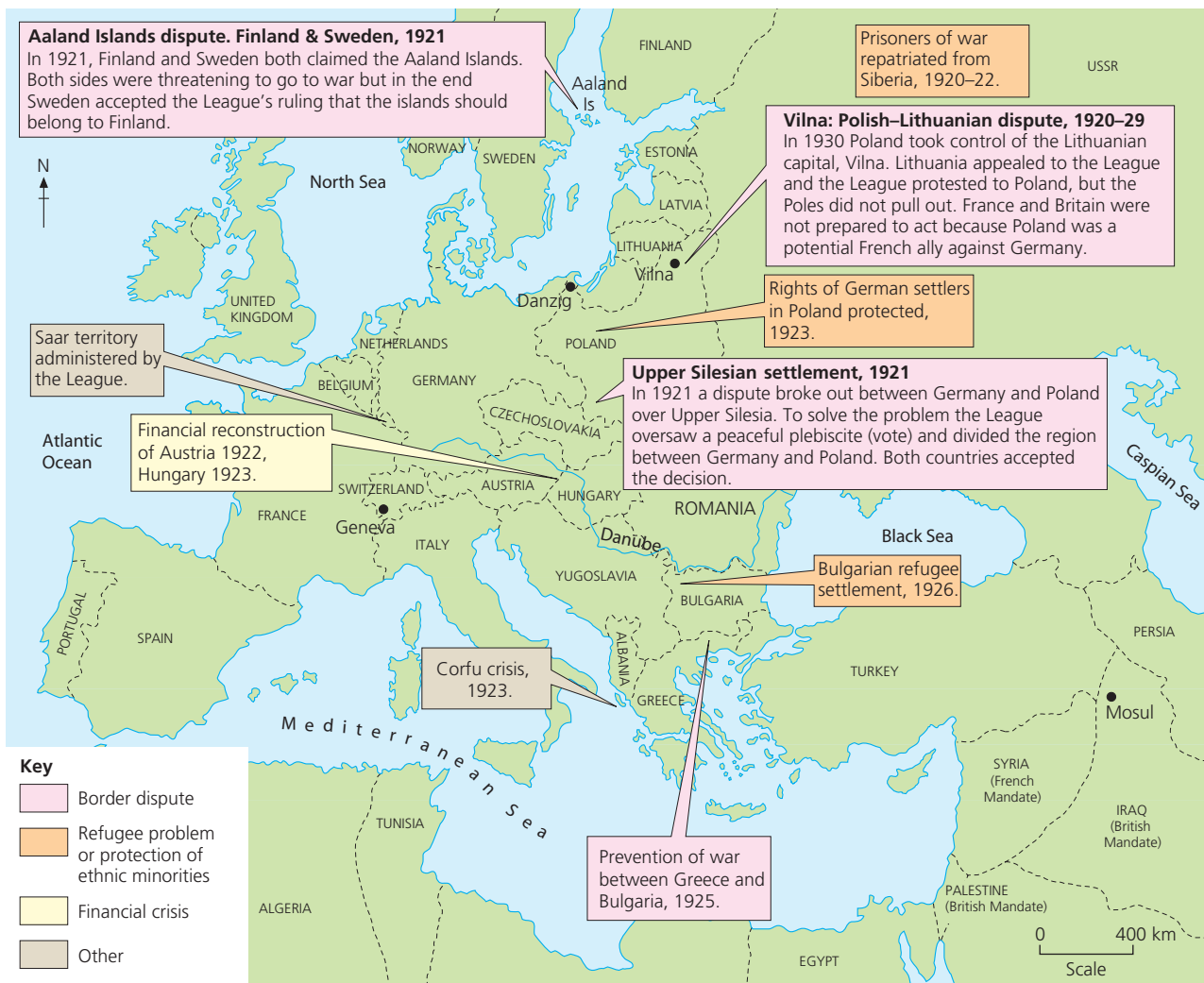
## The League of Nations and international security

Despite the achievements of its commissions, the League was always going to be judged primarily on whether it could prevent war between member nations. Many countries faced severe financial problems due to the cost of the war. In addition, the peace treaties themselves created a whole new set of problems. For example, redrawing the borders of a country on a map was easy enough, but making this work in practical terms was much more difficult. The defeated nations despised the terms of the treaties, but it was the League's job to enforce these terms.

So how well did the League do? The Factfile shows just a few of the 66 disputes dealt with by the League in the 1920s and summarises what happened in some of the border disputes. Next, you will look at two disputes in more detail: Corfu and Bulgaria.

### FACTFILE

A map showing the problems dealt with by the League of Nations in the 1920s.



## Corfu 1923

One of the borders that had to be decided after the war was between Greece and Albania. The Conference of Ambassadors was tasked with deciding where the border should be and it appointed an Italian general, Enrico Tellini, to supervise it. On 27 August 1923, while surveying the Greek side of the frontier area, Tellini and his team were ambushed and killed. The Italian leader Benito Mussolini was furious. He blamed the Greek government for the murders and demanded that Greece pay compensation to Italy and execute the murderers. When the Greek government refused to meet all of Italy's demands, Mussolini attacked and occupied the Greek island of Corfu. Fifteen people were killed. This attack violated the covenant, and Greece appealed to the League for help. The League condemned Mussolini's actions. However, it also suggested that Greece pay Italy the compensation.

Mussolini refused to let the matter rest. He claimed the Council of the League was not competent to deal with the issue and insisted that it should be decided by the Conference of Ambassadors. If Britain and France had stood together, Mussolini would probably have failed. However, the two leading League nations could not agree. Records from meetings of the British government show that they did not support Italy in the matter and were prepared to intervene to force Mussolini out of Corfu. The French backed Italy – probably because they were dealing with an issue in the RUHR region of Germany at the time, so they did not have the resources to support an armed intervention against Italy.

In the end Mussolini got his way. The Conference of Ambassadors ruled that the Greeks must apologise and pay compensation directly to Italy. On 27 September, Mussolini withdrew from Corfu, boasting of his triumph. There was much anger in the League over the Conference of Ambassadors' actions, but the ruling was never overturned.

- 1 'The main problem in the Corfu crisis was not the way the League worked, but the attitudes and actions of its own members.' Explain whether or not you agree with this statement.

## Bulgaria 1925

In October 1925, some Greek soldiers were killed on the border with Bulgaria. Greek troops invaded and Bulgaria appealed to the League for help. The League demanded that both sides stand down and told Greek forces to withdraw from Bulgaria. Britain and France backed the League's judgement (it is worth remembering they were negotiating the LOCARNO TREATIES at the same time, see opposite). Greece obeyed, but pointed out that there seemed to be one rule for large states such as Italy and another for smaller ones such as themselves. The outcome of the incident was seen as a major success for the League, and optimism about its effectiveness soared. However, the main reason the League succeeded in this case was because the great powers were united in their decision.

### FOCUS TASK

#### Internationalism vs nationalism in the 1920s

Look at the events and disputes on pages 18–20, then copy and complete the table below. You may decide that some disputes show examples of both internationalism

(international co-operation) and nationalism (states putting their own interests first).

| Dispute | Problem (who was involved and what they did) | Response (action taken by League, states or other organisations to solve problem) | Success for internationalism? (your judgement on whether nationalism or internationalism triumphed, with reasons) |
|---------|--|---|---|
|         |  |   |   |
|         |  |   |   |
|         |  |   |   |

## Disarmament

All the peace treaties stated that nations should disarm and it was the League's role to make sure that they did. However, throughout the 1920s it largely failed in this aim. At the Washington Conference in 1921, the USA, Japan, Britain and France agreed to limit the size of their navies, but that was as far as disarmament ever got. This failure was particularly damaging to the League's reputation in Germany. Germany *had* disarmed – it had been forced to – but no one else did so to the same extent.

**Source 12** A cartoon published in a British newspaper in December 1928. The caption reads: 'Peace (sadly): This looks very like the point we started from.' ►



PEACE (SADLY): "THIS LOOKS VERY LIKE THE POINT WE STARTED FROM."

- 2 According to the cartoon (Source 12), how much progress has been made on disarmament? What details in the cartoon led you to this conclusion?

## International agreements in the 1920s

Although disarmament failed, the major powers did work together to reach several agreements that seemed to make the world a safer and more secure place:

- **Rapallo Treaty (1922):** The USSR and Germany re-established diplomatic relations.
- **Dawes Plan (1924):** To avert an economic crisis in Germany, the USA lent it the money it needed to honour its reparations. These loans propped up the German economy and restored prosperity to the country in the mid-1920s.
- **Locarno Treaties (1925):** Germany accepted its western borders as set out in the Treaty of Versailles. This decision was greeted with great enthusiasm, especially in France, and it paved the way for Germany to join the League of Nations. However, nothing was said about Germany's eastern borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia. These states remained nervous about Germany.
- **Kellogg–Briand Pact (1928):** The official name for this was the 'General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy' (also known as the 'Pact of Paris'). It was an agreement between 65 nations not to use force to settle disputes.
- **Young Plan (1929):** Reduced the total amount of German reparations.

## So was the League of Nations irrelevant in the 1920s?

Each of these agreements was worked out by groups of countries working together rather than by the League of Nations, but this does not mean that the League was irrelevant. As long as such agreements were reached, it did not care whether or not it was involved. There is no doubt that during the 1920s the League was accepted as *one* of the ways in which international disputes were resolved, even if it was not the *only* way. Historian Zara Steiner has said that 'the League was very effective in handling the "small change" of international diplomacy'.

**Source 13** Historian Niall Ferguson, writing in 2006.

*Despite its poor historical reputation, the League of Nations should not be dismissed as a complete failure. Of sixty-six international disputes it had to deal with (four of which had led to open hostilities), it successfully resolved thirty-five and quite legitimately passed back twenty to the channels of traditional diplomacy. It failed to resolve eleven conflicts. Like its successor the United Nations, it was capable of being effective provided some combination of the great powers – including, it should be emphasized, those, like the United States and the Soviet Union, who were not among its members – had a common interest in its being effective.*

Some historians believe that the League's biggest achievement was the way it helped to develop an 'internationalist mind-set' among leaders. In other words, it encouraged them to think of collaborating rather than competing. The significance of this should not be underestimated. Before the First World War, the idea of international co-operation was largely unknown and most states would have been suspicious of an organisation like the League. To some degree the League changed these views simply by existing. Countries both large and small felt that it was worth sending their ministers to League meetings throughout the 1920s and 1930s, so they could have a say when they might not have done so otherwise.

**FOCUS TASK****Did nationalism or internationalism triumph in the 1920s?**

- 1 Look back over pages 18–21 and try to find:
  - a at least three events or developments that you think show internationalism being tried
  - b at least three events or developments that show nationalism at work.
- 2 Compare your findings with a partner. Between you, decide whether you think that nationalism or internationalism was more powerful in the 1920s. Make sure you can support your decision with at least two examples.

**TOPIC SUMMARY****Nationalism and internationalism in the 1920s**

- 1 The Paris Peace Conference was dominated by Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George (the Big Three), who disagreed on how to treat Germany, Wilson's Fourteen Points and the League of Nations.
- 2 Under the Treaty of Versailles Germany accepted blame for starting the war; had to pay reparations; lost land, industry, population and colonies; and was forced to disarm. People in Germany were appalled but they had no choice but to agree.
- 3 At the time, some thought the treaty was too soft on Germany, while others thought it was too harsh and could lead to another war. Most of the harshest criticisms came in the years just before and just after the Second World War, because critics blamed the peacemakers. Today, most historians think the criticisms are largely unfair. They believe the peacemakers had a near-impossible task and did a reasonable job in the circumstances.
- 4 The treaty set up a League of Nations to help prevent another war by encouraging international co-operation. The League's main methods of peacekeeping were diplomacy (talking), economic sanctions or, if necessary, using the armies of its members.
- 5 The League was the big idea of US president Woodrow Wilson, but his own country never joined. The leading members were Britain and France, but they had their own interests and bypassed the League when it suited them.
- 6 The League had some success in the 1920s, solving smaller international disputes and social, economic and humanitarian problems such as the refugee crisis.
- 7 The League also played a supporting role in helping the great powers sort out major international disputes, such as Corfu in 1923 (even though it failed to stand up to Italy).
- 8 The League was supposed to encourage disarmament, but failed to get any countries to disarm.

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

- 1 Outline the setting up of the League of Nations in 1919–20. (5)
- 2 Explain why the League of Nations had so much popular support when it was established. (10)
- 3 Outline the attempts by the League of Nations to maintain international peace in the 1920s. (5)
- 4 Explain why the humanitarian work of the League in the 1920s is generally seen as a success. (10)