6. The Soviet Union's turbulent rise
Geoffrey Hosking

‘The Soviet Union's turbulent rise’ charts the creation of the Soviet Union by the Bolsheviks, who renamed themselves Communists. Communists believed that Marxism, as interpreted by Lenin, entitled them to a monopoly of power over every aspect of public life. This enabled them to bring about change quickly, but eventually it became rigid and unresponsive to the problems of the real world. Josef Stalin launched a series of Five Year Plans in 1928 intended to industrialize the country, replacing foreign capital with state allocation of resources. Collectivization of farms destroyed traditional village life and caused a major famine. Communist cultural, social, and national policy throughout the 1920s and 1930s is also considered.

4. Thinking about war
Harry Sidebottom

The thinkers of the classical world were very concerned with war, ideas on the reasons for war, its justifications, and its accepted limits. ‘Thinking about war’ considers what these thoughts tell us about the past and also about modern discussions and attitudes. Herodotus and Thucydides, two great historians of classical Greece, took war as a central theme in their rhetoric. Does the failure of Greeks to produce a theory on the just war suggest that they thought war was a normal state of humanity? What did the Romans think about a just war? What did the Christians under Rome think about war? What did Augustine have to say about war?

5. NEP: society and culture
S. A. Smith

The thinkers of the classical world were very concerned with war, ideas on the reasons for war, its justifications, and its accepted limits. ‘Thinking about war’ considers what these thoughts tell us about the past and also about modern discussions and attitudes. Herodotus and Thucydides, two great historians of classical Greece, took war as a central theme in their rhetoric. Does the failure of Greeks to produce a theory on the just war suggest that they thought war was a normal state of humanity? What did the Romans think about a just war? What did the Christians under Rome think about war? What did Augustine have to say about war?
From the start of the NEP, social inequality rose. Class remained a fragile structure. ‘NEP: society and culture’ considers what the Soviets did to refashion the social systems in Russia, in terms of education, health care, housing, urban planning, and social work, and how it tried to combat class divisions and existing cultural issues. The Bolsheviks had to deal with social issues such as attitudes to family and marriage, orphaned and abandoned children, unemployment, homelessness, and the costs of education for the young. Following their intelligentsia forebears, the Bolsheviks sought to raise the level of ‘culturedness’ of a society perceived to be backwards in outlook.

8. What’s in it for whom?
Edward Craig

Thinking about philosophy is hard. Writing about it is even harder. Why do people bother? Perhaps often just out of curiosity. ‘What's in it for whom?’ asks: why does philosophy exist and what is the point of it? Philosophy asks what we should do, what is there, and how we know it is there. Most philosophy attempts to do something for somebody. If it is to endure, a philosophy needs a constituency, and its chance of survival is best if that constituency is large. A philosophy devoted to the individual has a large constituency. How about other constituencies such as the state, women, the working class, or animals? Philosophy is as wide as life itself.

9. Neodruids and the neopagans
Barry Cunliffe

Whilst 18th-century neodruidic societies embraced the trappings of romantic druidism — occasionally making spurious claims to legitimate descent from the Druids of the Classical world — they were essentially benefit societies. They served the social, economic, and emotional needs of people caught up in the exponential changes of the period from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. ‘Neodruids and the neopagans’ points out that the development of the Welfare State reduced the need for such organizations. The 1960s saw a rapid growth in the invention and practice of neopagan beliefs, including a number of groups styling themselves Druids. More recently, neopaganism has continued to increase in popularity.

6. Rage
Malcolm Gaskill
In first half of the 17th century, Europe was especially prone to witch-panics fuelled by war, rebellion and economic crisis. Rather than allaying fears, witch-hunts spread them. ‘Rage’ asserts that, in the age of statebuilding, a concerted witch-hunt was an aberration, destabilizing, likely to exacerbate social division. Pressures from below could be considerable, but governors had to resist them. The Salem witch-panics were made possible by the weakness of the state. By 1750, however, the line between the spiritual and the material had shifted decisively towards the modern scientific view. In the developing world, witch-hunts still further political ends, usually without much hope that central authority will intervene constructively.

2. The Coming of War
Michael Howard

Although the Balkan crisis differed little from those that had preceded it, Austria–Hungary was determined to use it to permanently crush the Serbian threat. ‘The Coming of War’ investigates the decision-making process that led each state to war, as well as their military situations in 1914 following the pre-war arms race. After securing German support in the event of war, the Austrian government issued Serbia with an impossible ultimatum. As expected, the Serbians refused, forcing the Russians to mobilize in their defence. German mobilization came just days later, their invasion of Belgium provoking Britain to declare war.

2. The formation of the Muscovite state
Geoffrey Hosking

‘The Formation of the Muscovite state’ charts the history of Muscovy from the late 15th century to the early 19th century. Muscovy enlisted the aid of Cossacks to defend the long and vulnerable southern and eastern frontiers. The lesser princes and boyars were given extensive powers to require local communities to fulfil their obligations. The pomeshchiki (service estate-holders) paid taxes to the treasury and exacted services from their dependent rural population. The rule of Tsar Ivan IV (the ‘Terrible’) is described along with the civil war between boyar clans in the 17th century, popular discontent, and the Orthodox Church, which became subordinated to the state under Peter I and Catherine II.
4. The United Nations
Christopher S. Browning

‘The United Nations’ discusses the world’s primary organization of collective security. The United Nations is often seen as an entrepreneur promoting norms of good governance, upholding commitments to human rights, and establishing standards around trade, environmental, and health issues. Peacekeeping is the activity the UN is most renowned for. The UN Charter has traditionally been understood as prioritizing principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention. Such principles have a moral foundation premised on upholding respect for different cultures, religions, and political and economic systems and are intended to thwart any imperial ambitions of territorial aggrandizement particular states might be harbouring.

9. Gauls and Romans
Barry Cunliffe

‘Gauls and Romans’ observes that, by the time of Caesar's involvement in Gaul, the Romanizing process in the south was already sixty years old and lucrative trading networks existed. When the tribes of the north European zone began pushing southwards into areas previously occupied by La Tène culture, Caesar had an excuse to invade Free Gaul. Unless Rome took over Gaul, the Germans would. The Gaulish tribes he encountered were also in a state of transition. Some had put themselves under Roman patronage. Several were experiencing dramatic social change. Caesar and his armies actively campaigned for eight years, slaughtering large numbers of Gauls and enslaving tens of thousands of others.

7. The uses of history
Helen Graham

History can be used as a weapon of propaganda. The post-Civil War regime manipulated a monolithic and partisan version of the war, referring to it not as a civil war but as a ‘crusade’ or ‘war of national liberation’. Franco used the Civil War for his own ideological purposes. ‘The uses of history’ considers how the Civil War was regarded and interpreted after it ended, in Spain and abroad. Contemporary Spanish history became a branch of state propaganda. Anglo-American historical writing on the war came to exert a great
influence in the 1960s and beyond providing different interpretations. Many writers have been inspired by the Spanish Civil War.

2. Civil war and the foundation of the Bolshevik regime

S. A. Smith

The October revolution was viewed as a chance for justice and equality to prevail over the old regime of arbitrariness and exploitation. The Bolsheviks hoped that revolution would break out in the more developed countries of Europe, and for a time this looked likely. ‘Civil war and the foundation of the Bolshevik regime’ considers the chain of events that lead to the start of Soviet power and details the extremely troubled years 1918–1922. Overall, the civil war strengthened national identities within Russia yet deepened divisions inside nationalist movements. Gradually, the party was transformed into the backbone of the new state as it acquired more functions and its apparatus proliferated.

4. NEP: politics and the economy

S. A. Smith

In March 1921, many feared that the new regime in Russia would not survive. In response Congress endorsed the abandonment of forced requisitioning in favour of a tax in kind on the peasantry, calculated as a percentage of the harvest. This marked the inauguration of the New Economic Policy (NEP). ‘NEP: politics and the economy’ looks at the impact of the years of the NEP which turned into a wholesale repudiation of War Communism. Lenin saw the NEP as a transitional system in which market mechanisms would gradually strengthen the state sector at the expense of the private sector. One difference that marked the period of NEP was the abandonment of terror as an instrument of political rule.

11. The collection of the Koran

Michael Cook

History tells us how God's speech came to be collected in the form we see it today. ‘The collection of the Koran’ examines gathering together of the Koranic text. The oldest securely dated complete Korans we possess today are from the ninth century. There are numerous fragments which resist precise dating but are older. Who collected the Koran and what was it collected from? There are differences between rival accounts. The process by
which the Koran achieved the status of canonical text was rapid, contrasting to the slow emergence of Biblical canons. The fact that we have only a single recension of the Koran is testimony to the authority of the early Islamic state.

5. In and out of prison
Julian V. Roberts

‘In and out of prison’ considers the state of prisons today; the typical prison population; the crimes that result in imprisonment; the costs of imprisonment; the process of release and the pros and cons of parole; life after release; and re-offenders. We expect our prisons to punish and to rehabilitate, but often there are numerous ‘pains of imprisonment’: incarceration, assault, homicide, accidental death by drug overdose, self-harm, and then the long-term financial impact and adverse life events on release from custody. Rehabilitation in the prison system is also difficult and costly to provide. Alternatives such as managing offenders in home confinement through intensive forms of electronic monitoring are also considered.

4. Socialism today and tomorrow
Michael Newman

In recent years, many commentators have pronounced the ‘death of socialism’. Few communist regimes survive, and of those that do, most are economically based upon the capitalist market. ‘Socialism today and tomorrow’ investigates the decline of social democracy and the collapse of Soviet communism in the latter half of the twentieth century, before considering the state and relevance of socialism today as well as its prospects for the future. It is apparent from the events of the past century that for socialism to succeed, it must abandon claims to exclusive validity and embrace the various traditions that have fragmented and enriched it.

2. Political authority
David Miller

‘Political authority’ argues that today, we are creatures of the state and asks: Under what circumstances, if any, do states wield legitimate political authority? How far are we as ordinary citizens obliged to obey the laws they make and follow their other dictates?
Political philosophers, including Hobbes, have often argued that, without strict obedience to political authority, that authority will crumble into dust. But in practice it seems that states and other forms of political authority can survive and function effectively only so long as people are generally (rather than universally) disposed to comply with them.

3. The Political System of Communism

Leslie Holmes

‘The political system of communism’ explains the dual structure of Communist states. The Communist Party was to play the ‘leading role’ in the political system, while the state was responsible for passing laws and implementing them. Communist parties were all structured according to the principles of democratic centralism, although they varied somewhat from country to country. The different functions of the Communist party are examined and the nomenklatura system is explained, which is vital to understanding how Communists kept control over society. The reasons for Communist elections, and the electoral methods used, are discussed.

5. Pairing up

Stephen Blundell

In the years following the Second World War, there was a large expansion in research in physics. The importance of the Manhattan project and the development of radar had proved the value of seemingly obscure research, and the scientists investigating superconductivity felt the benefits. The first progress was made with the discovery of the isotope effect in 1950, which identified a link between the mass of the atoms in a crystal lattice and the transition temperature of the superconductor. ‘Pairing up’ investigates the roles of John Bardeen, Leon Neil Cooper, and John Robert Schrieffer in developing our understanding of superconductivity, culminating with their breakthrough BCS theory.

4. ‘Integration’, class inequality, and ‘community cohesion’

Ali Rattansi

The concept of ‘integration’ has replaced multiculturalism as the key theme of national and local policies towards ethnic minorities. Especially in Britain, the notions of ‘community cohesion’, ‘social cohesion’, and ‘citizenship’ have been hailed as the way forward for
incorporating minorities. What exactly do these terms mean? The idea that minorities have failed to ‘integrate’ into societies is a central motif of the approach that replaced multiculturalism. In Britain, the concept of integration was taken over by the notion of ‘community cohesion’, moving the agenda further away. How is this cohesion to be defined and how is the lack of cohesion to be repaired?