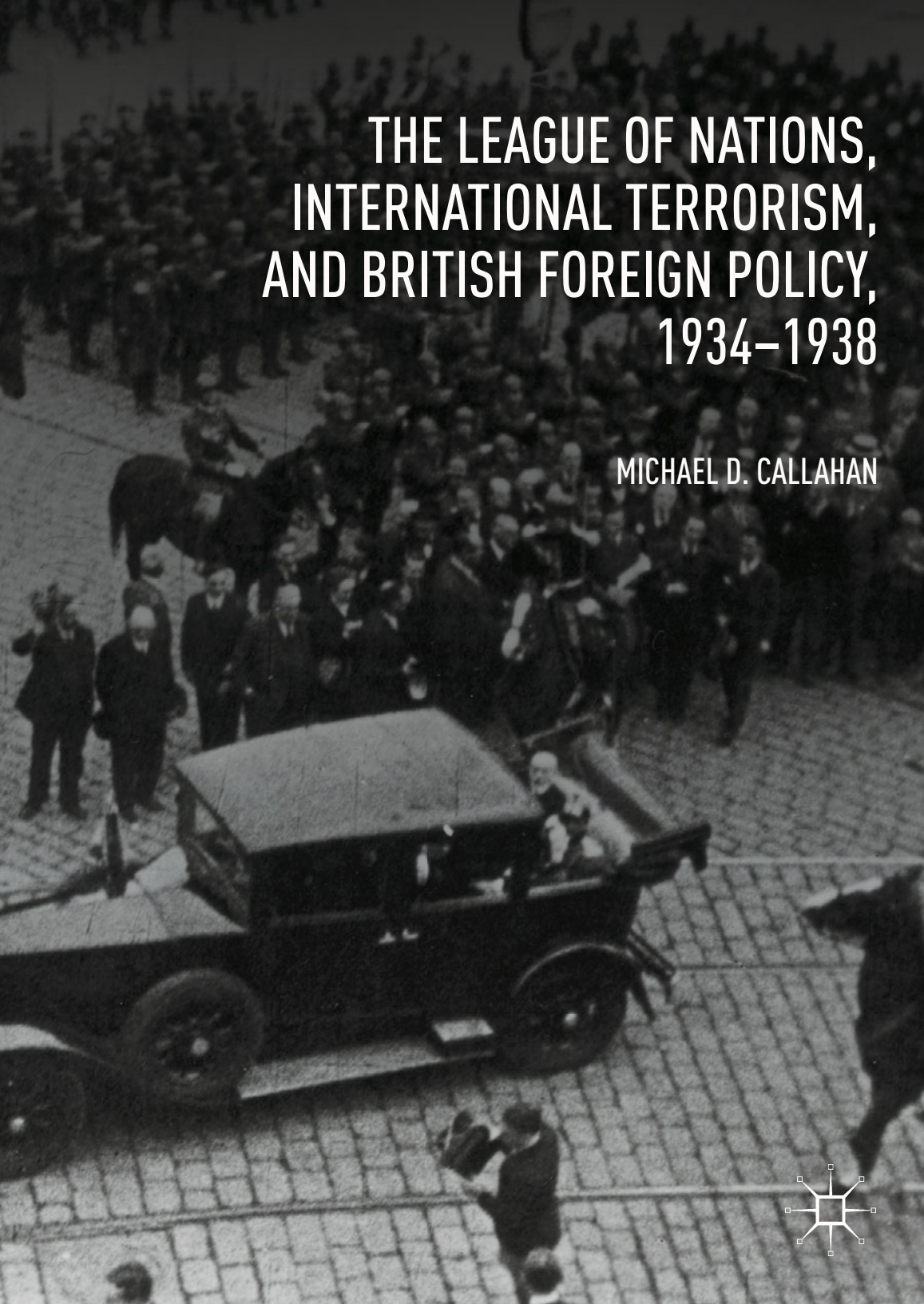

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1934–1938

MICHAEL D. CALLAHAN

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For
Christy, Mackenzie, and Jack

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University Library and for the services at Michigan State University Library. While every effort was made to identify and trace the owners of copyright material, I sincerely apologize if any copyright has been infringed.

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

On October 9, 1934, an assassin shot King Alexander I of Yugoslavia as he arrived in Marseilles to begin a state visit to France. Louis Barthou, the French foreign minister, who was riding in the car beside the king, was wounded in the melee and died later.[1] Evidence quickly established that the attack was an act of state-supported international terrorism. Alexander's murderer was a member of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), a separatist group that operated on both sides of the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border.[2] His three accomplices were Croatians who belonged to the Ustaša (Insurgent) Croatian Revolutionary Movement, which carried out attacks from sanctuaries in Hungary and Italy.[3] The terrorists' ultimate goal was to destabilize the multi-ethnic kingdom of Yugoslavia and create new nation states. Before going to Marseilles, the four conspirators had met at an Ustaša training camp in Hungary. Much like the shooting of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo twenty years before, Alexander's murder sparked an international crisis that threatened the peace of Europe. France was allied with Yugoslavia; Italy backed the Hungarians. In the background were alliances and individual states interested in either defending or changing the political status quo in Eastern and Central Europe. As Anthony Eden, soon to be Britain's foreign minister, recalled in his memoirs, "the dangers were clear enough, all the ingredients of the fatal weeks before the first world war were there again."[4]

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While these terrorist attacks had important similarities, their repercussions were very different. Europe avoided war in late 1934 largely because of the peacekeeping efforts of the League of Nations. According to the preamble of its Covenant, the main purposes of the organization were "to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security."[5] These central aims were accomplished in 1934, an achievement that represents the League at its most effective.

Alexander's murder caused much initial shock and confusion. Yugoslavia, joined by its allies Czechoslovakia and Romania, accused Hungarian authorities of supporting the terrorists who carried out the attack. Hungary denied responsibility and insisted on defending its honor. With strong leadership from Britain and France, the League made it possible for states to find common ground and adopt a unanimous resolution to this potentially dangerous dispute which preserved the peace that all sides wanted.[6] As part of this successful mediation, Geneva also sought to confront the serious threat of international terrorism. Guided by a proposal from the French government, jurists and officials from several countries spent the next three years drafting two international conventions.[7] The first classified specific terrorist acts, as well as conspiracies to commit them, as international crimes.[8] The second provided for the establishment of the world's first permanent international court to punish terrorists.[9] While both conventions were examples of constructive collaboration between states, reaching agreement was complicated and deeply divisive. As political realities in Europe rapidly changed, this accomplishment became largely irrelevant, increasingly technical and symbolic. In the end, few governments supported Geneva's anti-terrorism project in itself. In contrast to the League's success in keeping the peace in late 1934, the collective attempt from 1935 to 1938 to combat state-supported terrorism illustrates the progressively restrictive limitations on the organization's effectiveness.

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Scholarly interest in the history of the League has greatly increased in recent years.[10] Since the end of the Cold War, a growing number of historians and political scientists have discovered Geneva's many and wide-ranging humanitarian, economic, social, legal, and technical activities.[11] Some are also giving attention to how the League worked in complex ways to implement as well as extend the organization's central aims.[12] This new research has provided a much more balanced understanding of what Geneva actually accomplished, and why that mattered,

than earlier works that emphasized the organization's flaws and failures in light of the Munich agreement and the Second World War.[13]

The League of Nations was designed as a permanent, peacetime world-security organization. From its beginnings, it defined "peace" and "security" in terms of the experience of the First World War. "Cooperation" in various facets of international life meant diminishing the mutual misunderstandings and unintended provocations that many assumed had brought about war in 1914. A decade after the armistice of 1918, Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, often called the "war guilt clause," was already widely, if quietly, regarded as a simplistic embarrassment. Flaws in the international system, not deliberate plotting of aggression by Germany and Austria-Hungary, had caused the "Great War." Geneva's perceived purpose was not to deter wars of conquest, but to provide mechanisms by which men of goodwill, such as the architects of the Locarno accords of 1925, could resolve international differences through diplomacy.

In order to achieve this peace and security as well as promote such cooperation, League member states promised not to resort to war, to foster good relations between governments, to observe international law, and to respect all treaty obligations.[14] The vast majority of the world's sovereign states were League members by 1934. But both within and outside of the organization some observed that preventing war required an understanding of the root causes of political instability.[15] Peace depended on changing the way that states viewed themselves in relation to each other. New rules and systems for organizing international behavior were essential. This more expansive conception of global security work would require constructive conciliation, steady reform, and negotiated revision of international agreements.

Geneva addressed a wide range of daunting problems as part of this larger effort to bolster global security. The organization handled some thirty different international disputes in its first decade, several of which centered on the Balkans.[16] The League also took responsibility for controlling the international arms trade, aiding refugees, and protecting ethnic minority groups.[17] It supported humanitarian work, encouraged financial and economic collaboration, promoted public health and social welfare, fostered freedom of international transit and communications, and supervised the administration of dependent peoples in Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific.[18] Geneva mediated a number of border settlements in Europe.[19] It also championed intellectual cooperation,

facilitated the codification of international law, and supported the activities of the Permanent Court of International Justice.[20] Under the auspices of the League, governments agreed to criminalize slavery and the slave trade, the commerce in certain dangerous drugs and pornography, and traffic in women and children.[21] Such tasks not only contributed to world peace and security, but also made the League of Nations central to many of the transformative forces shaping the interwar period.

Despite this global impact, the League was profoundly limited, misunderstood by scholars as well as the general public. By 1920 it had already become clear that the United States would not join the organization, and that the universalist rhetoric of President Woodrow Wilson was delusional. States instead returned to traditional forms of international relations and regarded the League as an administrative mechanism and moral force, not a panacea. Thus, from the start the organization functioned in ways that few, including Wilson himself, had predicted.[22] Other states, including Brazil and Japan, further weakened the organization when they withdrew from it.[23] After Germany announced in 1933 its intention to withdraw, it ceased to participate in any League activities. Latin American and Asian members complained about what they regarded as the predominance of European influence in the organization. Aside from the Union of South Africa (a British dominion), Liberia and Ethiopia were the only African member states in 1934. The admission of Mexico, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ecuador, and the USSR compensated for some of these defections, but did not alter the fact that the League always lacked the authority that Wilson had envisioned to enforce global peace.

The League's influence was severely constricted in other ways as well. Geneva was not responsible for major international settlements such as the Washington Treaties of 1922 and the Locarno settlement. While some states viewed the organization's machinery as a means to institute reform and foster peaceful revisions to settlements over time, others saw it as tool to perpetuate the postwar status quo and resist change despite altered conditions. Above all, the League did not prevent many acts of aggression, including conflicts in the Far East, South America, Ethiopia, and Spain. It obviously did not halt the outbreak of the Second World War. After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the rise of Nazi Germany, a growing number of member states came to realize that the League as constituted simply could not stop aggression by a great power. None of this, however, demonstrates the organization's

unimportance. Rather, it indicates that the League was never what some of its prominent founders promised; its peacekeeping authority was always circumscribed by international power constraints beyond its control.

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The scholarly literature on Geneva's role in ending the Hungaro-Yugoslav crisis of 1934 and the organization's subsequent anti-terrorism work is scanty and fragmented.[24] Standard accounts of the League offer little or nothing on the matter.[25] Despite a huge amount of available archival material and published resources, there are no books on the subject.[26] More importantly, while Geneva's contribution to peace in the 1920s is now receiving reassessment, the secondary literature still largely discounts the organization's achievements and distorts how it actually functioned during the following decade. Many scholars continue to contend that states did not or could not use the machinery of the League to ease political tensions and address serious problems.[27] A study of Geneva's response to the terrorist attack at Marseilles challenges such assumptions.

Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany were not the source of all of Europe's problems during the 1930s. Much European political violence was deeply rooted in the ideological and ethnic conflicts developing in the east and southeast of the continent.[28] The creation of the League was a reaction against a world war that, whatever its long-term causes, was precipitated by chronic instability in the Balkans. Yugoslavia, along with Romania and Czechoslovakia, greatly benefitted from the peace treaties signed after the First World War. Austria-Hungary was divided, with each part losing substantial amounts of land and population. Bulgaria also suffered. Italy gained, but not as much other states. Both Italy and Hungary supported those groups and governments who insisted that they had lost territories they were entitled to under the principle of nationality and that therefore demanded revision of the peace treaties. From the start, therefore, governments and individuals supporting the postwar order faced "revisionists" whose national aspirations could be fulfilled only at the expense of other states. This made for an inherently unstable political situation in Europe that constantly threatened to degenerate into insurrection, terrorism, and even war.

Managing these myriad sources and symptoms of political violence in the Balkans was vital to the League of Nations from its origins. Geneva's actions after Alexander's murder prove that the organization not only could carry out this essential peacekeeping duty, but could do

so in constructive and often creative ways. It also was able to continue to foster the development of experimental legal methods and institutions designed to address specific international problems. Yet as with earlier settlements under the auspices of the League, successful resolution of the international crisis of late 1934 was imperfect and limited. It was a diplomatic compromise that required concealing certain facts while distorting others—the sort of solution that states aligned on all sides of an international dispute can choose to accept when they are genuinely determined to prevent war for fear of where it might lead. Such determination was absent in 1914 and would be again in 1939.

Reexamining the role of the League of Nations in settling the dispute between Yugoslavia and Hungary also has implications for the study of British foreign policy, especially the meaning of "appeasement" during the 1930s.[29] Britain was indispensable to the League's resolution of this dispute and was actively involved in Geneva's subsequent anti-terrorism efforts. Alexander's assassination traumatized Britain's minister in Belgrade, Nevile Henderson, and had a lasting impact on his diplomacy.[30] He went on to serve as the British ambassador to Germany from 1937 to 1939. Eden was Britain's representative on the League Council and was a central actor in resolving the international crisis in 1934. In retrospect, he rightly called it "a dispute of the type which the League of Nations was well qualified to handle."[31] Later, as minister for League of Nations affairs and then as foreign secretary, Eden ensured that Britain participated in Geneva's efforts to combat terrorism for the next three years. Sir John Simon, the foreign secretary between 1931 and 1935, also helped to avert a potentially dangerous conflict from erupting in Europe after Alexander's murder and took a personal interest in the question of international terrorism. As the home secretary from 1935 to 1937, he was essential in shaping British policy on the issue.

Britain, with a range of global interests, considered preserving Geneva's moral authority and maintaining stability in European affairs as of fundamental importance. If the League had a role to play in international relations, it was to help correct the flaws of the postwar order and preserve the peace. The terrorist attack at Marseilles alarmed London because it threatened to widen an already dangerous division in Europe. Britain wanted to stay out of any military conflicts that might result. Only a few months earlier, when Austrian Nazis assassinated Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, Simon told British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald that "[w]e must

keep out of trouble in Central Europe at all costs. July, twenty years ago, stands as an awful warning."[32]

Memories of 1914 drove the British government firmly and consistently to urge restraint on all sides after Alexander's assassination. While Simon initially feared that public demands for "justice" and calls to end "terrorism" were only likely to make the situation more dangerous, Yugoslavia's formal appeal to the League Council under the provisions of the Covenant ultimately made a negotiated and peaceful resolution to the crisis possible. For Britain, this settlement was example of reconciliation and appeasement within the framework of international cooperation. Historians seeking to explain the roots of the conciliatory attitude that eventually led to the Hoare–Laval Pact in late 1935 or the initial reactions to the Czech crisis in early 1938 need to understand how Britain responded to the terrorist attack at Marseilles in 1934.

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This book examines the intersection of the League of Nations, state-supported terrorism, and British foreign policy in the 1930s. It attempts to explain how Geneva's role in preventing the terrorist attack at Marseilles from leading to war in 1934, as well as its role in drafting two international conventions to suppress and punish terrorism between 1935 and 1938, demonstrate both the organization's function and limits. This study aims to contribute to debate about the utility of the League, the impact of state-supported terrorism on the international order, and the nature of British foreign policy after Hitler's rise to power. It also seeks to add to the scholarship on the history of modern international criminal law and legal procedure. In particular, this book offers reappraisals of the efficacy of one of the central security provisions of the Covenant and the scope of the League's more far-reaching security agenda. It contributes to the enormous historical literature on appeasement and explores how the British government's attitudes toward international terrorism were shaped not only by the actions of other states, but also by Britain's legal and moral obligations to the organization itself. These attitudes were informed by national traditions, domestic politics, individual personalities, and an awareness of Britain's limited options in confronting international crises in the 1930s.

While the League demonstrated that it still had effective peacekeeping authority in late 1934, its complex and often vexed efforts to combat terrorism in the years that followed were even more complicated by a

number of new factors. The most important of these was Nazi Germany. The League's anti-terrorism efforts were designed to deter or punish emulators of Alexander's assassination, not contend with the sorts of challenges that Hitler posed. His regime never participated in this collective response to international terrorism.[33] In sharp contrast to most British and French statesmen, Hitler considered war and the threat of war legitimate tools of international relations.[34] His actions simply overwhelmed the various debates about combating terrorism. Despite widespread determination to avoid repeating the First World War, Geneva's anti-terrorism project was increasingly divorced from the shifting realities leading to a new and very different global conflict. As the League deteriorated, direct threats to peace in Europe changed from Hungary and Italy aiding anti-Yugoslav terrorist groups to a far more dangerous great power's willingness to use force or the threat thereof to achieve its international objectives. In essence, state-supported political violence became subsumed in "war" rather than "terrorism."

Geneva could not attain the unattainable. The League did, however, provide an effective means for preventing the outbreak of a potentially dangerous and unpredictable conflict in Europe in 1934. It could not stop "Hitler's War" of 1939, but it did help to avert a repetition of the "Great War" of 1914. The League also enabled its members to cooperate in exploring ways to respond to the danger of international terrorism, a problem that remains among the most important and difficult in international relations. They did so with much the same lack of success the contemporary world has seen. Still, these same member states, along with other groups and individuals, were able to use Geneva's anti-terrorism project to advance their own objectives as the international situation changed between 1935 and 1938. France demonstrated loyalty to its European allies and portrayed itself as willing to develop new international laws and legal institutions to promote international cooperation. Britain showed public support for League principles while avoiding new international commitments. Other powers tried to strengthen the organization's capacity for collective action as jurists and academics championed a range of legal reforms. But in order to place the 1930s within a broader historical context, it is necessary to know how Geneva settled a serious international dispute resulting from a terrorist attack in Europe in 1934 and took organized action against state-supported terrorism between 1935 and 1938 in an effort to preserve peace in an increasingly uncertain world.

Notes

1. Among the many, sometimes contradictory, accounts are Stephen Graham, *Alexander of Yugoslavia: The Story of the King Who Was Murdered at Marseilles* (New York: Yale University Press, 1959); Vladeta Milićević, *A King Dies in Marseilles: The Crime and Its Background* (Bad Godesberg: Hohwacht, 1959); Allen Roberts, *The Turning Point: The Assassination of Louis Barthou and King Alexander I of Yugoslavia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970); Roger Colombani and Jean-René Laplayne, *La Mort d'un Roi: La vérité sur l'assassinat d'Alexandre de Yougoslavie* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1971); and François Broche, *Assassinat de Alexandre Ier et Louis Barthou: Marseille, le 9 octobre 1934* (Paris: Bolland, 1977).
2. For more on IMRO, see Hugh Poulton, *Who Are the Macedonians?* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 79–85 and James Frusetta, "Common Heroes, Divided Claims: IMRO between Macedonia and Bulgaria," in John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower, eds., *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), pp. 110–30.
3. For more on the Ustaša, see James J. Sadkovich, *Italian Support for Croatian Separatism, 1927–1937* (New York and London: Garland, 1987) and Mark Biondich, "'We Were Defending the State': Nationalism, Myth, and Memory in Twentieth Century Croatia," in Lampe and Mazower, eds., *Ideologies and National Identities*, pp. 54–81.
4. Eden's memoirs, in three volumes, appeared with inconsistent publication details. Avon, Earl of (Anthony Eden), *The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 120.
5. For the full text of the Covenant, see, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.
6. "Minutes of the Eighty-Third (Extraordinary) Session of the Council," *Official Journal*, 15th year, No. 12, (Part II), (December 1934), pp. 1759–60. For the full text of the Council's resolution, see Appendix B.
7. Ibid., p. 1739 and "Proposed Bases of an International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism," Annex 1524, pp. 1839–40. For the full text of the French proposal, see Appendix A.
8. For the full text of the convention, see Appendix C.
9. For the full text of the convention, see Appendix D.
10. For more, see, http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/IHS/ the online resources compiled by the Indiana University Center for the Study of Global Change, http://www.indiana.edu/~league/bibliography.htm, as well as

the list of scholars currently working on the League of Nations, available at: http://leagueofnationshistory.org.

11. For a few recent examples, see Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 9–36; Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), pp. 116–88; Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapters 2 and 3; and Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), Chapter 2.
12. Martyn Housden, *The League of Nations and the Organisation of Peace* (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2012), pp. 3–19. In addition to Housden's excellent introductory text, see Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 349–86 and 565–601. Also see Peter J. Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy 1914–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
13. A few prominent examples from the 1970s include George Scott, *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1973); Elmer Bendiner, *A Time for Angels: The Tragicomic History of the League of Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975); and James Avery Joyce, *Broken Star: The Story of the League of Nations* (Swansea: Christopher Davies, Ltd., 1978).
14. For a contemporary overview of international law during this period, see Green Haywood Hackworth, *Digest of International Law*, 8 vols. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1940–1944), vol. II, pp. 1–46.
15. For examples, see League of Nations, Forward by Sir Eric Drummond, *League of Nations: Ten Years of World Co-operation* (London: Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., 1930), p. 49 and William E. Rappard, *The Geneva Experiment* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), pp. 68–86.
16. For detailed accounts of three of these conflicts, see James Barros, *The Corfu Incident of 1923: Mussolini and the League of Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); James Barros, *The Åland Islands Question: Its Settlement by the League of Nations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968); and James Barros, *The League of Nations and the Great Powers: The Greek-Bulgarian Incident, 1925* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

17. For more, see David R. Stone, "Imperialism and Sovereignty: The League of Nations' Drive to Control the Global Arms Trade," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 35, no. 2 (April 2000), pp. 213–30; Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-war Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
18. For more, see Michael D. Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914–1931* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 1999) and *A Sacred Trust: The League Nations and Africa, 1929–1946* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2004). Also see Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation, 1921–1946* (Frankfort: Peter Lang, 2009) and Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
19. For the League's role in the settlements of the borders of Vilnius, Memel, and Upper Silesia, see Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, pp. 105–9, 152–8, and 302–5.
20. For a contemporary study of the Permanent Court of International Justice, see Manley Ottmer Hudson, *The World Court, 1921–1934* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934).
21. For an overview of the League's activities in 1934, see the League of Nations Association, *A Brief History of the League of Nations 1934 Edition* (New York: The League of Nations Association, Inc., 1934).
22. While never a member of the League, the United States did actively participate in a number of committees and commissions of the organization as well as the Permanent Court of International Justice. For more, see Warren F. Kuehl and Lynne K. Dunn, *Keeping the Covenant: American Internationalists and the League of Nations, 1920–1939* (Kent, OH and London: The Kent State University Press, 1997).
23. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, pp. 196, 389–90, 497, and 788 and Thomas W. Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914–1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), pp. 194–209.
24. The most comprehensive analysis is Martin David Dubin, "The Political and Diplomatic Context of International Terrorism" in *International Terrorism: Two League of Nations Conventions, 1934–1937* (Millwood and New York: Kraus International Publications, 1991), pp. 1–99 and "Great Britain and the Anti-terrorist Conventions of 1937," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 1–19. The best single

study of the Hungaro-Yugoslav conflict is Bennett Kovig, "Mediation by Obfuscation: The Resolution of the Marseille Crisis, October 1934 to May 1935," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1976), pp. 191–221. A useful short account of Britain and the League's anti-terrorism efforts is Charles Townshend, "'Methods which all civilized opinion must condemn': The League of Nations and International Action against Terrorism" in Jussi M. Hanhimäki and Bernard Blumenau, eds., *An International History of Terrorism: Western and Non-Western Experiences* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 34–50. The best legal study is Ben Saul, "The Legal Response of the League of Nations to Terrorism," *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, vol. 4, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 78–102. Also see J. J. Lador-Lederer, "A Legal Approach to International Terrorism," *Israel Law Review*, vol. 9, no. 2 (April 1974), pp. 194–220; L. C. Green, "Aspects of Terrorism," *Terrorism*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1982), pp. 373–400; and Geoffrey Marston, "Early Attempts to Suppress Terrorism: The Terrorism and International Criminal Court Conventions of 1937," *British Year Book of International Law*, vol. 73 (2002), pp. 293–313. Well-researched recent studies are Paul Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century: The League of Nations Era, 1919–1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and Mark Lewis, *The Birth of the New Justice: The Internationalization of Crime and Punishment, 1919–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), especially pp. 122–49. A helpful survey is Randall D. Law, *Terrorism: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 142–59.

25. The standard treatment remains Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, pp. 599–605. Also see Scott, *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations*, pp. 313–6; Bendiner, *A Time for Angels*, pp. 306–11; and George Gill, *The League of Nations: From 1929 to 1946* (Garden City, NY: Avery Publishing Group, 1996), pp. 134, 135, and 147. Works that make no mention of the League's anti-terrorism efforts include F. S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times 1920–1946* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986); The League of Nations Archives, *The League of Nations 1920–1946: Organization and Accomplishments: A Retrospective of the First Organization for the Establishment of World Peace* (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 1996); Ruth Henig, *The League of Nations* (London: Haus Publishing Ltd., 2010); and Marit Fosse and John Fox, *The League of Nations: From Collective Security to Global Rearmament* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2012).
26. A particularly valuable resource is Dubin, *International Terrorism: Two League of Nations Conventions, 1934–1937*. This work includes a set of eighteen microfiche that contain nearly 1800 pages of documents, the bulk of which are excerpted from official published sources as well as

some unpublished correspondence. It also contains a useful chronology of events and an extensive glossary.

27. One recent exception is Pierre-Etienne Bourneuf, "'We Have Been Making History': The League of Nations and the Leticia Dispute (1932–1934)," *The International History Review*, vol. 39, no. 4 (August 2017), pp. 592–614.
28. For more on this general point, see Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, eds., *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), particularly pp. 1–39.
29. The scholarly literature on this subject is vast. A good place to start is Paul Kennedy and Talbot Imlay, "Appeasement," in Gordon Martel, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered: A. J. P. Taylor and the Historians*, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 116–34. Also see Peter Neville, *Hitler and Appeasement: The British Attempt to Prevent the Second World War* (London and New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006) and Terrance L. Lewis, *Prisms of British Appeasement: Revisionist Reputations of John Simon, Samuel Hoare, Anthony Eden, Lord Halifax and Alfred Duff Cooper* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).
30. On Henderson's career in Belgrade, see Peter Neville, *Appeasing Hitler: The Diplomacy of Sir Nevile Henderson, 1937–39* (London and New York: Macmillan Press and St. Martin's Press, 2000), especially pp. xiv and 14–9.
31. Avon, *Facing the Dictators*, p. 132.
32. Simon to MacDonald, July 27, 1934, Simon Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford (BLO), MSS.Simon 79/39-40.
33. On earlier efforts to combat prewar anarchism, see James Joll, *The Anarchists*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980) and Richard Bach Jensen, "The First Global Wave of Terrorism and International Counter-Terrorism, 1905–1914," in Hanhimäki and Blumenau, eds., *An International History of Terrorism*, pp. 16–33.
34. In addition to those sources cited above, see Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims: Ideology, the Nazi State, and the Course of Expansion* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1973); Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938–1939* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); and Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933–1939: The Road to World War II* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005).

CHAPTER 2

"The Chief Danger in Europe at Present"

The League of Nations was already facing a number of difficult challenges before the terrorist attack at Marseilles in 1934. Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the rise of Hitler in Germany, and the failure of world disarmament had altered perceptions of the League, and how it functioned as a peacekeeping organization. International relations in general were being transformed, as some governments persisted in hoping to preserve the postwar order while others demanded changes. The policies of Europe's great powers were central to this increasingly dangerous political divide as the League's interests and their own diverged. French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou, for one, contended that the hostility between Italy and Yugoslavia over the future of the Balkans was the main threat to European peace. An understanding of the shifting diplomatic context of the early 1930s is essential for explaining why the individuals associated with the League, particularly the makers of British foreign policy, responded as they did to King Alexander's assassination.

At the same time, the old problem of organized political and ethnic violence continued despite the 1919 peacemaking efforts and creation of the League. Much as before the First World War, southeastern Europe remained a focal point for such violence, forcing governments to consider the nature and implications of "terrorism," both domestic and international. While many identified terrorism as a danger to peace, there was little discussion over how best to counter or even define it. Some jurists advocated expanding the League's role in unifying criminal

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law among states, the better to prevent and punish certain forms of political violence. Others, especially the British, expressed skepticism about a collective response to terrorism, let alone criminalizing it under international law. While Hungary and Yugoslavia publicly clashed over the issue at Geneva, and worries about political instability in Europe had intensified in the months before Alexander's murder, there was no sense of urgency about cooperating to combat state-supported terrorism. The terrorist attack at Marseilles would provide the missing incentive for an international approach to the problem as well as for a settlement of the international crisis it would spark.

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After the First World War, the victors cobbled together the "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" from the former Austro-Hungarian provinces of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the independent states of Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonian lands previously part of Bulgaria. This arrangement satisfied some Balkan peoples while frustrating many others. An original member of the League of Nations, the kingdom was plagued by internal political and ethnic turmoil from its founding. League officials recognized privately that the Belgrade government actively discriminated against non-Serbs, who comprised more than 60% of the population.[1] Many within this population not only had political expectations that differed from those of the Serbs, but also they did not share a common interpretation of history, harbored deep-rooted ethnic and religious hatreds, and often identified with different neighboring sovereign states including Albania and Bulgaria. As early as 1922, the leader of the main Croatian political party, Stjepan Radić, called on Geneva to dissolve the new kingdom and create an independent Croat state.[2] When a Serb politician murdered Radić in 1928, his widow and other Croats looked to the League to investigate the crime.[3] Macedonian organizations in Europe and North America routinely pressed the League to support Macedonia's "struggle for liberty and independence."[4] Fear of instability and separatism finally convinced Alexander to establish a royal dictatorship in early 1929. In October, he changed the name of the country to "the Kingdom of Yugoslavia" and resorted to harsh measures to preserve national unity.

This proved difficult. Yugoslavia's problems with separatists only worsened as a series of bombings and shootings in the early 1930s killed hundreds of people.[5] Many of these attacks were carried out by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), a terrorist organization

dedicated to independence for Macedonia, a territory divided between Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia. IMRO was based in Bulgaria with the tacit support of right-wing government officials in Sofia, but it also received aid from Benito Mussolini's fascist Italy.[6] After a military coup in Bulgaria in May 1934, the new government subdued the group in an effort to restore internal order and improve ties with other Balkan states including Yugoslavia. While IMRO's influence rapidly diminished, it continued to cooperate with other anti-Yugoslav groups, particularly the Ustaša.

The Ustaša movement had emerged in the late 1920s. Its leader was Ante Pavelić, a member of one of the smaller nationalist Croat political parties elected as a deputy in the regional assembly in Zagreb in 1927. He fled to Austria soon after Alexander proclaimed his royal dictatorship, then sent an "Appeal to the League of Nations" in September 1929 calling on the secretary-general to defend the "Croat nation" against "the autocrat of Belgrade."[7] He made a second appeal to the League a few weeks later.[8] After a brief period in Germany, Pavelić moved to Rome where the government gave him asylum and financial support. While many members of the Ustaša followed Pavelić to Italy, others found sanctuary in Hungary at a farming commune that also served as a terrorist training camp near the Yugoslav border. With a monthly subsidy from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ustaša developed on the fascist model and forged close ties with IMRO in the common aim of overthrowing Alexander's regime and replacing it with new independent states.

Increasing numbers of terrorist attacks in 1934 only made the question of internal stability and territorial integrity more vital to Yugoslavia. Along with Czechoslovakia and Romania, the kingdom benefitted from terms of the Paris peace treaties and other settlements that established the map of postwar Europe.[9] Many territorial gains those states secured flagrantly disregarded nationality and thus violated the principles of Woodrow Wilson's original Fourteen Points. Czechoslovakia emerged from the ruins of the former Austro-Hungarian empire and was comprised of Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Rusyns, among other minorities. Romania acquired lands previously ruled by Austria, Hungary, and Russia. Even defeated states such Bulgaria and Hungary had ethnic minority populations. Wilson and others admitted the treaties' serious defects and assumed that the League of Nations would sort them out peacefully over time as the resentments of the war

receded.[10] The "protection of minorities" at the time was called one of the organization's "most difficult and delicate tasks."[11] While Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania agreed to safeguard the rights of minority populations, all three states viewed the peace treaties as constituting a final, permanent settlement backed by the collective obligations of the Covenant. In 1920 and 1921, they formed the Little Entente against "revising" the treaties and redrawing national boundaries.[12] Poland, a "new" state reconstructed from large swaths of the former German and Russian empires (including areas inhabited by Belarusians and Ukrainians), staunchly opposed such revisions for the same reason. France, determined to protect itself against a revived Germany, entered into military alliances with Poland and the Little Entente powers in the 1920s. Both Greece and Turkey formally associated themselves with the Little Entente in opposition to "revisionism" by signing the Balkan Pact in February 1934.[13]

"Revisionism" was pressed not only by national minority groups such as the Macedonians and Croats, but also by the governments of Albania, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy. Czechoslovakia, with its large ethnic German population, resisted "revisionist" pretensions, particularly those of Hitler after he came to power in 1933 and announced that Germany would leave the League. The Czechs and their Little Entente allies also feared Austrian imperial revanchism; the frontier between Hungary and Yugoslavia was particularly contentious, as many Hungarians hoped to regain lands lost after the First World War.[14] Hungary's aid to anti-Yugoslav separatist groups was part of this larger aim to "revise" the postwar borders in the Balkans and recover some of these lands. Italy had long-standing ambitions in Albania, Greece, and Yugoslavia and was willing to provoke an international crisis and openly undermine Geneva's authority.[15] While Czechoslovakia tended to function as a parliamentary democracy, most of the other states in the region did not. Many had right-wing governments backed by their respective militaries.[16] By the late 1920s, Rome had established close ties with Austria and Hungary. Mussolini's support for the Hungarians went so far as to include shipping them weapons prohibited by the Treaty of Trianon. One result was that relations between the Little Entente and the major "revisionist" states in Europe were usually bad.[17] Another was that Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia were among the most consistent defenders of the League of Nations as well as of the principle

of respect for all treaty obligations in the years before the Marseilles terrorist attack in 1934.

Despite Italy's support of terrorist groups and its collaboration with "revisionist" states, Mussolini's foreign policy in the late 1920s and early 1930s was often ambiguous and contradictory.[18] Fascist Italy was a leading member of the League and a permanent member of its Council. Italian nationals participated in all important political and technical activities of the organization.[19] Italy was a signatory of international conventions and agreements, including the Kellogg–Briand Pact signed by fifty-four other nations in 1928 in an effort to promote international peace. In the same year, the Italian government opened the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law in Rome under League auspices.[20] In the aftermath of the Ustaša's repeated failures to topple the Yugoslav regime, Mussolini began to cut financial aid to the group; the Duce's foreign policy advisors pointed out the potentially dangerous international consequences of supporting it and began to urge an accord with Belgrade.[21] While he continued to endorse Croatian separatism, in April 1934 Mussolini told the head of the Italian delegation at the League, the respected diplomat Baron Pompeo Aloisi, that the Croats in Italian territory were "useless and dangerous."[22] In a speech at Milan three days before the shootings at Marseilles, Mussolini made vague references to "the possibility of an understanding" with Yugoslavia, an Italo-French rapprochement, and his hopes for "a true and productive peace."[23]

Italy went beyond words in opposing some forms of "revisionism" and acts of political violence. Mussolini wanted to preserve Austria's independence from Germany and was willing to cooperate with Czechoslovakia, France, and Britain in this effort. When Austrian Nazis murdered the Austrian chancellor in July 1934 in an attempt to overthrow the government and achieve unification with Germany, Aloisi denounced this act of "terrorism" and compared it to the attack at Sarajevo in 1914.[24] The Duce ordered 40,000 troops to the border and threatened military intervention. Italy's actions helped the authorities in Vienna suppress the insurrection.[25] Hitler was humiliated and Berlin's relations with Rome were badly damaged.

While Italy wanted Austria to remain independent from Germany, Yugoslavia wanted Austria to remain independent from Italy. Alexander deeply distrusted Mussolini. Relations between the two states were

poor, and did not improve after Italy, Austria, and Hungary signed the Rome Protocols in March 1934, further strengthening their already close political and economic collaboration. Making matters more difficult was evidence emerging from the trial of those arrested after an attempt on Alexander's life the previous December, which the king said convinced him that Rome had aided the plot.[26] After Hitler signed a ten-year non-aggression treaty with Poland in early 1934, Berlin began to exploit Yugoslav differences with Italy in an attempt to pull the Yugoslavs closer to Germany. These efforts resulted in a commercial treaty in May; Alexander increasingly regarded a potential union between Austria and Germany as no threat to his kingdom.[27] In August, the Yugoslavs admitted to allowing more than a thousand Austrian Nazis to enter the country as refugees, but insisted they were receiving no aid from his government.[28] A few weeks before the king's assassination, Nevile Henderson told the Foreign Office that if Austria could not be genuinely independent, the Yugoslavs would prefer it were dependent on Germany rather than Italy. "She feels, in fact, so strongly about the latter that she might go to war rather than submit to Austrian dependence on Italy which she considers tantamount to the abandonment by herself of her own right to security."[29]

The shifting foreign policy of the USSR had significance for Yugoslavia and this increasingly dangerous international context as well.[30] Throughout much of the 1920s, the Soviets criticized the peace treaties and supported communist groups abroad as a matter of principle. The USSR was not a member of the League and had a long-standing territorial dispute with Yugoslavia's ally Romania over the status of Bessarabia. Moscow actively championed the dissolution of the Yugoslav kingdom and the independence of the Macedonians, Croatians, and Slovenes.[31] While the USSR gradually began to adopt a less hostile attitude toward the West in the late 1920s, the threat of Nazi Germany convinced Moscow to accelerate this cooperation and participate in Geneva's security system. The Soviet regime remained ideologically opposed to the postwar global order, but was more urgently interested in containing Hitler. In the summer of 1933 the USSR signed non-aggression pacts with the Little Entente powers. Later in the same year the USSR and Italy agreed to a treaty of friendship, neutrality, and non-aggression. Only a few weeks before the attack at Marseilles, despite opposition from a handful of anti-communist states, the Soviets joined the League as a permanent member of the Council.[32] When Foreign Minister Maxim

Litvinov addressed the Assembly for the first time in September 1934, he declared that war was no longer "a remote theoretical danger" and called on the organization to oppose those seeking to redraw the map of Europe and Asia "by the sword."[33]

The state most responsible for helping the USSR gain entry into the League was Yugoslavia's lone great power ally, France.[34] The Soviets and French shared a fear of Nazi Germany. France had the largest army in western Europe, the world's second-largest overseas empire, and a network of military alliances. Its often harsh and militaristic public image reflected a more complicated aim either to protect French security by holding the Germans to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles or to negotiate any revisions with Berlin from a position of relative strength. The Locarno agreements of 1925 had improved Franco-German relations; after Hitler announced that Germany would leave the League and his government began to increase military spending, relations worsened. French military expenditures remained far greater than Germany's, but were invested in a purely defensive strategy. By 1934, military commitments to Poland and Czechoslovakia made by earlier French governments under different political and military circumstances were growing burdensome. France still promised to defend its allies, but investment in the Maginot Line rather than mobile forces meant the French had no offensive capability to project power into Eastern Europe. Besides, the French people were increasingly pacifistic.[35] Partly as a result, therefore, France's dependence on Britain deepened substantially. Few French leaders opposed all peaceful change to the postwar order, but most were more resistant to it than the British. Nonetheless, Paris continued to consider the League of Nations important for asserting France's great power status in the world and to maintaining peace with Germany. A French national, Joseph Avenol, was secretary-general of the organization from 1933 to 1940.[36]

Barthou was determined to enhance his country's security in the face of the growing German threat and burgeoning dilemmas.[37] He advocated a strong defense, greater international cooperation within the framework of the League, and more robust bilateral relations with current and potential allies. In eight months as foreign minister he visited Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Geneva.[38] He opened negotiations with both the USSR and Italy, worked to bring the former into the League, and wanted the Soviets to help contain Germany. He hoped to resolve French and Yugoslav political conflicts with Italy as

another way to restrain Hitler.[39] While Barthou knew that many obstacles lay ahead, the main purposes of Alexander's meeting with the French foreign minister in October 1934 were to reaffirm France's support for the Little Entente and to discuss Yugoslavia's relations with Italy—the most immediate threat to peace in Europe in Barthou's view.[40] Although intensely pessimistic about these talks, the king was willing to grant Italy certain economic concessions in exchange for guarantees of Austrian and Albanian independence and Italian promises to control anti-Yugoslav separatist groups.

The remaining great power directly concerned with European stability and the success of the League was Britain, where the organization enjoyed widespread popular support. Britain was a permanent member of the League Council and contributed the largest share of the League's budget. At Geneva the British government participated in the peaceful settlement of a number of international disputes, including its own with Persia over sudden cancellation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's contract in 1932.[41] But despite its huge empire and prominent position at Geneva, many contemporaries were convinced that British power was waning.[42] In the late 1920s, military spending as a proportion of GDP had declined, while domestic spending had risen dramatically. The fragmentation of the world economy into rival currency blocs in the early 1930s had severely undercut Britain's already declining export trade. In this context, British support for the League of Nations was not disinterested.

Within the League, Britain shared France's broad aims of preserving peace and defending Geneva's moral authority. Yet London and Paris repeatedly clashed over the means to these ends. They often distrusted each other and worked at cross purposes. Britain had no desire to underwrite France's eastern alliances or get involved in Balkan disputes. Yet some within the Foreign Office, including the permanent under-secretary from 1930 to 1937, Sir Robert Vansittart, argued as early as 1933 for greater Anglo-French-Italian cooperation against Nazi Germany and for Austria's independence.[43] By 1934, Simon broadly shared this view and hoped that Mussolini indeed would join Britain and France in restraining Hitler.[44] British officials viewed the eastern Mediterranean in general and Suez in particular as vital to Britain's imperial security and trade. Few were optimistic about relations between Italy and Yugoslavia. One of Sir John Simon's advisors remarked in May 1934 that it was "[a] thoroughly bad outlook—but King Alexander and Mussolini may all the same still