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Sommario/riassunto This work investigates the 'Janus face' of international relations,

refracted through the prism of the duality of Jan Christian Smuts, as it

manifested in his contribution to the League of Nations and his struggle against the emerging peace treaty. A predominant characteristic of international relations is its requirement to face two different ways at the same time - its Janus face. States profess their adherence to lofty ideals for humanity alongside the pursuit of their own immediate self-interest. This phenomenon in the behaviour of states has been referred to as the distance between vision and reality, and the gap between rhetoric and reality. International relations is, and is likely to remain, suspended between these two extremes; on the one hand, the pursuit of utopian ideals for the world, and, on the other, a defence of narrow self-interest, often prompted by the dictates of the realpolitik of the moment. How, then, are the values that underlie the founding of the first cornerstone of the current international order -the League of Nations -- to be understood? An under-explored case study in understanding the complex framework of international relations is that of the visionary and controversial South African, Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1950). On the one hand, Smuts was one of the principal authors of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and the person directly responsible for the recognition of human rights as a founding value of the Charter of the United Nations. On the other, the Premier of racially segregated South Africa.