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ABSTRACT

The approaching centenary of the Locarno conference in October 1925 provides a convenient reason to re-evaluate the significance of the treaties that emerged from it. Often styled as the 'real' peace settlement at the end of the First World War, the treaties of Locarno collectively represent one of the most important attempts to ensure lasting peace in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Central to the treaties' reputation as the 'real' peace settlement is their role in rehabilitating Germany's Great Powers status after the humiliation suffered at the Paris Peace Conference six years earlier. The Locarno agreements have been seen as one of the rare highpoints in post-First World War Western European diplomacy. They were viewed by contemporaries as a real diplomatic breakthrough that would allow finally for the ghosts of the enmities that had caused the First World War to be laid to rest, although subsequent generations of scholars have been much more critical about what the agreements achieved in the long-term. This article focuses on the contribution made to the conference by the head of the British delegation, the Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain. It re-examines his diplomatic priorities, especially his reputation as a Francophile. Its central thesis is that Chamberlain himself can be seen to embody the essential reasons why the Locarno agreements were heralded as a success at the time of their conclusion, but less so with the perspective of hindsight. The treaties contained within them two opposing diplomatic forces. On the one hand, the remnants of the pre-war national state system, with its emphasis on diplomatic self-interest, secret, private negotiations, versus the so-called 'new' diplomacy: international, open, democratic and accountable. This rendered most of the European diplomatic problems in the post-First World War era intractable; indeed that they were incapable of resolution by anyone. Chamberlain's entire engagement with the western European security question during the mid-1920s can be seen as evidence not only of those tensions but of the futility of trying to resolve them.

We are now approaching the centenary of the Locarno Conference in October 1925 and the signing of the treaties that emanated from it. Scholars of the military and international history of the first half of the twentieth century have been more than willing to mark the passing of the first hundred

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years since the event leading up to the signature of a sequence of security agreements primarily between Britain, France, Italy and Germany, in the Swiss resort of Locarno in October 1925.[1] At the very least, such anniversaries create a useful opportunity for us to pause for thought and reflect on the robustness of the historical field as it currently stands and evaluate previous and current directions of historiographical travel. Such processes also offer a useful opportunity to ask what we still do not know that we ought to; to evaluate whether we have the balance right in our arguments. Most of the centenary studies of the First World War focussed more on an intellectual spring cleaning of our understanding of the dynamics of Great Power diplomacy.[2] But as we move forward and mark the centenary of events that took place in the 1920s, there is a strong case to be made to reflect again on the importance of human agency in the diplomacy of the period.[3] And, certainly, in terms of British foreign policy during this time, few people were more important than Sir Austen Chamberlain, the former leader of the Conservative Party, Cabinet Minister and elder son of the firebrand Victorian politician, Joseph Chamberlain, and half-brother of Neville Chamberlain.[4] His period as British Foreign Secretary from 1924 to 1929 represented one of the longest tenures of that post in the twentieth century.[5] And although recent historiography on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and its legacy has reflected more on the diplomatic tectonic shifts the treaties that resulted from it caused in Central and Eastern Europe than on individual human agency.[6] The fact remains that, for most scholars and students of the Paris Peace Conference, the dynamics of the relationship between the 'Big Three' – Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson – respectively the French and British Prime Ministers and the American President – remain central to the narrative.[7] And for no scholar of this period and of the 1920s does this point resonated more strongly than with the distinguished Canadian diplomatic historian, Professor Brian McKercher.[8]

Although McKercher's principal contributions to his field were made before the so-called cultural turn tried to cast aspersion on the writing of 'traditional' diplomatic history, his work has proven to be ahead of its time.[9] McKercher has always appreciated the human context in which diplomacy takes place. And his writing is not just concerned with human agency, but its connection with a host of other characteristics, foibles and emotions possessed by mortal man such as personal prejudice, snobbery and pride. Ultimately, diplomacy is about how people understand each other's thoughts and actions and then formulate an optimal response to them. And if this point is valid in how we understand the diplomatic machinations of the Big Three, it remains a legitimate means of analysing other, related events in that era. It was, after all, their intention to set up a mechanism for the maintenance of peace and for peace making that would continue beyond the signature of the treaties in Paris in the summer of 1919. And on the question of the future of western European

security strategy, reflections on the connection between the legacy of the peace makers of Paris and the events that led to the conclusion of the Treaty of Locarno in the autumn of 1925 are particularly appropriate. The treaties signed at Locarno was indeed a direct reaffirmation of the main territorial clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, especially those relating to the frontier between France and Germany. They also banned the signatory powers from making recourse to war for thirty years, reaffirmed the demilitarised status of the Rhineland, established as permanent the post-1919 German frontiers both in the east as well as in the west. The treaties were also a statement of good faith in the relevance of the League of Nations to the future trajectory of European diplomacy by offering Germany equal status with Britain and France as a permanent member of the League's security council.

This article aims to accomplish two objectives. First, it will re-examine Chamberlain's role and position within his own 'Big Three' or 'Big Four' if one includes the Italian fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, at the Locarno conference in October 1925 and in the years that followed. Second, it attempts to locate the Locarno treaties within their wider context in 1920s western European diplomacy. It offers an analysis not unlike that made by Margaret Macmillan about the peace makers of 1919.[10] She argued that the Paris 'Big Three' were confronted with an unprecedented mass of intractable problem that no mortal would have been able to resolve with total success, and that, as such they deserve credit for the effort that they made.[11] This article argues that a similar argument can be made about the Locarno 'Big Three' – Chamberlain, and his French and German opposite numbers, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann. While the problems they faced were complex but not of the order of magnitude of the Paris counterparts, both groups of men had important things in common, especially in regard to how they would be judged by history. While it has been argued that the treaties that Chamberlain, Briand and Stresemann negotiated failed to prevent the outbreak of another war in Europe in 1939, is it reasonable to expect them to have anticipated that the treaties of Locarno would come under the types of challenges that resulted in that situation occurring?

The historiography on the Locarno treaties has been shaped by scholars' preoccupation with the 'German Question', one of the great scholarly debates in the international history of the twentieth century, but one that has been so dominant that it has skewed our finer understanding of events on its periphery contextually and chronologically.[12] Consequently, it is often difficult to swim against a scholarly tide that primarily views the 1920s as a decade of limited significance that did little more that serve as a political and diplomatic interlude to the rise of the Third Reich. Consequently, it is almost seen as acceptable intellectual 'collateral damage' to write that the treaties of Locarno were failures after the Nazis' infringements of the Treaty of Versailles simply because *de jure* they both dealt

with broadly the same issues. And, as an extension, because Hitler was known to be hostile to the Treaty of Versailles, that he must therefore have been equally hostile to the Treaty of Locarno. Whereas, in certain important aspects, the two treaties served very different purposes. The Treaty of Versailles was intended to create a framework for creating a lasting peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and the German Empire after the First World War. The Treaty of Locarno, while seeking to reinforce the 1919 treaty, promoted a spirit of reconciliation between the victors and vanquished of the First World War. It sought to rehabilitate Germany's Great Powers status, primarily through permanent membership of the Council of the League of Nations. As such as represented an important affirmation of one of the central pillars of the new post-war style approach to diplomacy. At the conference, the German delegation at the conference was accorded equal status to its French and German counterparts, while the conclusion of the Locarno treaty breathed fresh life into the flagging ongoing international disarmament negotiations at Geneva. And most importantly, the Locarno treaties banned the signatories from making recourse to war for thirty years, a bold step that not even Lloyd George would have considered six years earlier in Paris.

So it is possible to make a case that the Locarno treaties can be seen as an example of the so-called 'new diplomacy' at work; inclusive, internationalist, democratic, rejecting war as an instrument of conflict resolution. And given the amount of press coverage the conference attracted, the negotiation and celebration of their conclusion marked the Locarno treaties as an important new example of public opinion being aware of and influencing foreign policy. This was especially true in Britain. That Chamberlain compiled a number of hand-tooled leather-bound scrap books of newspaper cuttings chronicling his role in the treaties' negotiation in the press. Indeed, as late as 1930, Chamberlain argued that:

> The interdependence of the nations is a fact which must increasingly affect the whole world. It is not merely a sense of the appalling horrors of modern war, which has driven the world to seek protection from it in the League of Nations; it is the growing perception that our interests are so interwoven that the victors suffer only less than the vanquished, and that even the neutral is involved in the common disaster of mankind'.[13]

Importantly, also much of the historiography on the Locarno conference is concerned with an analysis of the thoughts and actions of the men responsible for the negotiation of the treaties. This is particularly true of the role played by Stresemann.[14] Early studies, published in his lifetime and shortly after his death in 1929, lionised him as a great European statesman who fully embraced the spirit of Weimar democracy and who wished to build permanent bridges of conciliation with Germany's former enemies during the First World War. He was a German who was happy to be appeased by the British and French.

This view prevailed until the 1950s, when the release of Stresemann's papers and diary appeared to reveal a very different set of motives for his involvement in the Locarno negotiations.[15] For over twenty years, Stresemann was portrayed as one much more sympathetic to the German diplomatic mindset that had been instrumental in the outbreak of not only the First World War but also the second.[16] Some even went as far as to describe Stresemann as a 'proto-Hitler'.[17] According to this generation scholars, Stresemann intended to catch the British, French and Italian governments in a confidence trick at Locarno. That in reality, Stresemann was engaged in 'two-handed' diplomatic strategy that involved reaching a rapprochement with the Soviet Union as well as with the British and French. It was not until the publication of Jonathan Wright's biography of Stresemann that this view underwent substantial revision.[18] He suggested that Stresemann's diplomatic strategy contained elements of both the earlier interpretations. That Stresemann was a *realpolitiker* who was no more a German nationalist than many of the politicians on the political right in the Weimar Republic.

The historiography concerning Mussolini, Briand and Chamberlain is much less extensive. The most influential work on the *Duce*'s early diplomatic strategy remains Alan Cassel's *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*, but has also been discussed in influential biographies, such as those by . . . . Briand's reputation is tied to his ambitious vision of an integrated Europe where war would be impossible and his desire to draw the United States more fully into a role that would make that possible.[19] Both came at a price which for different reasons, Chamberlain was reluctant to pay. Most of the historical literature on Chamberlain's period as Foreign Secretary is concerned with his role in the conclusion of the Treaty of Locarno.[20] The first analysis portrayed Chamberlain as a single-minded, even fanatical advocate of a security pact between Britain and France. So much so that he neglected other aspects of his portfolio as Foreign Secretary.[21] Chamberlain's biographer offered a more nuanced portrait.[22] While Chamberlain was undoubtedly a committed Francophile, his views were in step with and no more deeply felt than those of his colleagues in the Foreign Office.[23] And it was entirely appropriate, even desirable that the political head of that department's views should be in keeping with and reflect those of his subordinates. This view of Chamberlain was then further refined by Richard Grayson who was keen to portray his subject as pro-European rather than as merely pro-French.[24] This interpretation is closer to McKercher's assessment and sits well with Chamberlain's own view of his role as 'honest broker'.[25] The current author's earlier work placed her analysis somewhere between Dutton and Douglas Johnson.[26] Chamberlain, while undoubtedly sympathetic to the security needs of France, was not blind to the limitations of French government's own policies in that area. Nor did Chamberlain object when Briand showed a willingness to look beyond a security agreement with Britain in the years that followed the

conclusion of the Locarno treaties.[27] All of these studies place a great deal of emphasis on Chamberlain's personality and, in varying degrees, on the importance of his pro-French sympathies in shaping his thinking.[28]

What emerges from this aspect of the historiography is a complex patchwork of motive, personal prejudice, individual diplomatic strategic planning and some sense of a holistic grand vision for the future of western European diplomacy. The images that were released to the press were often of Stresemann, Chamberlain and Briand enjoying afternoon tea in a genteel setting, discussing the business of the day. They wanted to convey the impression that any agreement that emerged would fundamentally stem from these intimate personal interactions. However, this was the opposite message from that contained within the meat of the treaties themselves. Instead, this was the old pre-1914 approach to diplomacy resurgent and writ large, with its emphasis on interpersonal relationships and informal networks of influence. So at the heart of the negotiation and content of the Treaty of Locarno is a fundamental contradiction of diplomatic style, approach and substance.

Indeed, it is not surprising therefore that the academic literature on the treaties of Locarno themselves is also riven with discussion about diplomatic form, intention and substance. There is now almost *de rigour* among Locarno scholars to include the words 'myth' and 'reality' in the titles of their analyses. The idea that the conclusion of the treaties of Locarno represented a uniquely positive moment in 1920s diplomacy largely stemmed from the men who negotiated them and by the press. But it was a propaganda campaign that gained a great deal of traction, primarily because the governments who negotiated the agreements wanted it to be true and need it to be so. The treaties appeared to represent a final breaking free from the passive aggressive culture that had underpinned western European diplomacy since the end of the First World War. This view of the Locarno treaties remained in place until the 1950s, until the first trickle of archival sources from the period began to emerge. In the vanguard was Professor of International History at the London School of Economics, George Grün.[29] For him, the Locarno treaties should be placed within the wider context of the origins of the Second World War. They were a diplomatic failure because one of their principal purposes had been to prevent war for at least thirty years and to secure the western frontiers of Germany as set out under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. This, as the period between 1933 and 1945 had demonstrated, had plainly failed to do. Half a generation later, the American diplomatic historian, Jon Jacobson, offered another negative analysis of the significance of the treaties.[30] The problem with the Treaty of Locarno was that there was no follow up to it; that Stresemann, Briand, Chamberlain and their colleagues did not do enough to build on its success and the good will it generated. They should have seen its conclusion as the start of a process of building a network of

European security agreements, not as the end. While both scholars make some valid points, this article contends that these views are too critical. And here, we return to comments made above about parallels with the historiography on the Paris Peace Conference, especially the work of Margaret Macmillan. Hindsight in life is a wonderful thing, but it is a dangerous tool in the hands of historians. This article contends instead that no one in 1925, including Austen Chamberlain, could have anticipated the consequences of the enormous international political, economic and diplomatic crisis that emerged after the Great Depression in the autumn of 1929.[31] That includes the emergence of the immensely diplomatic narratives that surrounded the rise of the fascist dictators, especially in Germany, Italy and Spain, and the increasing insularity of the Soviet Union. And, of course, the extent to which all of these developments exposed rather than concealed the fault lines in the pivotal diplomatic relationship between the peace makers after the First World War, especially those between Britain, France and the United States.

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However, there were other factors at work that should be borne in mind when assigning culpability to the Locarno statesmen and the fruits of their negotiations. Margaret Macmillan argued of the peacemakers in 1919 that no one could have done a better job of making peace in the circumstances, however, flawed what emerged from the Paris Peace Conference might have been.[32] This article contends that the same argument can be made about the Locarno statesmen. Indeed, it was not so much with what could be termed the 'human factor' that the fault lines lay. The Locarno treaties ultimately failed to achieve their goals for the same reason as most of the other attempts to improve diplomatic relations between the victors and vanquished of the First World War. The international system inherited by the victorious powers, was fractured by two opposing forces: nationalism in all its forms; and internationalism. The former was linked to entrenched relics of the pre-war order that had encouraged national competition, imperial rivalry and was the heyday of the Westphalian nation state. The First World War had done much to demonstrate and ultimately remove some of this political and diplomatic infrastructure and culture, but it had not removed all of it. Indeed, it has been argued that for the victorious powers, the First World War brought about little change in political mindset, strategic thinking or diplomatic outlook.[33] At the same time, the enormity of the dislocation of the event created the need for an alternative world view. Some of the historiography on the Paris Peace Conference has demonstrated the effect of asking statesmen steeped in the political and diplomatic traditions of the pre-war world to think suddenly in a radically different way.[34] A mere six years later, at Locarno, it is difficult to believe that that ability to think differently had become better honed. Chamberlain's belief in the primacy of an Anglo-French security negotiations

as the bedrock of the Locarno treaties marked him out as an 'old' diplomatist.[35] His instinct was for a network of bilateral agreements that collectively would bind the signatory powers together in a mesh that would guarantee European peace.

Consequently, Chamberlain should therefore be seen as a man who was a practitioner of both the 'old' and 'new' diplomatic traditions. And as has already been suggested, he was far from unique in this. But this analysis should influence the way we view all of his forays into international diplomacy, not simply during the Locarno conference. However, the evidence does suggest that he was more at home being – and more successful – as a practitioner of the former rather than the latter. The clearest indication of this does not come from Chamberlain's involvement in the negotiations during the Locarno conference itself, but through the part he played in what could be termed as a residual event: the admission of Germany as a permanent member of the League of Nations Council in the autumn of 1926. Although written some time ago now, David Carlton's article on what came to be known as the League Council Crisis, provides an unrivalled insight into Chamberlain's thinking at this time.[36] The decision to allow the admission of Germany to the League of Nations as one of the terms of the treaties of Locarno represented the zenith in British and French League policy in the 1920s. Some of the reasons for this are discussed elsewhere in this article, but there is another important point to consider. It demonstrated that, for all is flaws, the British and French governments were committed to making the League work and believed that it could be an effective force in international diplomacy in the future. But, as Carlton argues, the British and French did not entirely have the strength of their own convictions and believed that such a bold step, that would propel Germany back to the front rank of the Great Powers, might be considered a step too far.[37] To sweeten the pill, Briand and Chamberlain encouraged the claims of other powers to a permanent seat on the League Council to be considered simultaneously with the admission of Germany. From the spring until the autumn of 1926, there followed a complex set of diplomatic negotiations in which both Britain and France made the case for several, mostly European countries, to join Germany as a new permanent member of the League Council. The most vociferous debate concerned the case for Poland. The inclusion of Poland would mean the presence of a powerful eastern European state that, together with France, could help encircle Germany and thwart any attempts to act contrary to the rules of League membership. Importantly, Chamberlain's inclination was to support the French case for a Polish candidature. In a memorandum to the Foreign Office, he wrote: 'I think that by doing so we shall best serve the cause of peace and, as far as I can judge from the opinion of other Powers represented on the Council, we shall be acting in accordance with the general wish. We might find ourselves isolated if we adopted an attitude of opposition'.[38] When the German government objected to the inclusion of Poland, Chamberlain did not conceal his hostility,

writing, 'Why should they at their very entry into the League and even before they have entered begin to threaten that unless they have their way, they won't play? This seems to me characteristically German and ... characteristically inept'.[39] In the days that followed, Chamberlain solution to his frustration was to abandon his support for a Polish candidature in favour of one by Spain.[40] The diplomatic fall out from that decision forms the substance of the remainder of Carlton's analysis. But these examples do suggest that Chamberlain's diplomatic thinking was rather instrumental and short-term. While he could see the advantage of strengthening the League, he disliked the closer bonds between states that the internationalist culture that underpinned it involved.

McKercher's various analyses of Chamberlain's diplomacy offers different kinds of evidence to suggest that the Foreign Secretary's had some leanings towards the 'new' diplomacy. [41] For McKercher, the impetus for Chamberlain to ponder the future of western European security came from the poor state of France's relations with Germany in the mid-1920s, caused mostly by the ongoing and often mired negotiations concerning reparations and disarmament.[42] What he termed the 'cold war' between France and Germany.[43] This perspective was also central to Briand's thinking and if one accepts this analysis, it is possible to view Chamberlain equally as an early advocate of what became the movement towards European integration after the Second World War. Both Briand and Chamberlain thought it imperative to find a way to break down the systemic military and economic tensions between France and Germany permanently. In achieving that, the rest of western Europe would be able to develop networks of security either through the conclusion of treaties or through the League of Nations.

However, there are a number of problems with this analysis. Chamberlain and Briand differed in the way that the Franco-German rapprochement could be brought to pass. This not only undermined the short- and medium-term effectiveness of the treaties of Locarno, it was symptomatic of the tensions within the wider international system outlined above. In short, Chamberlain thought like the late Victorian/Edwardian politician that he essentially was. As most of his contemporary countrymen believed, in foreign affairs, Britain had two principal priorities: the protection of the Empire, and, in Europe, maintaining and monitoring French security needs. In contrast, in 1925, Briand was already a full-fledged internationalist advocate of the new diplomacy. For him, bilateral agreements offered only limited appeal; they were, by definition, restricted to France's relations with one country.[44] Constructing an elaborate network of such agreements of that kind that had existed in Europe before 1914 would take time, and the diplomatic landscape of the continent was now a very different place. What was more, had not the political, economic and diplomatic consequences of the First World War demonstrated the perils of such a system if it failed?

To view Chamberlain as primarily an internationalist advocate of the new diplomacy is to attribute to his diplomatic strategic thinking a complexity and originality that the present author would contend was largely absent. McKercher has argued that the Foreign Secretary played a 'twisted' diplomatic game, a game that he played 'to win'.[45] When it came to western European security, Chamberlain, like most politicians of his generation and social class believed in essentially one thing: the need for a bilateral security pact between Britain and France. That it was later extended to include Germany and Italy, and some of the eastern European states came about because of force of circumstance, not because Chamberlain's thinking evolved. Indeed, in the months leading up to his departure for Locarno, Chamberlain often gave the impression of being a political prisoner of his Cabinet colleagues, who thought his views on European security too narrow. This continued to be a source of chagrin throughout the negotiations of the treaties of Locarno and beyond.

Indeed, it is possible to see his decision to style himself as the so-called 'honest broker' in the negotiations as part of this unwanted, even forced strategic shift. On the one hand, this notion is an extension of McKercher's point about the root cause of the tension in western European security being the fraught relationship between France and Germany. Rather, like a referee in a boxing match, with the two countries in opposing corners, Britain secured a position in the negotiations that suggested a diplomatic integrity that was detached, even aloof from Franco-German machinations.[46] And indeed, this notion was not new; Chamberlain was perfectly aware that the notion had been central to much of British policy towards western Europe since the Congress of Vienna in 1815. And the creation of this role by Britain had been viewed by many as something of a diplomatic masterstroke. It guaranteed Britain a central role in European diplomacy while allowing a degree of strategic and military detachment which sat well with Foreign Office and British military sensibilities. However, it can be argued that by the mid-1920s, the role of 'honest broker' did not stem solely from such foresight and reference to historical precedent. It was yet another compromise by Chamberlain. While his plans for an Anglo-French security pact were thwarted by the Cabinet and by the Committee for Imperial Defence, Chamberlain nevertheless could not quite bring himself to embrace German involvement in the negotiations on an equal footing as the French. So he adopted a diplomatic strategy which officially gave the impression of detachment, even neutrality, whole privately hankering for his personal preferred course of action.

In reality, this notion of British detachment, which Chamberlain styled as the role of the 'honest broker' in the Locarno negotiations represented a loss of influence in western European diplomacy. But this was a process that had started during the First World War, a decade earlier. It did not stem from the machinations of the statesmen at Locarno. But, as the twentieth century

progressed, it was precisely because the principal locus of diplomatic, military and economic tension lay between France and Germany, that international attention became increasingly focussed on how to defuse it. British interests were, by definition, of secondary importance to this. And in 1925, and still more after the Second World War, Britain in reality lacked the military and economic clout to continue in the role of 'honest broker', or at least to perform that role alone. Consequently, it could be argued that in advocating Britain's role at Locarno as that of the 'honest broker', Chamberlain was ensuring that the gaze of the international community was not on Britain's security needs, but on those of the other powers present at the conference. The major diplomatic developments of the remainder of the decade tended to bear out this analysis: Chamberlain's problems with securing Germany's admission to a permanent seat in the League of Nations Council in the autumn of 1926, and Briand's decision two years later to look to the United States, and not to Britain, to broker an even more important security agreement than the Treaty of Locarno, the Kellogg-Briand Pact to outlaw war.

Yet, while Chamberlain may not have been the most original diplomatic thinker to hold the position of British Foreign Secretary, his thinking on western European security was consistent during the 1920s, and, significantly, continued to be for the remainder of his life, until his death in 1937. This was especially so about his views relating to German military and diplomatic intentions. It is doubtful therefore that he would have disputed Jacobson's analysis of the limitations of the Treaty of Locarno because it failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War. Yet, importantly, like his almost exact contemporary, Winston Churchill, his voice from the 'wilderness' of the Conservative back benches about Hitler's true intentions were consistent, vociferous, and, at the time, largely disregarded. But the point was, they were right. Chamberlain's death at the time when his half-brother was entering Downing Street meant that history has been denied his views on what he thought about his sibling's involvement in the pivotal diplomatic events that led up to the outbreak of the Second World War. As late as 1935, Chamberlain remained an unreconstructed Francophile. He wrote: 'The deeper Englishmen and Frenchmen penetrate into each other's nature, the more they will find they have in common; the deeper Englishmen and Germans go, the greater the divergence of faith and spirit which will be revealed between them'.[47]

It is tempting therefore to argue that by the mid-1930s the two Chamberlain brothers were positioned at opposite ends of the appeasement debate. But the reality was more nuanced than that. Both were advocates of something called appeasement, but for each man it took a different form. For Austen Chamberlain, it meant an unconditional British willingness to meet France's security needs. It meant fostering an international culture so rooted in the rejection of war that *de facto* another major European war would be impossible. It meant allowing any residual enmity between states left over from the

First World War to be set aside to allow the building of a new world order that was worthy of the sacrifice of those who had fought and died in that conflict. It was about setting new standards of what constituted a civilised society based on democracy and the rule of law. Although Chamberlain did not view the conduct of diplomacy and the relations between states through an academic, intellectual lens, his thinking had a moral uprightness to it that was shared by many of his generation who had been shocked by the scale of the carnage and dislocation caused by the recent Great War.

For Chamberlain's younger half-brother, Neville, the circumstances were different, and the stakes were higher. The statesmen who met at Locarno in 1925 could afford the luxury of such sensibilities because they were not directly confronted by rogue states displaying a willingness to upset the international order. In contrast, Neville Chamberlain's diplomatic strategy had a raw pragmatism to it; how to prevent an apparently imminent Europe-wide war for long enough to allow the democratic powers sufficient time to prepare for it so that they had a good chance of emerging victorious. Furthermore, Neville Chamberlain inhabited a political and diplomatic world in which the aims and strategies central to thinking to the Locarno statesmen had already proved to be inadequate in dealing with states that did not share the same objective as the democratic powers. Austen Chamberlain's understanding of the concept of appeasement was also much closer to what many saw as Britain's historic role in European diplomacy as that of a power broker. One reason why the concept of the honest broker appealed to him and was acceptable to the Foreign Office was because it was familiar, indeed the concept had its roots in British European diplomatic strategy stretching back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Whereas, a strategy that required making territorial concession to avert war was not.

McKercher argued that Chamberlain was one of the most brilliant British foreign secretaries in the twentieth century.[48] It is difficult to view Chamberlain in quite that way, primarily because of the way in which he often quite unashamedly allowed his own prejudices to cloud his judgement. This led him eventually to misread Briand and Stresemann at crucial times in their relationship. But he was consistent in his views and priorities, even if the same could not be said about his approach to diplomacy. His Francophile tendencies remained strong, as did his antipathy to the motives behind German foreign policy. Chamberlain tends to emerge as the most 'lightweight' of the leaders of the principal delegations at the Locarno Conference. He did not have a grand diplomatic vision of Europe beyond the desire to maintain a lasting peace; in that he had much in common with the many who had lived through the First World War. He was not a Versailles revisionist. He was not a thinker on diplomatic theory or practice; to him diplomacy was simply a means to an end. In the year leading up to his arrival in Locarno, he possessed little interest in doing anything other than creating a lasting security agreement between Britain

and France. What changed that was the award of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1925.[49] This had a profound impact on Chamberlain; henceforward he viewed himself as a diplomatic visionary. In 1925, Chamberlain wanted the world to think that the long-term future peace of Europe was safe in the hands of his fellow Locarno statesmen. For the remainder of his life, he was concerned to ensure that his part in the negotiation of the treaties retained at least some of that mystique. He saw it as being a unique moment in time; a point of rare diplomatic planetary alignment when something never before achieved suddenly became possible. And if it could happen in Locarno in 1925, a version of it could happen again in the future; Chamberlain wished the agreements to be seen as the start of a process of rapprochement, not the end.

This analysis of Chamberlain as Foreign Secretary and especially his role in the negotiation of the treaties of Locarno positions him in a precarious position of being an advocate of the new diplomacy but a practitioner of the old. Or, at least, as someone more at home as a practitioner of the old diplomacy. There is not the space here to explore the extent to which this analysis was true of Briand or Stresemann, or, indeed, their colleagues within their respective national delegations. However, it does have implication for how we see the effectiveness of the treaties and their long-term significance. Within Chamberlain we see embodied the fundamental dichotomy within western European diplomacy in the 1920s: the advocacy and defence of national self-interest in foreign policy, even the pursuit of personal prejudice within it, versus a compulsion to be more outward facing, altruistic and internationalist in outlook. This was not a conflict that Chamberlain would have been able to resolve, even if he had been aware of all of its implications n 1925 and remembering also that he died two years before the outbreak of the Second World War. Indeed, this article contends that no one would have been able to resolve such a dichotomy because it was fundamental and systemic to the entire international system after the First World War. But it nevertheless was a root cause of why, ultimately, despite the best efforts of both the Chamberlain brothers in their respective roles, the likelihood of another major European war became more likely.

Notes

1. The conference produced seven treaties that are generally referred to collectively as either the Treaty of Locarno or the Locarno Pact.
2. Within the deluge of books that appeared to mark the various centenaries of the period leading up to the First World War and beyond, the following were among the most influential. S. McMeekin, *The Russian origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); W. Mulligan, *The origins of the First World War* 2nd ed, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2017); C. Clark, *Sleepwalkers: how Europe went to war in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013). And among those on the course of the war itself, see. D. Stevenson, *1917: war. peace and revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

3. This point continues to be reflected, for example, in the literature on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. While recent attention has shifted towards the impact of the peace settlements on eastern and southern Europe, the tradition of focussing on the impact of individuals on international diplomacy was led by Alan Sharp as the editor of the Makers of the Modern World series. This consisted of short biographies of the leader of every national delegation at the conference. Examples of the former include: L.V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). An example of Sharp's series is: D.R. Watson, *Georges Clemenceau* (London: Haus, 2008).
4. C. Petrie, *The Chamberlain tradition* (London: Lovatt Dickson, 1940); P. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: an entrepreneur in politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); D. Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: gentleman in politics* (Bolton: Ross Anderson, 1985); R. Self, *Neville Chamberlain: a biography* (London: Routledge, 2006). On the British Conservative party in the early twentieth century, see J. Ramsden, *The age of Balfour and Baldwin: 1902–1940* (London: Longman, 1978).
5. E. Goldstein, :The evolution of British diplomatic strategy for the Locarno Pact, 1924–5", in *Diplomacy and world power: studies in British foreign policy, 1890–1950 Ed. M. L. Dockrill and B.J.C. McKercher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 130–31. Also 'The British official mind and Europe', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 8, 3 (1997), 165–78.
6. For example, T. Irish, 'The Paris Peace Conference and cultural reparation after the First World War', *English Historical Review* 137 (589), 1693–1724,
7. D.R. Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: a political biography* (London: David McKay, 1976) remains the best study in English; a useful study of the career of Lloyd George is R. Lloyd George, *David and Winston: how a friendship changed history* (London: John Murray 2006). On Woodrow Wilson, see, M. Berg, *Woodrow Wilson – Amerika und die neuordnung der Welt – eine biographie* (Munich: Beck, 2017).
8. This is evident in much of his oeuvre, but see especially B.J.C. McKercher, *The Second Baldwin government and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and in his *Esme Howard. A diplomatic biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
9. For the context of the 'cultural turn', see, *inter alia*, D. Reynolds, 'International History, the cultural turn and the diplomatic twitch', *Cultural and Social History* 3, no. 1 (2006),75–91.
10. M. Macmillan, *Peacemakers:the Paris conference and its attempt to end war* (London: John Murray, 2003).
11. *Ibid*. 34–67, but is a theme throughout the book.
12. A hardy perennial in the scholarly literature on western European security in the first half of the twentieth century, see recently, L. Fischer, 'Continuity and discontinuity in nineteenth and twentieth century German history', *Canadian Journal of History* 45, no. 3 (2010), 565–88.
13. A. Chamberlain, 'Great Britain as a European power', *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 9, no. 2 (March 1930), 181.
14. Although now more than fifty years old, the best general study of Stresemann's diplomatic strategy towards Britain remains W. Weidenfeld, *Die Englandpolitik Gustav Stresemann; theoretische und praktische Aspekte der Aussenpolitik* (Mainz, 1972).
15. A useful summary can be found in M.J. Enssle, 'Stresemann's diplomacy fifty years after Locarno: some recent perspectives', *Historical Journal*, 29, no. 4 (1977), 937–48.
16. H.A. Turner, 'Continuity in German foreign policy? The case of Stresemann', *International History Review* 1, no. 4 (1979), 509–21.

17. R. Grathwol, 'Gustav Stresemann: reflections on his foreign policy', *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, 1 (1973); 'Stresemann revisited', *European Studies Review* 7, no. 3 (1977), 341–52.
18. J. Wright, *Gustav Stresemann: Weimar's greatest statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On the specific Locarno context, see, 'Locarno: a democratic peace?' *Review of International Studies*, 36, no. 2 (2010), 391–411.
19. P. Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the Politics of National Security in the Era of the First World War* ;(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
20. P. Edwards, 'The Austen Chamberlain-Mussolini meetings', *Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (1971), 153–64; P.J. Beck, "A tedious and perilous controversy': Britain and the settlement of the Mosul dispute, 1918–1926", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17, no. 2 (1982), 256–76.
21. D. Johnson, 'Austen Chamberlain and the Locarno Agreements', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 1 (1962), 62–71.
22. D. Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: gentleman in politics* (Bolton: Ross Anderson, 1985), 259–99.
23. Douglas Johnson, 63.
24. R.S. Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the commitment to Europe: British foreign policy, 1925–1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).
25. B.J.C. McKercher, 'Austen Chamberlain's control of British foreign policy, 1924–1929', *International History Review*, 6, no. 2 (1984), pp. 570–91.
26. G. Johnson, 'Austen Chamberlain and Britain's relations with France, 1924–1929', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 17, no. 4, (2006), 753–69. See also D. Richardson, *The evolution of British disarmament policy in the 1920s* (London: Pinter, 1989).
27. Johnson, *ibid*, p, 766; G. Johnson, 'Austen Chamberlain and the negotiation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact', in *Locarno revisited. European diplomacy, 1920–1929 Ed. G. Johnson* (London: Routledge, 2004), 60. See also B.J.C. McKercher, *The Second Baldwin government and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
28. See also R. Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain diary letters* (Cambridge: Royal Historical Society, 1995).
29. G. Grün, 'Locarno: idea and reality', *International Affairs*, 31 (1955).
30. J. Jacobson, *Locarno diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1972).
31. Compare also Z Steiner, *The Lights that Failed. European international history 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
32. Macmillan, *op.cit.*
33. See Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, *op. cit*.
34. *Inter alia*, R. Henig, 'Britain, France and the League of Nations in the 1920s', in *Anglo-French relations in the twentieth century: rivalry and cooperation Ed. A. Sharp and G. Stone* (London: Routledge, 2002), 139–58.
35. In one of the most recent studies, the Serbian historian, Dragan Bakič, sees the famous Locarno tea parties between Stresemann, Briand and Chamberlain not only as examples of a revival of the 'old' interpersonal diplomacy, but as serving a wider purpose. Chamberlain, he argued viewed his French and German opposite numbers as embodying their respective countries national identities. That he was quite literally bringing German and French sensibilities to the negotiating table. D. Bakič, "Must win peace': the British brokering of 'Central European' and 'Balkan Locarno', 1924–29", *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 1 (2012), 24–56
36. D. Carlton, 'Great Britain and the League Council Crisis, 1926', *Historical Journal*, 11, no. 2 (1968), 354–64.

37. *Ibid*., 355.
38. Chamberlain Memorandum, 1 February 1926, in *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, series IA, vol. I., No. 233.
39. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, February 19 1926, TNA/FO800/257.
40. Carlton, *op. cit.*, 358.
41. McKercher, 'Austen Chamberlain's control of British foreign policy, 1924–1929', *op cit*. 582–4.
42. *Ibid*., 578.
43. *Ibid*, 580.
44. R. Boyce, 'Was there a "British" alternative to the Briand Plan?' in, *Britain and the threat to stability in Europe 1918–1945 Ed. P. Catterall and C.J. Morris* (London: Leicester University Press, 1993), 17–34.
45. McKercher, 'Austen Chamberlain's control of British foreign policy, 1924–1929', *op cit*. 578.
46. Chamberlain to Crewe, April 2 1925, TNA/FO800/258.
47. A. Chamberlain, *Down the Years* (London: Cassell, 1935), 165–66. Cf. Chamberlain's comment in 1925: 'Germany … now shows a disposition to delay and haggle which would justify every suspicion of her good faith and would not only deprive us of all power to help her but must make us feel that it is not only useless but dangerous to attempt it'. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, June 30 1925, PRO/FO371/10735/C8770/459/18.
48. McKercher, 'Austen Chamberlain's control of British foreign policy, 1924–1929', *op. cit*. 571.
49. Briand and Stresemann were jointly awarded the accolade the following year.

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