The Inter-War Years
1919–39

Introduction

In early 1919, representatives of the victorious powers in the First World War met in Paris to draw up the peace treaties to end the war. The failure of these treaties to create a stable and fair peace settlement made it certain that Europe would face further international problems and disputes. The Treaty of Versailles imposed on an unwilling and embittered Germany was particularly controversial and left the Germans determined to reverse its terms at the first opportunity.

Yet the peacemakers of 1919 sincerely believed that they had given the chance of a peaceful future. They set up the League of Nations to resolve international disputes and prevent countries from ever going to war again. This international organisation set up to preserve world peace was dealt a serious blow by the USA's refusal to join, but still did much to encourage co-operation between nations. Without the world's largest superpower and one of the only established nations not ravaged by war, it would be weak in both people's perception of it and its ability to act. However, the League made a number of useful attempts in the 1920s to reach international agreements to prevent future conflict leading to war. It had some successes, particularly in Greece, in persuading nations to resolve conflicts peacefully.

However, the Great Depression, starting in 1929, created a more unstable international climate, in which aggressive nations, prepared to use war to achieve their aims, challenged the principles of international peace and co-operation on which the League was based. The League proved too weak to stand up to Japanese aggression in Manchuria, and could not prevent the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.
By the mid 1930s it had lost its authority and had ceased to play an effective part in international affairs.

During the 1930s, the greatest threat to international peace was Hitler's desire to rebuild the military might of Germany and to reverse the territorial losses incurred in the Treaty of Versailles. Ignoring limits placed on Germany by the treaty, he built up the armed forces and followed an aggressive foreign policy which saw Austria, Czechoslovakia and finally Poland fall under Nazi control. Britain and France had followed a policy of appeasement during the 1930s, hoping that differences between them and Hitler could be resolved by negotiation. By September 1939 it was apparent that this policy had failed.

**ACTIVITIES**

The League of Nations was set up after the most destructive war in world history; if successful it would be nothing short of miraculous. Discuss or write a short answer for the following questions.

a. Look at the artist's interpretations of the League in Source A. Why do you think it was not able to carry out its optimistic targets?

b. What does it say about how the League was viewed if this drawing was completed at the very start of its existence?

c. Does it matter that the leading powers in the Peace Conference made up the central backbone of the League?

d. Consider the timeline and the introductory text.

**e i** Why do you think the League did not last a generation?

**e ii** What was the difference between the 1920s and 1930s?

**e iii** Was the League of Nations doomed from the start?

f. Look at the modern cartoon of the UN, the League's successor, in Source B. Do you think that the international community is now able to work collaboratively for peace? Explain your answer.
Were the peace treaties of 1919–23 fair?

What were the motives and aims of the ‘Big Three’ at Versailles?

The terms of the armistice

When nations make peace at the end of a war, they first agree the terms on which they will stop fighting (the armistice), before they meet to discuss and agree the terms of the peace treaty that formally ends the war. The First World War was exceptionally damaging and bitterly fought. As it came to an end, the defeated powers sought an armistice, but the victors were determined that its terms should be so severe that there would be no chance of hostilities breaking out again. The armistice terms came to have an important effect on the terms of the peace treaties themselves. For example, in the armistice agreed with Germany, the principle of reparations was accepted. Germany also agreed to leave Alsace-Lorraine, and that its armies would evacuate all areas on the left bank of the Rhine. Each of these found its way into the final peace treaty, as did other military restrictions placed on Germany by the armistice. Thus terms that were intended primarily to bring the fighting to an end actually became part of the treaty that punished Germany.

In January 1919 representatives from 32 countries met in Paris for a conference that would make the peace settlement at the end of the First World War. The tasks they faced were huge. The Europe of 1914 had been swept away by the impact of war. Nobody knows how many died in the war – at least 8 million fighting men and a further 8 million civilians is a reasonable guess.

The Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires had collapsed, the former replaced by an unpredictable communist dictatorship pledged to destroy capitalism throughout the world. Large areas were left devastated by the fighting, and the European economy was shattered by the costs of war.

In these circumstances, to agree a peace settlement that everyone, victors and defeated, found fair and acceptable would have been an impossible task. What is remarkable is that the peacemakers achieved as much as they did.

All the politicians at the Paris Peace Conference were under pressure to meet the expectations of public opinion. The problem was that people in different countries wanted different outcomes.

The Italians were determined to gain the territory that they thought would make them a great power. The French wanted to make Germany pay, and so did the British, although they had a leader who increasingly doubted the wisdom of doing this. The Americans were

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:

- examine the key motives and aims of the ‘Big Three’ at the peace conference
- evaluate the impact of the different aims and motives in shaping the Treaty of Versailles.

Historical skills:

AO2 – Causation, consequence, significance
AO3 – Enquiry.

Fact file

- Total troops dead – 8 million
- Total troops wounded – 21 million
- France lost around 250,000 buildings and 8000 sq miles of farmland
- Britain spent the modern equivalent of £9 billion on the war (most of this was loaned from the USA)
- Major European countries – Germany, Russia and Austria – collapsed in revolution
- Bad harvests and poor weather led to flu outbreaks across Europe that killed twice as many people as the war.
not really enthusiastic about being involved in European affairs at all. Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and the Italian Prime Minister, Orlando, all found that they were not free to make the peace they wanted, as public opinion at home would not let them.

**ACTIVITIES**

**Balancing activity**

Answer the following questions by placing the countries or their respective leaders on an opinion line.

- Who was to blame for the war?
- Who caused the most damage?
- Who joined the latest?
- Who lost the most men?
- Who was in a position to fix things?
- Who could gain the most from the peace settlement?

**The ’Big Three’**

Of the nations that assembled in Paris to make peace, three possessed the power to make decisions which, more often than not, the others would have to accept. These were the great powers that had won the war: the USA, France and Britain. They were represented at the peace conference by President Wilson and prime ministers Clemenceau and Lloyd George, known collectively as the ’Big Three’. Italy and Japan were the other members of the Council of Ten (there were two members from each of the five powers), which met daily at the conference to take all the important decisions.

**KEY WORDS**

**Reparations** – payments made by Germany to compensate other countries for damage caused during the First World War.

**Treaty** – (definition to come)

**KEY PEOPLE**

**Woodrow Wilson** – President of the USA 1913–21.

**David Lloyd George** – Prime Minister of Britain 1916–22.

**Georges Clemenceau** – Prime Minister of France 1917–20.
**Great Britain**

Lloyd George became leader of Britain's coalition government in 1916. In December 1918 his government won a massive election victory by promising to 'squeeze the German lemon till the pips squeak'. The British blamed the Germans for the war and wanted to make them pay; some even suggested that the Kaiser should be hanged. Lloyd George probably knew early on that a harsh peace would store up trouble, but he was constrained by British public opinion and election promises.

Lloyd George was determined to preserve Britain's interests as the greatest naval power. He also wanted the German fleet sunk – a matter that the Germans resolved by sinking all their ships, held captive at Scapa Flow. By the completion of the treaty, however, British public opinion was shifting. As a trading nation, Britain knew that German recovery was essential to the European economy, and that large reparations payments would make this impossible. The British were not prepared to help France keep Germany weak.

**France**

Clemenceau became French prime minister in 1917 when defeat in the war seemed a real possibility. He rallied the country, and led it to victory. As chairman of the peace conference, he was personally willing to compromise in order to find a settlement, but he knew what his countrymen expected. France had borne the brunt of the fighting on the Western Front. Much of north-east France was devastated. The French expected Germany to pay for this destruction, and wanted to ensure that Germany would never invade France again.

Clemenceau found it hard to achieve his aims. Neither Britain nor the USA shared France’s enthusiasm for punishing Germany, nor did they want to provide guarantees for French security in future. Clemenceau’s demand for the German frontier to be pushed back to the Rhine was bluntly rejected. When the terms of the Treaty of Versailles became known, it was condemned throughout France. Within a few months, Clemenceau’s government was overthrown and his political career ended.

**HISTORY DETECTIVE**

Both Lloyd George and Clemenceau were forced to be more hardline because of pressures at home. Can you find out why?
The USA

Woodrow Wilson was a leading democrat in the American government when the war began and became President in 1916. He was a man of strong principles, who found it hard to accept other people’s views. At first, he kept the USA out of the war, until by 1917 he had become convinced that ‘to make the world safe for democracy’ the USA would have to fight the Germans. However, once the war was won, Wilson wanted a fair settlement that would guarantee future world peace. In January 1918 he outlined his ‘Fourteen Points’, the principles that he believed should guide peacemaking when the war ended (see below). The most important thing was self-determination – people of different national groups had the right to rule themselves.

At Paris, Wilson tried to have every decision debated by all 32 nations. But this was too slow, and most nations were interested only in their own problems. Wilson was increasingly forced to compromise on his Fourteen Points, and had to place his hopes in the new League of Nations to put right any problems with the peace treaties.

The Fourteen Points

1. No secret treaties.
2. Freedom of the seas.
3. The removal of economic barriers.
4. The reduction of armaments.
5. Settlement of all colonial claims.
6. Germans to leave Russian territory and a settlement of all questions affecting Russia.
7. Germans to leave Belgium.
9. Italian frontiers adjusted to take into account the nationality of the population.
10. The peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to be given self-determination.
11. Germans to leave Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and international guarantees of their independence to be given.
12. The people of the Ottoman Empire to be given self-determination, and the Dardanelles to be permanently opened to international shipping.
13. An independent Polish state to be created with access to the sea.
14. A general association of nations to be formed to give guarantees of political independence to great and small states alike.

VOICE YOUR OPINION!

Wilson’s Fourteen Points still stand today as a revolutionary concept. They look as if they could have been written in any decade of the 20th century. Examine the list.

• How many of these points have been agreed today?
• How far would you agree that Wilson’s greatest asset was also his weakness?

AO1 – Recall, select and communicate knowledge

Explain why France wanted a harsh peace to be imposed on Germany. [6 marks]

ACTIVITIES

1. Why was it so difficult to make a peace settlement which would please everyone?
2. How were the important decisions made during the peace conference?
3. What were the main differences in the aims of the ‘Big Three’?
Get your sources sorted

**Essential Knowledge:**
- Germany had just been defeated in the First World War.
- The peace treaty was imposed on Germany.
- Clemenceau wanted to ruin Germany.
- The treaty blamed Germany for the war and made her pay for ALL the damage.
- Germany lost land, her armed forces, raw materials, colonies and industry.
- The Germans hated the treaty.

**Assess the source**

Two bats outside the open window – more vampires? This could mean Britain and America or perhaps even Russia.

A vampire which is sucking the girl’s blood. This quite clearly represents Clemenceau sucking the blood (reparations) from Germany.

A young girl, beautiful but sick. The fragile new Germany.

The curtains are blowing in an obvious wind. Unstable weather represents the dangerous new Europe.

Weapons laid aside. Germany is helpless to defend herself because she has lost her army.

<Insert S_510220_ph_006: Cartoon of Georges Clemenceau, French president in 1919, sucking the blood of Germany>

Caption to be supplied.
This means that nobody really thought about how each country would rebuild their economies.

Europe was at a crisis point before the war because some countries had been greedy capturing land and resources. There was an imbalance of power. Versailles, dominated by Britain, France and the USA did nothing to change this.

The Treaty includes no provision for the economic rehabilitation of Europe – nothing to make the defeated Central Powers into good neighbours, nothing to stabilise the new States of Europe, nothing to reclaim Russia; nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity or to adjust the systems of the Old World and the New … Reparation was their main excursion into the economic field, and they settled it from every point of view except that of the economic future of the States whose destiny they were handling.


According to Maynard Keynes the biggest concern of the Big Three was to help themselves.

This source is an excellent example of contemporary opinion because it was produced 1 year after the treaty was signed.

The 3 Cs and a J

Look at the following questions and fill your answer into the frame.

- **Context** – What was happening at the time?
- **Content** – What is happening in the cartoon?
- **Comment** – What is the meaning of the cartoon?

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**SOURCE ?**

*We hoped to establish justice, fair-dealing between nations, and the honest keeping of promises; we thought to establish a good and lasting peace which would, of necessity, have been established on good will. The Peace Treaty has done nothing of the kind.*

General Hubert Gough, speech at a Union of Democratic Control (11 November, 1920).
Why did the victors not get everything they wanted?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
• examine the difficulties of the discussions at Versailles and why it was hard to satisfy such a diverse range of people
• evaluate the concerns shared by the Big Three and assess the ambitions of the peacemakers in context.

Historical skills:
AO2 – Causation, consequence, significance
AO3 – Enquiry/interpretation of events.

Concession with contempt

Once the conference met, the Big Three came to realise that compromises would be necessary. They frequently and strongly disagreed. The British and French would not accept Wilson's vision of a new international order based on the Fourteen Points, and the British and the Americans would not back up France in making a peace that would keep Germany weak.

However, all leaders got their way on some issues, and failed to do so on others.

• Although he championed the rights of different nationalities to rule themselves, in dealing with Italy's and Japan's territorial demands Wilson was prepared to give way and to ignore this principle of self-determination. Had he not done so, they would have refused to sign the treaties.

• Lloyd George fought hard to keep German territorial losses to a minimum, and argued for more German border areas to be given plebiscites (a vote on which country to join), but he was also capable of insisting on increases in reparation payments to suit British interests.

• When Clemenceau insisted on the German frontier being pushed back to the Rhine, Wilson threatened to quit the conference and return home. The French had to be satisfied with the demilitarisation of the Rhineland.

To make matters worse, the British very quickly came to see the Treaty of Versailles as a mistake. Quite clearly, none of the victors got the peace they wanted, not least because they all wanted a different kind of peace. However, even when the nations first assembled in Paris, they were not free to shape the peace as they wished. Four important factors limited their freedom of action.

SOURCE A

Caption to be supplied

SOURCE B

The treaty represented an uneasy compromise between Wilson’s idealism, French security requirements, and British pragmatism [common sense].

The British historian R. Henig, speaking in ??????.

GETTING STARTED

Look at Source A. If this is a fair illustration of Wilson in the post-war period, can you suggest a reason why

a he may not be in tune with his fellow peacemakers?
b the peace treaty could be very prone to failure?
1 Wartime commitments and secret treaties

While the war was going on, a number of promises of territory were made to certain countries to encourage them to fight. Now that the war was over, these nations would expect the promises to be kept.

- Italy had joined the war on the Allies' side after the secret Treaty of London (1915) was signed, promising it a share in any partition of the Ottoman Empire or of German colonies, as well as significant areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Japan's claims on China and parts of the German Pacific Empire had also been supported by the British in 1917.

Wilson was horrified to hear of the extent of these commitments, most of which went against his principle of self-determination. Britain and France were much less enthusiastic about keeping their side of these bargains once the fighting stopped, but sometimes they could not avoid it.

Although the more extreme of the Italian demands for territory were resisted by the Allies at the peace conference, Italy still made substantial gains from Austria in South Tyrol, Trentino and Istria (but not the port of Fiume, which was given to Yugoslavia).

2 The collapse of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires

In early 1917 the Russian monarchy had collapsed under the pressures of fighting a losing war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. By the end of the year, Russia was defeated. In March 1918 Russia's new Bolshevik government signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans. Under the harsh terms of this treaty, Russia gave up huge areas on its western borders: Finland, the Baltic States, its Polish provinces and the Ukraine. Although the treaty was annulled by Germany's defeat, most of the lost territory (the exception was the Ukraine) was not recovered by Russia, which was embroiled in civil war until 1920. The populations of these areas were quite distinct national groups. As neither Germany nor Russia would rule them, they would rule themselves. The peacemakers might discuss or adjust the frontiers of these states, but Germany's defeat and Russia's collapse brought them into existence.

Similarly, in Austria-Hungary the war brought the end of the monarchy. This sprawling central European empire contained dozens of different national groups. Some, such as the Czechs and Slovaks, declared their independence while the war still continued. As the empire fell apart, new countries emerged in its place. When the peace conference met, the new states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia already existed. True, their boundaries had not been finally decided, but the peacemakers did not make extensive changes to them.

3 The terms of the armistice

When nations make peace at the end of a war, they must first agree the terms on which they will stop fighting (the armistice) before they meet to discuss and agree the terms of the peace treaty that formally ends the war. The armistice terms were particularly severe after the destruction and brutality of the First World War, and these came to have an important effect on the peace treaties themselves. For example, in the armistice agreed with Germany, the principle of reparations was accepted. Germany also agreed to leave Alsace-Lorraine and that its armies would evacuate all areas on the left bank of the Rhine. Each of these found its way into the final peace treaty.

KEY WORDS

Armistice – agreement to stop fighting so that peace terms can be discussed.
Concession – definition to be supplied

KEY CONCEPTS

Pragmatism – definition to be supplied
Obligation – definition to be supplied
4 Public opinion

All the politicians at the Paris Peace Conference were under pressure to meet the expectations of public opinion. The problem was that people in different countries wanted different outcomes. For example, the Italians were determined to gain the territory that they thought would make them a great power. Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and the Italian Prime Minister, Orlando, all found that they were not free to agree the peace terms they wanted, as public opinion at home would not let them.

The terms of the treaty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War guilt</th>
<th>Germany had to accept the blame for the war.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 231 of the treaty</td>
<td>‘Germany accepts responsibility for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied governments have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military restrictions</td>
<td>Tight restrictions were placed on Germany’s armed forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No air force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Army limited to 100,000 men. No conscription.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• No tanks.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Navy limited to 15,000 men.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No submarines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Size and number of naval ships limited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reparations</td>
<td>As Germany accepted the blame for the war, the Allies could demand payment for all the damage caused. Germany was required to pay compensation – reparations – to the Allies. A Reparations Commission was set up to fix the amount. It reported in 1921. Germany was presented with a demand for £6600 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German territory</td>
<td>Germany lost all of its colonies overseas. Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar coal region in western Germany were also lost. A union or ‘Anschluss’ with Austria was forbidden. Western Prussia and Upper Silesia went to a new Poland. Danzig became a free city protected by the League of Nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The League of Nations</td>
<td>The first item in all the peace treaties with the defeated nations was the ‘Covenant’ (the rules) setting up the League of Nations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BRAIN BOOST

Shame – war guilt
Unfairly treated – Conference, No 14 points
Guilt – ‘such a confession in my mouth would be a lie’ (Count Brokdorff Rantzau)
Army reduced – symbol of national pride
Removal of lands – made Germany poorer and weaker, against self-determination
Reparations – strangled the new government, felt by all the population

A cartoon about the Treaty of Versailles. It shows the figure of Germany about to be guillotined. The other three figures (left to right) are Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George.

SOURCE

C

What do you think they got right at Versailles?
What were the dangers of the decisions?
How accurate are the following historical equation statements for Europe after 1919?
Too independent = too weak
Weak Germany = weak Europe
Now try one of your own.
Germany’s colonial losses

Germany’s colonies were given to the victorious powers as mandates. This means they were governed by one of the victorious powers until they were ready for independence.

- Togoland and Cameroons – to Britain and France.
- German South West Africa – to South Africa.
- German East Africa – to Britain.
- New Guinea – to Australia.
- Samoa – to New Zealand.
- Pacific islands north of the equator – the Marshalls, Marianas and Carolines – to Japan.

Germany’s colonies in Africa were given to the victorious powers as mandates. This means they were governed by one of the victorious powers until they were ready for independence.

Germany’s colonies in the Pacific were also allocated as mandates.

- New Guinea – to Australia.
- Samoa – to New Zealand.
- Pacific islands north of the equator – the Marshalls, Marianas and Carolines – to Japan.

Territorial terms of the Versailles settlement.

1. DANZIG was made a free city under League of Nations authority. Poland could use the port for its external trade.
2. THE POLISH CORRIDOR gave Poland access to the sea. It also split East Prussia from the rest of Germany.
3. THE SAAR was put under League of Nations authority for fifteen years. France was given the production of the Saar coalfields as part of the reparations payments.
4. THE RHINELAND was to be permanently demilitarised by Germany. It would be occupied by the Allies for fifteen years.
5. ANSCHLUSS (union) between Germany and Austria was forbidden.

SOURCE D

America is far away, protected by the ocean. Not even Napoleon himself could touch England. You are both sheltered; we are not.

Georges Clemenceau, debating with Wilson and Lloyd George on 27 March 1919. Wilson had pressed Clemenceau for ‘moderation’.

SOURCE E

Never was there a greater contrast, mental or spiritual, than that which existed between these two notable men.

David Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties (1938).

SOURCE F

We have assembled here for two purposes – to make the peace settlements, and also to secure the future peace of the world.

Woodrow Wilson, speaking at the Paris Peace Conference (January 1919).

KEY WORDS

Compensation – ((definition to come))
What was the immediate impact of the peace treaty on Germany up to 1923?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
In this lesson you will:
• examine the social, political and economic effects of the treaty on Germany
• apply source analysis skills to assess Germany’s position up to 1923.

Historical skills:
AO1 – Recall, select, use and communicate knowledge
AO2 – Causation and consequence.

The unbearable diktat

Although Germany lost the First World War, the reality of defeat took some time to hit the German people. Their country had not been invaded, and right up to the last few weeks of the war their leaders had continued to insist that they were winning.

The Germans had good reason to believe that the Allies would treat them mercifully. They assumed that peace would be based on the principles of the Fourteen Points. The Kaiser, whom many blamed for the war, was now out of the way, overthrown in the German Revolution of November 1918 and replaced by a new democratic, republican government. However, German confidence was misplaced. The harsh terms of the armistice clearly indicated the kind of peace that would eventually be made. More ominously, none of the defeated nations was allowed representatives at the Paris Peace Conference.

The final terms of the Treaty of Versailles were presented to the Germans with no negotiation – a ‘diktat’ (dictated peace), as they called it.

The Germans were stunned by the severity of the treaty. They considered rejecting it outright, but the alternative was a resumption of the war. The government knew it had no choice but to sign, and was promptly blamed by the entire German nation when it did so. Extremist opponents of the government blamed the ‘November Criminals’ (those who had asked for peace in November 1918) and claimed that they had ‘stabbed Germany in the back’. Many Germans were only too ready to believe the myth that their country had not really lost the war, but had been betrayed by disloyal Jews and socialists. From the very start, Germans did not accept the treaty as a just peace, and many were prepared to do everything they could to make sure the treaty did not work.

GETTING STARTED

SOURCE A

Those who sign this treaty, will sign the death sentence of many millions of German men, women and children.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, leader of the German delegation to Versailles (15 May 1919).

Do you feel that any government could survive the humiliation that Germany suffered in 1919 and still keep the support of its people?

BRAIN BOOST

Territory
Reparations
Army
Blame
Blocked from Anschluss

The acrostic above is a useful way of remembering the key impacts the treaty had on Germany. The key word is blame (article 231) – it is the link word that justified the allies imposing all the terms.
The weak Weimar Republic

In the confused and violent aftermath of the war, the Weimar Republic (Germany's new government) was much weakened by being blamed for agreeing to the treaty. Extremists from right and left struggled to overthrow the republic. Even the army was not totally loyal to its own government. It was angry about the military restrictions in the treaty. Many ex-soldiers refused to disarm after the war, and became members of Freikorps. These were semi-official bands of soldiers, who helped the government crush its left-wing enemies. The trouble was that they were very unreliable allies for the republic to have, and were notorious for their extreme nationalist views.

In 1920, when the government (under pressure from Britain and France) tried to enforce the military restrictions in the Versailles Treaty, a force of Freikorps under Wolfgang Kapp occupied Berlin with the intention of overthrowing the republic. The army did nothing to intervene. This attempted revolution – known as the ‘Kapp Putsch’ – failed only when a general strike organised as a protest against the putsch brought communications to a standstill and demonstrated the support of the working people for the government.

The issue that Germans resented most about the Treaty of Versailles was being forced to accept responsibility for the war (the ‘War Guilt’ clause) and to pay reparations. It was not just Germans who thought reparations were an impossible burden for Germany to bear.

How did Germany cope with the reparations?

The reparation payments were the most hated feature of the Weimar government's responsibilities. Germans of all political orientations were distressed by their responsibility to pay such enormous amounts in reparations. Worse still, they were not capable of paying the annual requests because they had lost many of their most productive areas of natural resources and industry. Germany paid the first year and then defaulted on the next two. In 1923 the French had had enough and decided to take action. They invaded the Ruhr region in western Germany. This was an industrial area that had been retained by Germany under the treaty of Versailles but only on the condition that the Germans never deployed an army to protect the area.
Could the treaties be justified at the time?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
• examine the methods of settlement used to deal with the other members of the Triple Alliance
• analyse, with reference to Wilson’s 14 points, how far a workable peace was achieved elsewhere in Europe.

Historical skills:
• AO3 – Enquiry.

The remaining peace treaties, 1919–23

The Treaty of St Germain, September 1919

This was the treaty signed by the Allies with Austria. Austria accepted the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austria and Hungary were left as small independent states.

Reparations

Austria agreed to pay reparations, but the collapse of the Bank of Vienna in 1922 meant nothing was paid.

Military restrictions

Austria was permitted an army of no more than 30,000 men.

The impact of defeat

• It was impossible to give every national group self-determination. Most of the new states contained defeated minorities who continued to create problems.
• Splitting up the empire created economic problems. Roads and railways had not been built to suit the new states, and the new nations had their own taxes on trade, where previously trade had been free.

The Treaty of Neuilly, November 1919

This was the treaty signed by the Allies with Bulgaria.

Reparations

Bulgaria had to pay £100 million in reparations.

Military restrictions

Bulgaria’s army was limited to 20,000 men.

GETTING STARTED

• What is nationality?
• Why is it important for people who share the same culture to feel they have the opportunity to express it?
• What are the dangers of redrawing boundaries with countries when you don’t consult the people who live there?

1 South Tyrol and Trentino to Italy.
2 Istria and Trieste to Italy.
3 Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia, creating Yugoslavia.
4 Transylvania to Romania.
5 Galicia to Poland. The new state of Poland also received territory from Germany and Russia.
6 The new state of Czechoslovakia was created.

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The Treaty of Trianon, June 1920

This was the treaty signed by the Allies with Hungary. With the Treaty of St Germain, it marked the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Reparations

Hungary agreed to pay reparations, but the collapse of Hungary’s economy in the early 1920s meant nothing was ever paid.

Military restrictions

Hungary was permitted an army of no more than 35,000 men.

The impact of the defeat

- A communist state under Bela Kun was established in 1919. He was overthrown later in the year and a military dictatorship set up under Admiral Horthy.
- The Hungarians continued to resent a settlement that left up to 3 million Magyars (Hungarians) under foreign rule.

The Treaty of Sèvres, August 1920, amended by the Treaty of Lausanne, July 1923

These treaties were signed by the Allies with Turkey.

Impact of the Treaty of Sèvres

- The Turks were so outraged by the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres that the Sultan's government was overthrown in an uprising led by Mustapha Kemal.
- Rather than fight Kemal, the Allies agreed to amend the Treaty of Sèvres. This led to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923.

The Treaty of Lausanne

- Turkey recovered Smyrna and Eastern Thrace from Greece.
- All foreign troops left Turkey.
- Turkey regained control over the Straits.
- Turkey did not have to pay reparations.
- No limits were placed on Turkey's armed forces.

ACTIVITIES

Look at the terms of the other peace treaties.

a How do they compare to the Treaty of Versailles?

b In what way did they improve the countries?

c What other impacts did they have?

KEY WORDS

Partition – (definition to come)

Mandate system – system after the First World War by which colonies of the defeated powers were given by the League of Nations to the victorious powers to administer.

Plebiscite – a referendum, when all electors can vote on an important issue.
Glory in the spoils

There is no doubt that the treaties which established the peace settlement at the end of the First World War imposed very strict terms upon the defeated countries.

- Germany lost all its colonies and, in total, 13 per cent of its land. Nearly six million German citizens now found themselves living outside Germany’s borders. The Germans were also forced to agree to pay huge reparations and carry out massive reductions in their armed forces.

- Austria saw its empire disbanded and was also forced to pay reparations to the Allies. It too had its armed forces reduced. Similar penalties were also imposed on Bulgaria and Hungary.

- The Turks were so angered by their territorial losses that they rose up and overthrew their own government. The Allies then agreed to less severe terms in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

The terms of the treaty were strict, but they were not entirely unexpected. When the armistice was signed in November 1918 the Germans knew they would have to pay reparations, surrender territory and reduce their armed forces. These were the usual consequences of defeat in war. Indeed, some historians think that the Germans might have imposed even harsher terms on the Allies if they had won the war.

Although the strict terms of the Treaty of Versailles aroused much criticism, this did not mean that the treaty-makers had simply acted foolishly or were not aware of what they were doing.

The ‘Big Three’ met after the most terrible war in history. They were determined to make sure that war would not happen again. Some of the decisions the peacemakers had to make were extremely difficult. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was breaking up, large areas of Europe had been devastated, communism was spreading and Europe’s economy was in tatters. There was a need to restore stability – and quickly.

Perhaps, therefore, those historians who have condemned the Treaty of Versailles have been over-critical. Perhaps the peacemakers did a reasonable job considering the problems they faced. However, the view held by most historians since 1919 is that the treaties were too harsh and were likely to lead to future war. It would only be a matter of time before the Germans, in particular, set about seeking revenge.

SOURCE A

It was a peace of revenge. It sowed a thousand seeds from which new wars might spring. It was as though the Devil had sat beside Clemenceau and whispered madness into the ear of Wilson and grinned across the table at Lloyd George.

An extract from a book written by a British historian in 1929.

SOURCE B

Lloyd George told one of his officials that the treaty was ‘...all a great pity. We shall have to do the same thing all over again in twenty-five years at three times the cost’.

Using the sources and your own knowledge, is Marshall Foch’s comment a fair assessment of the Versailles Treaty?

**SOURCE**

This cartoon by Will Dyson was published in a British newspaper in 1919. The ‘Big Four’ are seen leaving Versailles. Dyson shows Orlando, the Italian prime minister, as well as Lloyd George (at the back), and Wilson (far right), while Clemenceau, the prime minister of France (in front) stops as he hears a child weeping. The child represents ‘the class of 1940’. Dyson thought that the terms of Versailles would lead to further war in 1940. He was wrong by only 4 months!

**SOURCE**

To be sure, the First World War had shattered the Austro-Hungarian Empire and left Germany defeated. But the treaty signed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on 28th June 1919 neither extinguished the ambitions that had ignited the war nor quieted the anxieties it had spawned. Victors and vanquished agreed only that the conflict had been a dreadful catastrophe, a blood spilling man killing, nation eating nightmare of unprecedented horror. All were determined to avoid its re-occurrence, more precisely each nation was determined to avoid the repetition of its own role in it.


**SOURCE**

This is not peace. It is an armistice for fifteen years.

The judgement of Marshall Foch on the Treaty of Versailles. Foch was the French commander-in-chief of the Allied armies in the final year of the war.

**ACTIVITIES**

Look back through the chapter and your notes and try to identify the impacts of the decisions. Place them on the scales below to illustrate a judgement.

The purpose of this task is to show the importance of assessing situations in balance.

Use your task to plan the essay below.

**GradeStudio**

**AO2 – Understand and analyse a source**

Using the sources and your own knowledge, is Marshall Foch’s comment a fair assessment of the Versailles Treaty?
To what extent was the League of Nations a success?

What were the aims of the League?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
- Information: (to come)
- assess the aims of the League of Nations and analyse how each of the major European powers would react to its introduction.

Historical skills:
(Assessment Objectives for lesson – to come)

GETTING STARTED

The League of Nations was the brainchild of Woodrow Wilson, a man many believe was way ahead of his time, but despite his vigorous campaigning, few people shared his vision.

SOURCE A

1 Look at the artist’s interpretation of the League (Source A). What is the cartoon’s message?
2 What does it say about how the League was viewed if this drawing was completed at the very start of its existence?

The birth of the League of Nations

The peacemakers at Versailles knew that they had not solved all the problems of the post-war world, but they looked to the League of Nations to complete their work. They set up the League of Nations to resolve international disputes and prevent countries from ever going to war again. This international organisation set up to preserve world peace was dealt a serious blow by the USA’s refusal to join, but still did much to encourage co-operation between nations. However, without the support of the world’s largest superpower and one of the only established nations not ravaged by war, it would be weak in both people’s perception of it and its ability to act.

BRAIN BOOST

Aims of the League [DIES]:
1 Disarmament
2 Improve people’s jobs and lives
3 Enforce the treaty of Versailles
4 Stop War (collective security)
The covenant of the League

The covenant was the rule book of the League of Nations. Its central aims are listed below. In a world recovering from war with continued disputes about territory, these were optimistic goals, to say the least.

To promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security:

- by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war
- by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations
- by the firm establishment of international law as the rule of conduct between governments
- by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another
- by working alongside each other and removing old alliances all the nations in the League, both large and small, could ensure ‘collective security’.

The aims of the League

1 To stop war

The League aimed to discourage aggression and deal with disputes by negotiation. The League planned to provide collective security by a community of power. In Article 10 of the Covenant of the League, members promised to defend the territory and independence of League members and to take action ‘in case of danger’.

2 To improve the life and jobs of people around the world

The League aimed to fulfil this aim both by direct action to improve health and welfare and by encouraging trade and business.

3 Disarmament

(How did the League aim to achieve this?)

4 To uphold and enforce the Treaty of Versailles

(How did the League aim to achieve this?)

Main points of the covenant of the League of Nations

A91 – Select and communicate knowledge

Using the evidence on the page and your own knowledge, complete the following exam question. Don’t forget to plan your answer and explain the evidence you include.

Describe how the League of Nations was meant to keep the peace. [6 marks]

Examiner’s tip

To get 3–4 marks look at one aspect in detail, for example:
- the theory of collective security.
- the actions the League could take against aggressive nations.

To get 5–6 marks on this question, you need to look at several aspects and give more detailed explanations.
How successful was the League in the 1920s?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
In this lesson you will:
- examine the successes of the League in international diplomacy throughout the 1920s
- develop your ability to categorise and prioritise evidence to form a judgement.

Historical skills:
((Assessment Objectives for this lesson – to come))

GETTING STARTED
(to come)

SOURCE A

Successes and failures in peacekeeping
The peace treaties of 1919–20 did not resolve all the territorial disputes caused by the war.
- The Turks were so outraged by the peace settlement that they refused to accept it. They went on fighting, mainly against the Greeks, until the Allies were ready to agree to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.
- The Italians were dissatisfied with their gains, and managed to hold on to Fiume after D’Annunzio’s occupation of 1919–20.
- The Poles were especially active, grabbing much of the area of Teschen from Czechoslovakia in early 1919 (the League finally fixed this border between the two countries in 1920). More importantly, the Poles were at war with Russia until 1921, gaining much of the Ukraine and Belorussia.

<Insert S_510220_ph_012: Cartoon ‘The old order of things’ – author to confirm details>

Caption to follow

Quarrels settled by the League
Quarrels not settled by the League

1919–20
CZECHOSLOVAKIA v. POLAND
1920
ALBANIA v. YUGOSLAVIA
1921
GERMANY v. POLAND
1921
SWEDEN v. FINLAND
1923
GERMANY v. LITHUANIA
1920
POLAND v. LITHUANIA
1925
GREECE v. BULGARIA
1924
IRAQ v. TURKEY
1936
ITALY v. ABYSSINIA
1921
ITALY v. GREECE
1928
BOLIVIA v. PARAGUAY
1932
COLOMBIA v. PERU
1919–20
CZECHOSLOVAKIA v. POLAND
1920
ALBANIA v. YUGOSLAVIA
1921
GERMANY v. POLAND
1921
SWEDEN v. FINLAND
1923
GERMANY v. LITHUANIA
1920
POLAND v. LITHUANIA
1925
GREECE v. BULGARIA
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1936
ITALY v. ABYSSINIA
1921
ITALY v. GREECE
1928
BOLIVIA v. PARAGUAY
1932
COLOMBIA v. PERU

Quarrels settled by the League
Quarrels not settled by the League

3000 km

N

OCR GCSE History B: Modern World History
In the face of continuing violence and uncertainty, the League only gradually established a role for itself in dealing with international crises. Even when it did become involved, its record in resolving crises was mixed.

**Vilna, 1920**
This area was claimed by both Poland and Lithuania. It was included in the new state of Lithuania set up at the end of the First World War, but it had a majority Polish population. In 1920, during the Russo–Polish War, Vilna was occupied by Polish forces, which later refused to leave. This seemed a clear case of one League member (Poland) showing aggression against another (Lithuania), but the League was very reluctant to become involved. Taking action against Poland would have required armed forces, but League members were not willing to supply them. In addition, Britain and France saw Poland as a strong barrier against Germany and communist Russia and did not wish to upset it. The League tried to negotiate a deal, but in 1923 it confirmed Poland's occupation of Vilna. Sporadic fighting between the two sides continued until 1927.

**The Aaland Islands, 1921**
These islands are in the Baltic Sea about halfway between Sweden and Finland. Both nations claimed the islands and seemed ready to fight over them, but they invited the League to reach a judgement on the dispute. It decided the islands should be awarded to Finland, and Sweden accepted this decision.

**Upper Silesia, 1921**
Upper Silesia was one of several plebiscite areas defined in the Treaty of Versailles. The people who lived in these areas could vote on which country should have the territory. Upper Silesia contained large numbers of Poles and Germans, and since the areas was particularly important for its industry, both Poland and Germany were determined to acquire the territory. In the plebiscite held by the League in March 1921, the people voted in favour of Germany by 700,000 votes to 480,000. The League decided to partition the area. Germany received over half the land and population, while the Poles had most of the industry. This caused great bitterness in Germany, but both countries accepted the decision.

**Economic collapse in Austria and Hungary, 1922–23**
In 1922–23, Austria and Hungary faced bankruptcy. Their economies had not recovered after the war, and now, burdened with reparations payments, it seemed that they would simply collapse. The League arranged international loans for the two countries, sending commissioners to supervise how the money was spent. In effect, the League temporarily took over the economic management of the two countries. With this help, both Austria and Hungary were able to begin economic recovery.

### Successes and failures of the League in the 1920s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place/event</th>
<th>Action taken by League</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Vilna</td>
<td>The League ordered the Poles to leave, but was ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Silesia</td>
<td>The League settled a dispute between Germany and Poland in 1921 by holding a plebiscite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aaland Islands</td>
<td>A League investigation settled a dispute between Sweden and Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922–23</td>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>The League helped prevent economic collapse by arranging loans and sending economic experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Corfu</td>
<td>The League tried to stop a war in Corfu, but Italy refused a League order to leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memel</td>
<td>The League tried unsuccessfully to make the Lithuanians leave in 1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruhr</td>
<td>The League was unable to stop the French invasion of the Ruhr in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>The League arbitrated in favour of British Iraq and against Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Greece stopped its invasion when condemned by the League</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Words**

Plebiscite – a referendum, when all electors can vote on an important issue.
Partition – (definition to come)
Corfu, 1923
In August 1923, five Italian surveyors who were working for the League of Nations in mapping the Greek-Albanian frontier were shot and killed on the Greek side of the border. Mussolini, the new Italian dictator, took advantage of the situation, demanding compensation from the Greek government. When this was not forthcoming, he bombarded and occupied Corfu, an island off the Greek coast. This action was in complete defiance of the principles of the League, of which Italy was a prominent member. The Council wanted to condemn Italy, but the great powers would not permit it. Instead, they put pressure on the Greeks to accept Mussolini’s demands. Only when the Greeks had apologised and paid up did Mussolini withdraw his forces from Corfu.

The Greek-Bulgarian dispute, 1925
After the Treaty of Neuilly, the border between Greece and Bulgaria remained a source of tension between the two nations. After a number of violent incidents, the Greeks invaded Bulgaria in October 1925. On this occasion the League intervened effectively. It condemned the Greek action and pressurised them to withdraw, which they did.

Humanitarian successes of the League
The League was the first international organisation to suggest that the world community should take collective action to tackle problems such as starvation, disease and child slave labour. In the 1920s the League:

- repatriated 400,000 First World War prisoners of war.
- worked to prevent leprosy, and took steps to kill mosquitoes to prevent malaria.
- closed down four Swiss companies which were selling illegal drugs.
- attacked slave owners in Sierra Leone and Burma and set free 200,000 slaves.
- in 1922 the League helped refugees in Turkish camps.

Attempts at disarmament
The League’s attempts to organise a disarmament conference were less successful:

- the disarmament conference of 1923 failed because Britain objected.
- the disarmament conference of 1931 was wrecked by Germany.

However, the League did endorse the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, a pact agreed by the French and US governments to outlaw war, which was signed by 23 nations and supported by 65.

Conclusion
The League had its successes and failures in dealing with international crises in the 1920s. It was at its best when dealing with small nations that were prepared to accept its authority. However, when the great powers had vital interests at stake, they ignored the League. Thus the League could do nothing about the French invasion of the Ruhr in 1923. Moreover, there were already signs that it would prove incapable of dealing effectively with determined aggressors.

A number of important international agreements were signed by the great powers in the 1920s without reference to the League. It was as if the great powers felt that some matters were too important for the League to handle. There were many such agreements, but two examples will illustrate the point. The League was notably unsuccessful in achieving disarmament. However, by the Washington Naval Agreement of 1922 the USA, Britain, Japan, France and Italy agreed to limit their fleets. No major ships would be built for 10 years and the size of the American, British and Japanese fleets would be in the ratio 5:5:3, with

KEY WORDS
Repatriated – (definition to come)
Leprosy – (definition to come)
France and Italy having about half as many ships as Japan. The League played no part in reaching this agreement.

Even when the great powers met to discuss relations with Germany and the future of the Versailles settlement, the League was not invited. In the Locarno Treaties of 1925, signed between Germany and the wartime allies, Germany formally accepted its frontiers with France and Belgium. It also agreed to the permanent demilitarisation of the Rhineland, and to accept international arbitration in any future disputes with France. Locarno did much to create a more friendly relationship between Germany and the other great powers, and led directly to Germany being admitted to the League in 1926.

ACTIVITIES
1 Using the information on pages 000–000, assess the League’s success on the following sliding scale.
   Excellent progress ————————————————— Insufficient progress
   a Mark on the line where you think the League lay in the 1920s on each of the following issues.
      • Preventing war
      • Upholding the peace treaties
      • Punishing aggressive states
      • Humanitarian work
   b Write a short paragraph to explain why you think this was the case.

2 Complete the table using the information in this lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was the problem?</th>
<th>What was the League’s reaction?</th>
<th>What was the verdict?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vilna (1920)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Aaland Islands (1921)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Silesia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic collapse in Austria and Hungary (1922–3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corfu (1923)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek–Bulgarian dispute (1925)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How far did weaknesses in the League’s organisation make failure inevitable?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
- examine the strengths and weaknesses of the structure of the League of Nations and the roles of its members
- assess the potential problems that would occur due to the nature of the League’s organisation and members.

Historical skills:
AO1 – Recall and select knowledge
AO3 – Evaluation.

The covenant of the League of Nations

The covenant of the League of Nations (the document that outlined its aims) was written into each of the peace treaties signed in 1919–23. Wilson hoped this would ensure that the League was accepted by all nations. However, from the start, the League shared many of the weaknesses of the treaties themselves. The defeated powers were not consulted about the League and were not invited to join. The victorious powers did not really agree among themselves about the League. Wilson's idealism and belief in co-operation between nations were not shared by the cynical and worldly-wise Europeans. Lloyd George went along with the idea to keep Wilson happy, and the French agreed on the basis that anything which might give them additional security against Germany was worth trying.

Most important of all, Wilson's failure to persuade the US Congress to accept the treaties meant that the USA never joined the League. The absence of the world's most powerful nation seriously undermined the League's authority to deal with international problems.

The structure and organisation of the League

To carry out its work, the League needed a structure that would enable nations to meet, discuss and resolve international problems. It was decided that the League would be based in Geneva, Switzerland. All the member states could send representatives to the Assembly. This was the League's parliament. It met every year and had ultimate authority over the League's actions. In the Assembly, all nations were equal and had one vote. The Assembly was too large to react quickly to international crises, so a smaller group called the Council was set up; this met more frequently.

The great powers attempted to control the Council. Britain, France, Italy and Japan were permanent members and were originally matched by representatives from four other states. The number of additional states represented increased to nine over the years.

The League's operations functioned smoothly, it had its own administrative staff – the Secretariat. This was the League's civil service, which arranged the work of the Council and Assembly.

ACTIVITIES

Consider the sanctions that could be issued by the League in the event of a conflict.
1. Do they seem to form a logical pattern?
2. Are they fair?
3. Aside from the obvious desire to maintain peace, are there any other reasons why the League saved military action for last?
4. Why do you think the League was consistently unable to apply economic sanctions?
**Special Commissions**
The Council supervised the work of commissions set up by the Covenant to deal with particular issues. The most important of these commissions were for disarmament and for the mandates. The League also established a range of committees and agencies, dealing with international social and economic issues, such as health, drugs, prostitution, working conditions, refugees and women’s rights.

**Court of International Justice**
The Court of International Justice was set up in The Hague to rule on legal disputes between nations, but as countries had to agree in advance to accept the court’s verdicts, many important disputes were never referred to it.

**International Labour Organisation**
The ILO was a fundamental element of the peace established in 1919, but more importantly its success would be one of the major factors in analysing the League’s success in the eyes of common people. The ILO worked primarily in establishing rights and freedom for workers. Laws were passed to ensure working hours and conditions were protected as well as international codes for inspection of workplaces and laws to protect foreign workers.

**Settling disputes**
The covenant of the League set out three ways in which the League could act to settle disputes:
- an impartial hearing from a neutral country
- a ruling by the Court of International Justice
- an inquiry by the Council.

If these did not work and a country chose to ignore the League, it could take further action in the following stages:
- Stage 1: it could pressurise the guilty country, bringing world opinion against it (moral pressure).
- Stage 2: members of the League could refuse to trade with the ‘guilty’ country (economic sanctions).
- Stage 3: the armed forces of the member countries could be joined together and used against an aggressor (military force).

**The structure of the League of Nations.**
- **Assembly**
  - Met once a year. All member nations of the League had one vote here.

- **Council of the League**
  - A committee that took major decisions. Most major nations were members.

- **Permanent Court of Justice**
  - Fifteen judges met at The Hague in the Netherlands. They settled international disputes, e.g. over frontiers or fishing rights.

- **Secretariat**
  - The permanent ‘civil service’ of the League. It carried out decisions taken by the Council.

- **International Labour Organisation**
  - Each member nation sent two government ministers, one employer and one worker. They discussed working conditions and got countries to make improvements.

- **Special Commissions**
  - Drug addiction
  - Health
  - Slavery
  - Help for undeveloped nations
  - Refugees
  - Minorities
  - Mandates
  - Women

**The League has been described as a toothless tiger. How far do you think this interpretation is true?**
Another phrase that could be applied to describe the League’s structure, particularly the permanent members of its Council, is ‘keep your friends close but keep your enemies closer’.

- Discuss with a partner which you think is the most effective analogy.
Membership

The League had 42 members when it was set up, and this number increased over the years. However, it was not just the USA that was not a member. At first, all the defeated nations were excluded. They were all later allowed in – Germany joined in 1926, although it left again when Hitler came to power in 1933. Russia was also excluded because other nations refused to recognise its communist government. It was finally admitted to the League only in 1934. Other founder members of the League, such as Japan and Italy, subsequently left it. So the League was never an organisation of all states, or even of all the most important states.

The League was dominated by Britain and France, who disagreed significantly over the role that the League should play in international affairs. Britain regarded the League as a harmless talking shop, but did not want to give it real authority or power. France, on the other hand, wanted the League to enforce the terms of the peace treaties. This difference in attitude between the two powers most involved in the League's work inevitably weakened it.

Security issues

The real test for the League came when it had to deal with aggression. In theory, the Council could raise armed forces from member states, but in practice countries were very reluctant to agree to this. The Covenant said the League should use sanctions to deter aggressors – all members would refuse to trade with them until the aggression ceased. However, the League was only as strong and determined as its members, and nations often looked to the League to solve problems that they would not deal with themselves. Although the League could sometimes pressurise small nations into obedience, it was too weak to deal with great powers like Japan and Italy.

Idealism

The creation of the League was an idealistic attempt to make sure nations did not have to live through the horrors of the First World War again. It was the first organisation in which governments worked together for world peace. Its agencies also carried out much successful humanitarian work. Its campaigns for better health and working conditions, to help refugees return to their homes and to free slaves, did much to improve people's lives across the world. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) encouraged governments to recognise trade unions and to improve workers' pay and pensions. Even when governments did not accept everything proposed by the League's agencies, public awareness of a whole range of social issues was increased.

However, the idealism of the League was also a weakness. All the member states, large and small, had equal voting rights, and all decisions (in both the Assembly and the Council) had to be unanimous. This was fine when members agreed with each other, but not when they disagreed.

The work of the commissions illustrates how the League was powerless to make progress against the wishes of individual states. The Covenant committed all members to reducing armaments, yet the disarmament commission found this impossible to achieve. The French regarded disarmament as giving away their security, while the Germans, who had been disarmed under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, thought they had a right to re-arm, at least to the level of the other powers. Not until 1932 was the commission finally able to set up a Disarmament Conference. By then, much of the spirit of co-operation and trust the League originally enjoyed had disappeared. The conference could agree nothing, and France's refusal to disarm was the perfect excuse for Hitler to walk out of the conference (and the League) in 1933.

The Mandates Commission was only slightly more successful. The mandated powers were supposed to administer the mandates on behalf of the League and to prepare them for eventual independence. In practice, they treated them more or less as colonies. Iraq's independence in 1932 was the only example of a mandate being freed in the interwar period.
Conclusion
The circumstances in which the League was set up, and in particular the refusal of the USA to join, left it with serious weaknesses. It was not well equipped to deal with cases of aggression, and had no armed forces of its own. It worked well when members wished to co-operate, and through its agencies had many worthwhile achievements. However, its creators were too optimistic and idealistic in expecting all nations to accept its authority.
How far did the Depression make the work of the League more difficult?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
• examine the consequences of the American Wall Street Crash on the economies of Europe
• assess the long- and short-term effects of the crash on the effectiveness of international diplomacy and the League of Nations in the 1930s.

Historical skills:
((Assessment Objectives for this lesson – to come))

GETTING STARTED

(to come)

Global economic crisis

The Great Depression was sparked off by the Wall Street Crash – the collapse of the US stock market – in October 1929. The slump in American share prices was a disaster not just for America, but for the world economy. The wave of bankruptcies that followed the crash sent the US economy into a downward spiral that had a deep impact on world trade. Hardly a country in the world remained unaffected. The only exception was the Soviet Union, whose economy was not dependent on trade with other nations. The slump in world trade made all other nations poorer, and unemployment soared as industries ground to a halt.

Although this was an economic crisis, it soon had harmful political effects, which impacted on the work of the League of Nations. The Great Depression did much to destroy the goodwill on which the League had depended in the 1920s. The 1930s brought increasing tension and conflict, as nations struggled to cope with the effects of the crash. Their failure to find peaceful ways of doing this culminated in the Second World War.

Unemployment

Millions of workers lost their jobs because of the crash. Across the industrialised states, unemployment was five times higher in 1932 than it had been in 1929. In the USA, 30 per cent of the working population was unemployed. Not surprisingly, the unemployed demanded action from the politicians. However, the politicians had little idea how to cope with the situation. Their first reaction was to assume that the slump was temporary and would soon correct itself. Meanwhile, the unemployed became ever more desperate. The effects of unemployment were different from country to country, but everywhere governments became uncertain, unstable and preoccupied more with solving their own problems than with tackling international difficulties.

Extremism

In some countries, notably Germany, the Depression helped extremist political parties come to power. Voters were tempted to follow any politician who offered a solution to unemployment. They felt they had nothing to lose, as democracy had failed them. These extremist parties were often nationalist – they had a hatred of other nations, and were concerned only with their own national interests. Where such parties came to power, they often showed an unwillingness to accept international agreements and a willingness to use force to achieve their aims. The League of Nations found it almost impossible to deal with the more violent international climate of the 1930s, as nations simply ignored its authority.

Militarism

Extremist leaders looked to foreign policy success to distract the attention of their people from troubles at home. Dictatorships re-armed their countries and prepared their populations for war. Political parties like the Fascist Party in Italy and the Nazis in Germany were like armies – they even had their own uniforms. In these countries, ordinary life was militarised. People who did not accept party discipline were punished. Workers lost their rights. Opposition was not tolerated. Women and children, as well as men, were expected to join party organisations. Militarism in a powerful country like Germany posed a great threat to other countries. Sooner or later the dictatorships would use their power. The consequences of increasing militarism in Germany are described later. Two other powers whose militarism did much to destroy international peace in the 1930s were Japan and Italy.
How the depression affected the League

Desperate people suffering terrible economic hardship increasingly turned to leaders offering radical solutions. This led to the rise of militaristic fascist governments.

There was less international cooperation. The USA and other nations looked to take care of themselves instead of worrying about world peace and humanitarian issues.

Britain and France no longer wished to sort out international disputes that would cost them money and could further damage their trade.

Complete the table below by placing the sentences in the correct column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American isolationism</th>
<th>Rise of extremist governments</th>
<th>Weakening of Britain and France</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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- Increasing challenges to peace treaties
- Reduced the League’s ability to take military action
- Reduced the League's ability to threaten aggressive nations
- Countries sought to fix economic problems by conquering new lands

- The main powers of the League became less committed
- America took no interest in international affairs
- No American loans available
- Increasing challenges to the League

ACTIVITIES

1. Complete the table below by placing the sentences in the correct column.

2. a Using the evidence you have gathered in the lesson, decide what you think was the biggest area of difficulty the League faced after 1929. Decide on a format to display this judgement; you may want to use a pie chart, a priority pyramid or a PEE paragraph, for example.

   b Share your answers with a partner and consider their opinion.

   c Challenge your partner to explain their judgement with reference to at least three other factors that they didn't choose.

   d Using the information you have gathered from the diagrams and your discussions, now place the areas of difficulty in a priority pyramid in order of importance.

There is a saying in international affairs that ‘when America sneezes, the world catches a cold.’

- What does this suggest about the American influence on other countries’ economies?
- What does this reveal about the Wall Street Crash?
- How far do you think this saying still applies today?
Increasing militarism in Japan

Japan was already established on the Asian mainland: its victory over Russia in the war of 1905 had given Japan control over much of Manchuria, and in 1910 it had annexed Korea. Moreover, Japan emerged from the First World War as the most important power in Asia, acquiring colonies in the Pacific and control over German territories leased from China. Yet Japan was not satisfied by these gains for several reasons:

- Rapid population growth and industrial development meant that Japan had to import food and raw materials.
- The Allies’ refusal to refer to racial equality in the peace treaties of 1919–20 was deeply offensive to the Japanese.
- The Japanese government had accepted an inferior position in the Washington Naval Agreements (1922), which permitted Japan only three ships to every five built by Britain and the USA. The Japanese military took this as a sign that they could not trust their politicians to protect Japan’s interests.

Tension between the military, who wanted a policy of aggressive expansion in Asia, and the politicians, who were much more cautious, grew worse during the 1920s. The army began to act without government approval. In 1928 it had the local warlord in Manchuria, Chang Tso Lin, assassinated because it thought the government’s policy of friendship towards Chang was wrong. The army simply wanted to annex Manchuria.

There were also increasing economic difficulties towards the end of the 1920s. The price of rice began to collapse because of over-production, and Japan’s farmers saw their incomes fall sharply. Moreover, the export of silk, mostly to the USA, was seriously affected by the Depression. By 1932 the price was only one-fifth of what it had been a decade earlier. Japanese industry was also in a dire
state – production and employment fell 30 per cent between 1929 and 1931. While the government seemed unable to cope with these developments, the army's policy of territorial conquest and expansion seemed to offer the people some hope.

The Mukden incident
In September 1931, the army staged the so-called Mukden incident, which led to the seizure of Manchuria and the establishment of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. The government in Tokyo had advance warning of these plans, but did not intervene. Politicians needed great courage to stand up to the army, since assassinations were common. In May 1932 a group of soldiers murdered the prime minister, Inukai Tsuyoshi, in his own house. In February 1936 a full-scale military revolt in Tokyo was crushed only after many politicians and government officials had been murdered. Such events undermined normal political life. After 1932 Japan's governments were dominated by military men, and followed ever more aggressive policies, culminating in the invasion of China in 1937.

The League’s failure in Manchuria, 1931–33
Manchuria is a part of northern China that is fertile and rich in natural resources such as coal and iron ore. In the 1920s China was weak, and in many areas local leaders, or warlords, were more important than the national government. Japan took advantage of this weakness to expand its interests in Manchuria.

The Japanese already had an army (known as the Kwantung army) stationed in southern Manchuria to protect the territory gained from Russia in 1905. They also owned the South Manchurian Railway. The Chinese regarded the area as theirs, and claimed that they had been forced, first by Russia and later by Japan, to accept foreign domination of Manchuria. By the late 1920s many Chinese were moving into Manchuria to settle, attracted by the ability of land and work. At the same time, the Chinese government was beginning to stand up to the warlords, and the Japanese feared that the Chinese might soon be strong enough to challenge them in Manchuria.

Exasperated by what they believed was their own government's weakness in dealing with China, in September 1931 officers of the Kwantung army staged the Mukden incident. The exact sequence of events remains unclear; however, on the night of 18 September, there was an explosion on the South Manchurian Railway just outside the city of Mukden. The Japanese claimed that this was sabotage by the Chinese, who subsequently opened fire on the Japanese railway guards. The Chinese denied this, claiming that all their soldiers were back in their barracks at the time. Whatever the truth of the matter, the incident was very convenient for the Kwantung army, giving it an excuse to begin the takeover of Manchuria.

KEY WORDS
Warlord – (definition to come)

VOICE YOUR OPINION!
Study the map of Asia.
• How easy would it have been for the Mukden incident to be staged by either side?
• The benefit for Japan is quite obvious, but how would the event benefit China?
There is no doubt that the Japanese government was appalled by the invasion, but as it progressed successfully an outburst of nationalism swept Japan, leaving the government no choice but to accept what had occurred. In 1932 Manchuria was renamed Manchukuo, and the last Chinese emperor, Pu Yi, removed from power in his own country in 1911, was installed by the Japanese as a puppet ruler.

**How did the League of Nations react?**

At first, the occupation of Manchuria looked like an obvious case of aggression by Japan. However, the Japanese had long-standing economic rights there, agreed by treaty with the Chinese. Most nations were inclined to regard Manchuria as a Japanese sphere of interest, and were not keen to get involved. In addition, the Japanese had successfully sown confusion about the true circumstances of the Mukden incident, and insisted that they were just defending themselves from Chinese attacks.

Nevertheless, when China appealed for the League's help, it could not ignore what was going on. The League instructed Japanese forces to withdraw, but it was ignored, and the further advance of the Japanese into Manchuria left little doubt of their intentions.

In truth, there was little that the League could do if Japan remained determined to ignore its authority. For most League members, events in East Asia seemed very distant. China's internal turmoil was well known, and many League members secretly sympathised with Japan's attempts to impose 'order' on the region. The League decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry under Lord Lytton, which was sent to the area to gather information and report on what happened. When the report was published in late 1932, it condemned Japan's actions. The members of the League accepted Lytton's conclusions. The Japanese response was simple: they ignored the report and left the League.

The occupation of Manchuria did not end Japanese aggression in China. Early in 1932 Japanese and Chinese troops clashed in Shanghai, and during four weeks of fighting the Japanese bombed parts of the city. In February 1933 the Japanese occupied Jehol province, which bordered Manchuria. These actions were just a prelude to the full-scale invasion of the Chinese mainland that commenced in July 1937. In the months that followed, fighting spread through much of China, and by 1938 many of China's most important cities were under Japanese occupation. Many historians regard July 1937 as the true starting date of the Second World War.

The League had been exposed as powerless to deal with Japanese aggression in Manchuria. However, because these events took place in East Asia and not in Europe, they were not too damaging to the League's authority. It was easy for the League's supporters to continue to believe that, if a similar crisis occurred in Europe, where vital interests of the great powers were at stake, the League would be able to cope with it.

**SOURCE**

This cartoon by David Low attacks the weakness of the League in bowing to Japanese military aggression.
Increasing militarism in Italy

Italy, like Japan, emerged from the First World War dissatisfied with the gains it had made. The years immediately after the war were marked by great instability as the country tried to cope with its economic problems. Unemployment rose rapidly, and extremists on left and right struggled to take control.

By 1922, Mussolini's Fascist Party, or Blackshirts, had emerged as the dominant group. After staging his ‘March on Rome’ in October that year, Mussolini was invited by the king to become prime minister. It took some time for him to take complete control of the country, but by 1926 he was firmly established as dictator – he preferred the title ‘Il Duce’.

Once in power, Mussolini put into practice the extreme right-wing policies of his Fascist Party. Opposition was crushed and other political parties were banned. He took command of the economy, controlling working conditions, pay and prices by law. His achievements seemed impressive. New roads were built, marshes were drained, dams were constructed for hydroelectric power, and railways were electrified. In foreign affairs, Mussolini quickly made a name for himself. He built up Italy’s armed forces and was not afraid to use the threat of violence. The Corfu incident of 1923 showed that Mussolini would follow an aggressive, nationalistic foreign policy.

ACTIVITIES

1 Examine the two cartoons of events in Manchuria (Sources A and B).
   a How far do they fit with the conclusions you have drawn from the text?
   b Were Britain and America justified in criticising other countries for their expansionist policies?
   c What does this event reveal about the effectiveness of the League of Nations sanctions when faced with a large threat?
   d What was the damage caused by Japan leaving the League?

2 Imagine that you are one of Lord Lytton's advisors sent out to Asia to try to resolve the dispute between China and Japan. Compile a report that considers the following:
   • China’s right to call on the League for support
   • a recognition of Japan’s need to expand
   • a re-affirmation of the aims and intentions of the League
   • specific discussion points about the dispute
   • a judgement to be presented to the League advising the best course of action. You can feel free to select alternative options to the League in the face of this crisis.

KEY PEOPLE

Lord Lytton – (description to come)
Pu Yi – (description to come)
Benito Mussolini – (description to come)
The invasion of Abyssinia

Like other nations, Italy was hit badly by the Great Depression. When unemployment rose, Mussolini turned to foreign adventures to distract the Italian people from the troubles at home. The first victim was the African state of Abyssinia, a poor, undeveloped state in north-east Africa. Most historians believe that the resulting crisis was a death-blow to the League, which found it impossible to take effective action to stop Italian aggression.

Abyssinia was almost the only part of Africa not under European control and, being located next to the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, it was an obvious target for Mussolini's colonial ambitions. Italy had attempted to conquer Abyssinia before, and one of Mussolini's aims was to avenge the humiliation suffered by the Italians at the Battle of Adowa (1896). Despite the Treaty of Friendship that Italy had signed with Abyssinia in 1928, it was clear by 1934 that Mussolini was planning war. In December 1934 a clash between Italian and Abyssinian troops at the oasis of Wal Wal gave Mussolini the excuse he needed. Although the League attempted to intervene in the dispute, tension increased and by September 1935 war seemed near.

The League's failure in Abyssinia, 1935–36

The League was in an impossible situation. Both Italy and Abyssinia were member states, bound in theory to accept the League's authority in settling their dispute. But it was obvious that Mussolini wanted war. If he invaded Abyssinia, the League would have to take action; but what action? Everything would depend on the attitude of Britain and France, the two great powers of the League. If they were determined enough, Mussolini might be forced to back down. However, they needed Mussolini's friendship because they saw him as a potential ally against Germany.

In January 1935, the French foreign minister, Laval, met Mussolini in Rome. A number of secret agreements were made, some of which concerned Abyssinia. Laval thought he was making economic concessions in North Africa so as to win Mussolini's friendship. But Mussolini interpreted France's approach as an indication that he could do as he liked in Abyssinia. In any case, Mussolini assumed that Britain and France, both major colonial powers themselves, would not object to Italy acquiring another African colony of its own. There was some surprise, then, when Britain tried to warn Mussolini off from invading Abyssinia. In September 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare, the British foreign secretary, made a vigorous speech to the Assembly of the League, calling for collective resistance to any Italian aggression.

In spite of the warnings, Italy's invasion of Abyssinia commenced on 3 October 1935. The Abyssinian forces stood little chance against the
modern Italian army, but the country was huge and the roads poor, so the Italian troops were not able to advance quickly. At first, it seemed the League would take the strong action that Hoare had demanded. Within a week the League had condemned Italy as an aggressor, and soon afterwards it imposed sanctions, by which the League members were forbidden to trade with Italy. Crucially, however, the sanctions were not extended to basic war materials such as coal, iron and oil. Even Mussolini later admitted that this would have stopped the invasion within a week. But Britain and France were unwilling to risk provoking Mussolini more than necessary. As a result, they kept the Suez Canal open to the Italians, allowing Mussolini to supply his armies in Abyssinia.

**The Hoare–Laval plan**

Behind the scenes, Britain and France undermined the apparently tough actions of the League. Desperate for a settlement with Italy, Hoare and Laval met in December and agreed a plan that was designed to bring the invasion to an end. Abyssinia would be split up, with Italy gaining much of the fertile lands in the north and the south of the country. Another huge area in the south would be reserved for Italian economic expansion and settlement. Abyssinia would be reduced to half its original size, and limited to the barren, mountainous region. The only compensation for Abyssinia would be a narrow strip of land providing access to the Red Sea – the so-called ‘corridor for camels’.

The Hoare–Laval Plan was never put to Abyssinia or Italy. Almost immediately, details of it were leaked to the press, causing a public outcry. Hoare and Laval were forced to resign. However, the damage had been done. Everyone now knew that the British and French had been talking tough, but were not prepared to back up their threats with action. Just the opposite – they seemed willing to reward Mussolini for his aggression.

**Description by Mussolini’s 19-year-old pilot son of one attack in Abyssinia by the Italian air force.**

The bombing was magnificent sport. One group of Abyssinian horsemen gave the impression of a budding rose unfolding as the bomb fell in their midst and blew them up.
The end of the League of Nations

The League was, of course, completely powerless when its most important members would take no effective action. Abyssinia was left helpless against the Italians, who now pressed home the invasion with greater determination. Only the difficulty of the terrain could slow the advance of the Italian troops, who were using modern weapons such as bombers, tanks and poison gas, against Abyssinian troops often armed only with spears. On 5 May 1936 Italian troops entered the Abyssinian capital, Addis Ababa, in triumph.

Three days earlier the Abyssinian emperor, Haile Selassie, had fled the country. He travelled to Geneva, where on 30 June he addressed the Assembly of the League of Nations. He spoke for three-quarters of an hour, summarising the events of the war and protesting against the failure of the League to deal with the invasion. His speech marked the end of the League’s existence as an important international organisation. Nobody took it seriously in future, and it played no significant part in the events which, from 1936, rushed its members towards another war.

Mussolini’s invasion of 1935–36 went unchecked by other nations. From 1936 Italy sent troops to support the Nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War. At first, Mussolini was suspicious and jealous of the German dictator Adolf Hitler, but the signing of the agreement which became known as the Rome–Berlin Axis in 1936 marked the first move towards the alliance of Italy and Germany in the Second World War.

SOURCE

I, Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia, am here today to claim that justice which is due to my people, and the assistance promised to it eight months ago, when fifty nations asserted that aggression had been committed in violation of international treaties.

Haile Selassie addressing the Assembly of the League of Nations, 30 June 1936.

SOURCE

The real death of the League was in December 1935, not 1939 or 1945. One day it was a powerful body imposing sanctions, seeming more effective than ever before; the next day it was an empty sham, everyone scuttling from it as quickly as possible. What killed the League was the publication of the Hoare–Laval Plan.


KEY PEOPLE

Adolf Hitler – (description to come)

KEY CONCEPTS

Spanish Civil War – (definition to come)
Conclusion
The failures of the League over Manchuria and Abyssinia left weak nations defenceless against aggression by powerful neighbours. Manchuria and Abyssinia were occupied by foreign powers and abandoned by the League. Other nations realised that they could no longer look to the League for security. Furthermore, violence and aggression had been shown to pay. Although Italy and Japan left the League, they continued to play an active part in international affairs. They kept the territory they had gained and suffered no penalty. They were encouraged to take further aggressive actions. Japan persisted in its attacks on China. Italy intervened in the Spanish Civil War and later occupied Albania (in April 1939).

The weakness of Britain and France in dealing with the Abyssinian crisis mirrored the weakness of the League itself. Up to 1936 they could pretend that collective security was the way to deal with international aggression. From 1936 onwards they had to find different ways of dealing with the dictators. Above all, they had to accept that nobody would do this for them. Although they continued to appease Hitler, re-armament began in earnest as the democracies faced up to the fact that, in the end, they might have to fight another war.

The Manchurian and Abyssinian crises destroyed the idea of collective security by demonstrating that League members would not act together firmly in the face of determined aggression. This also destroyed the credibility of the League as a peacekeeping organisation.

ACTIVITIES
1. Consider Source D in the context of your own knowledge.
   a. Does Mussolini appear to be acting fairly?
   b. What impact do you think his desire to capture Abyssinia would have on the League?
   c. How far do you think Mussolini's desires are led by examples elsewhere, for example Hitler and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria?

2. Examine the two cartoons of events in Abyssinia (Sources D and G).
   a. How far do they fit with the conclusions you have drawn from the text?
   b. What was the grave mistake made by Hoare and Laval?
   c. What is the damage of Italy leaving the League?
   d. What does this event reveal about the effectiveness of the League of Nations sanctions when faced with a large threat?

Grade Studio
AO3 – Evaluate how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented in different ways

Abyssinia proved to be the ‘final straw’ for the League’s credibility. To what extent do Sources D–F reflect the idea that the League was incompetent in dealing with Italian aggression?
Why had international peace collapsed by 1939?

What were the long-term consequences of the peace treaties of 1919–23?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
- consider the decisions made at Versailles and focus specifically on the long-term impact on Germany
- assess the most damaging decisions at Versailles from the German perspective.

Historical skills:
AO2 – Analysis
AO3 – Evaluation.

Introduction

The Second World War started barely 20 years after the first had finished. Hopes of establishing permanent peace were destroyed by the Great Depression and the rise to power of aggressive, militaristic regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan. Hitler’s takeover in Germany in 1933 was a major turning point. His foreign policy challenged the Treaty of Versailles directly and put Europe on the path to war.

The legacy of the First World War peace settlements

The peace settlement after the First World War left many nations, both victors and losers, dissatisfied. Some of the problems caused by this were resolved, more or less peacefully, during the 1920s. But in Germany resentment of the Treaty of Versailles persisted. As early as 1920, Hitler stated in the Nazi Party Programme that he would get rid of the Treaty of Versailles, gain Lebensraum (living space) for the Germans by conquering land to the east, and unite all Germans in a new German Empire (Reich). Since other nations could be expected to resist these aims, Hitler’s policies would mean that Germany would have to become a great military power again – something forbidden in the Treaty of Versailles.

However, it was not just extremists like Hitler who wanted to overturn the terms of the peace settlement. The aims of Stresemann, German foreign minister between 1923 and 1929, were in some respects similar to those of Hitler. However, whereas Stresemann was willing to work co-operatively with other nations to achieve his aims peacefully, Hitler was prepared to use force. Nonetheless, it was clear that many Germans did not accept the settlement of 1919–23 and this left Germany’s future unresolved.

SOURCE

The historian, with every justification, will come to the conclusion that we were very stupid men … We arrived determined that a Peace of wisdom and justice should be negotiated; we left the conference conscious that the treaties imposed upon our enemies were neither just nor wise.

Harold Nicholson, British diplomat, speaking in 1919. He was one of the leading British officials at the Paris Peace Conference.

KEY PEOPLE

Neville Chamberlain – ((description to come))
Gustav Stresemann – ((description to come))
Once the international system of collective security began to crumble under the impact of the Great Depression, the way was open for Hitler to make Germany a great power again. He was helped by the weakness of the system set up to enforce the peace settlement. The League of Nations had no armed forces. The idea of collective security was fine as long as nations wanted peace, but it gave no security against determined aggressors.

Moreover, Britain and France found it hard to agree about how to treat Germany. The British felt that Germany had been harshly treated at Versailles and saw nothing wrong in making concessions. The French were fearful of Germany becoming strong again. Desperate to avoid another war, Britain and France responded to Hitler’s demands with a policy of appeasement – making concessions to him in the hope that he would be satisfied.

**THE BRITISH POLICY OF APPEASEMENT**

Appeasement is most closely associated with Neville Chamberlain (British prime minister 1937–40), but the policy was followed by Britain almost from the time Hitler came to power in 1933. By the 1930s most British politicians did not believe that all the terms of the Versailles settlement could be maintained; it was vital to reach an agreement with Germany that would settle its grievances once and for all. Appeasement assumed that Hitler would keep his side of a bargain, but Chamberlain himself doubted whether appeasement would finally work, although like most politicians in Britain and France, he would try almost anything to avoid war.

**ACTIVITIES**

1. Read Sources A, B and C above and remind yourself of the aims of Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson during the Versailles Treaty. To what extent were they ‘stupid men’?

2. Consider Source D and discuss your interpretation with a partner.
   a. List three things that the cartoon suggests about the legacy of the Treaty of Versailles.
   b. Given that this was a contemporary image, what consequences do you think it might have had on how Britain and France treated Germany?
What were the consequences of the failures of the League in the 1930s?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
• examine the way in which Hitler viewed the League of Nations and the steps he took to overcome it
• explore the continuity and significance of the failure of the League of Nations in allowing Hitler to expand according to his plans.

Historical skills:
AO2 – Select
AO3 – Understand sources.

GETTING STARTED

As you read through this lesson, note down the failures of the League of Nations to stop Hitler.
• How was Hitler able to take advantage of the weaknesses of the League?
• To what extent was the League involved in key events?
• What could the League have done differently?

How did Hitler destroy the Treaty of Versailles?

One of the central aims of the League of Nations was to uphold the Treaty of Versailles. Between 1933 and 1936, Hitler destroyed the Treaty of Versailles, finding this surprisingly easy to do. One reason was his determination and willingness to take risks. Another was the weakness of other nations and their unwillingness to stop him.

Germany leaves the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference, October 1933

The League of Nations Disarmament Conference started in 1932 and dragged on unsuccessfully into 1933. The Germans said they would be happy to accept disarmament if every nation disarmed; if not they wanted to increase their armaments to French levels. The French would neither disarm nor allow German re-armament. This gave Hitler an excuse to leave the conference while pretending that Germany wanted peace. In fact, almost from the moment Hitler came to power, Germany had been re-arming. On the same day he withdrew Germany from the League of Nations. Many in Britain blamed France for the failure of the Disarmament Conference.

The population of the Saar votes to rejoin Germany, January 1935

The Treaty of Versailles had placed the Saar, an important coal-mining area on the Franco-German border, under League of Nations administration for 15 years. In January 1935, the people of the Saar voted by 477,000 to 48,000 to return to Germany. This overwhelming vote was a tremendous propaganda success for Hitler, who increased its international impact by promising to make no further claims on French territory, thereby giving up German claims to Alsace and Lorraine, which had also been lost in the Treaty of Versailles.

German air force and army, March 1935

In March 1935, Hitler announced that Germany had a military air force (the Luftwaffe), and that he was introducing conscription (compulsory military service) to expand the army to half a million men. It was an open secret that Germany had been re-arming for some time, but this announcement was a clear rejection of the military restrictions in the Treaty of Versailles. Britain, France and Italy formed the so-called Stresa Front, condemning German re-arming and agreeing to work together to preserve existing treaties. But as Hitler expected, they were not prepared to take any action.
Anglo-German Naval Treaty, June 1935
This treaty allowed the Germans to build a navy 35 per cent of the size of Britain’s. It seemed to guarantee Britain permanent naval superiority over Germany, and was consistent with Britain’s policy of trying to control and satisfy legitimate German demands. In fact, it merely permitted Germany to ignore the naval restrictions in the Treaty of Versailles, including those on the possession of submarines and battleships, and to build up a navy as quickly as possible. By signing this treaty, Britain officially recognised that the military terms of the Treaty of Versailles were dead. Britain had consulted neither France nor Italy before signing – the Stresa Front had collapsed.

German re-occupation of the Rhineland, March 1936
While the Rhineland remained demilitarised, Germany was vulnerable to attack from the west. Pursuing a more aggressive policy in the east meant that the Rhineland would first have to be made secure. On 7 March 1936, Hitler took a big gamble by marching his troops into the demilitarised zone. His armies were not prepared for war, and he could not know how Britain and France would react. But the French would not act alone and the British saw no reason to risk war in order to stop Hitler ‘marching into his own backyard’. Hitler had used force and nobody had tried to stop him. In future, the threat of war would lie behind all of Hitler’s demands.

The Rome–Berlin Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact
Hitler’s successes made it easier for him to develop closer relationships with possible allies such as Italy and Japan. The Rome–Berlin Axis (1936) was not a formal alliance but an informal agreement between Hitler and Mussolini to work more closely together. Thus both Italy and Germany gave support to the nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. This war, which broke out in 1936, gave Hitler an opportunity to test much of his new military equipment. The Anti-Comintern Pact (1936) committed Germany and Japan to hostility towards the Soviet Union, and Italy joined the pact in 1937. A full military alliance between Germany and Italy (the Pact of Steel) was signed in 1939, and expanded in 1940 to include Japan.
How far was Hitler’s foreign policy to blame for the outbreak of war in 1939?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:

• examine the nature of Hitler’s foreign policy and the reaction of other countries to it
• investigate and evaluate the concept of appeasement and where it failed in its objective to pacify Hitler.

Historical skills:
AO1 – Select
AO3 – Evaluation.

GETTING STARTED

((to come))

Anschluss, March 1938: Why did Hitler bother to invade Austria?

Austria is a German country both by language and by culture. Hitler had been born and raised in Austria, and his desire to unite all Germans was well known. Although the Treaty of Versailles forbade the union of Germany and Austria (Anschluss), it seemed obvious that he would try to bring it about.

A strong Nazi Party already existed in Austria. In 1934, Nazis murdered the Austrian Chancellor, Dollfuss, during an attempted takeover which failed only when Mussolini, the Italian dictator, threatened to intervene. At this time, Mussolini was suspicious of Hitler, and regarded Austria as being in Italy's sphere of interest.

In 1936, Dollfuss's replacement, Schuschnigg, agreed to appoint Nazis to the government. In return, Germany promised to respect Austria's independence. But in January 1938, Austrian police raided Nazi headquarters in Vienna and found plans to take over the government. On 12 February, Schuschnigg met Hitler at Berchtesgaden and agreed to appoint Seyss-Inquart, a Nazi supporter, as Minister of the Interior, and to lift all restrictions on Nazi Party activities.

By making concessions to Hitler, Schuschnigg hoped to preserve Austria's independence. However, Schuschnigg also announced that a plebiscite would be held for the Austrians to decide whether or not Austria would remain an independent nation. If the vote went in Schuschnigg's favour, Hitler's plans for the gradual takeover of Austria would be undermined.

On 11 March, Hitler demanded that the plebiscite be postponed. When the Austrians agreed, he demanded the replacement of Schuschnigg by Seyss-Inquart. The plan was for Seyss-Inquart to become chancellor and then request German help to restore order in Austria. At 8pm, Seyss-Inquart was appointed chancellor, and the Germans invaded Austria the following day.

The German invasion of Austria was one of the worst-planned invasions in history. German tanks had to refuel at petrol stations along the road to Vienna, and German commanders had to use tourist guides to plan their routes. But there was no resistance from the Austrians and the invasion was completed without bloodshed. Austria was absorbed into Germany; the Anschluss had occurred.

This time, Mussolini did not object. Since the creation of the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936, Hitler and Mussolini had worked together more closely. Without Italy's protection, Austria was doomed; Britain and France would not intervene. Although many people in those countries were worried by Hitler's methods, most were reassured by a plebiscite held on 10 April, in which over 90 per cent of Austrians approved the Anschluss.
The Czechoslovakian crisis, 1938

After the Anschluss, it was clear that Czechoslovakia would be the next country to attract Hitler's attention. A free and hostile Czechoslovakia would make it impossible for Germany to fight a war in the west. Czechoslovakia's geographical position, with its land thrusting deep into German territory, would be a direct threat to Germany. Although not a large nation, Czechoslovakia was well defended and had a modern and well-equipped army.

However, it had one crucial weakness which Hitler planned to exploit. Its population included several ethnic minorities, among them 3.5 million ethnic Germans living in the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia along the German-Czech border. The Sudeten Germans could be used to stir up trouble against the Czech government.

A Czech–German war?

The Czechs knew that to surrender the Sudetenland would make them defenceless against Germany, since all Czechoslovakia's frontier defences against Germany were in the Sudetenland. Handing these over would mean that Hitler could easily take over the rest of Czechoslovakia whenever he wanted. It began to look as though war between Germany and Czechoslovakia might break out. If so, then France and probably Britain would go to Czechoslovakia's aid. However, neither Britain nor France wanted to fight against Germany. Chamberlain was sure that a peaceful solution could be found to the Czech crisis. On 15 September 1938 he met Hitler at Berchtesgaden in Germany to discuss the crisis. Hitler made it clear that the crisis could be solved only by the transfer of the Sudetenland to Germany. Chamberlain indicated that he had no objection to this as long as the transfer was done peacefully.

A week later on 22 September, having in the meantime forced the Czechs to agree to the loss of the Sudetenland, Chamberlain returned to Germany to meet Hitler at Bad Godesberg. But Hitler now demanded that the Sudetenland be handed over by 1 October, and that claims on Czech territory by Hungary and Poland be met. If his demands were not met by 1 October 1938, Germany would invade Czechoslovakia. Europe was on the brink of war.
The Munich Conference

Chamberlain was desperate for any solution that would avoid war. When Mussolini proposed a four-power conference, both Chamberlain and Hitler, who now saw the prospect of achieving his aims without having to fight, agreed to attend. On 29 September 1938, Chamberlain, Hitler, Daladier (the French prime minister) and Mussolini met in Munich and signed an agreement that gave Hitler the terms he had demanded at Bad Godesberg. It was also agreed that Czechoslovakia’s new frontiers would be guaranteed by the four powers. This enabled the British and French to claim that Czechoslovakia had been saved.

In fact, the guarantee was meaningless. Hitler had no intention of keeping to it and soon both Poland and Hungary grabbed the territory that they wanted while the traditional rivalry and dislike between Slovaks and the more prosperous Czechs within what was left of the country further threatened the Czechoslovakian government.

‘Peace for Our Time’

The Soviets were not invited to the Munich Conference. Everyone knew they would never agree to Hitler’s terms. The Czechs were not even consulted and had no choice but to agree. The day after the conference, Chamberlain met Hitler alone and they agreed an Anglo-German Declaration. The two countries promised never to go to war with each other again, and that they would settle all disputes between the two countries by consultation. It was a copy of this agreement that Chamberlain waved to the cheering crowds on his return to Britain. He announced to the British public, ‘I believe it is peace for our time.’

By 10 October 1938 German troops had completed the occupation of the Sudetenland. Czechoslovakia was now defenceless against its enemies.

SOURCE

The final settlement forced Czechoslovakia to cede to Germany 11,000 square miles of territory in which dwelt 2,800,000 Germans and 800,000 Czechs. Within this area lay all the vast Czech fortifications. Czechoslovakia’s entire system of rail, road, telephone and telegraph communications was disrupted. It lost 66 per cent of its coal, 80 per cent of its lignite, 86 per cent of its chemicals, 80 per cent of its cement, 80 per cent of its textiles, 70 per cent of its electrical power and 40 per cent of its timber. A prosperous industrial nation was split up and bankrupted overnight.

An American historian, William Shirer, writing in 1959, summarised the damage that the Munich Agreement did to Czechoslovakia.

VOICE YOUR OPINION!

Place these factors in order of importance for the outbreak of war in 1939.

- Hitler’s policies
- Peace treaties
- Appeasement
- Failure of the League
- Anti-war feeling in Britain and France
- The Depression.

Czechoslovak territorial losses from the Munich Agreement, 1938.

Lost to Germany, October 1938
Lost to Hungary, October 1938
Lost to Poland, November 1938
Czechoslovakian border before Munich Agreement

SOURCE B
Hitler destroys Czechoslovakia, March 1939

At Munich, Hitler had given Chamberlain meaningless promises about the future of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain thought that the Munich Agreement had secured 'peace for our time'. He was wrong. Within six months Hitler's armies were on the march again. Czechoslovakia could not survive in its weakened state. Internally torn apart by the hostility between the Czechs and the Slovaks, and with much of its territory already seized by Germany, Poland and Hungary, it was incapable of defending itself. In March 1939, Hitler ordered his armies to occupy Bohemia and Moravia, two parts of Czechoslovakia that had been protected by the Munich Agreement. Slovakia then became nothing more than a puppet-state under German domination. Hungary took the opportunity to grab yet more territory – this time Ruthenia.

Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist. On 23 March 1939 Hitler also seized the territory of Memel from Lithuania. It was finally clear to everyone, including the British and French governments, that the policy of appeasement was dead. In an effort to deter any further German aggression, Chamberlain promised Poland that Britain would guarantee its independence.

Examiner's tip

Before you start, write a short essay plan with an introductory statement and a concluding statement and what you aim to include in each of the paragraphs in between (you should plan around four or five paragraphs).

Write your answer to the question ensuring you include evidence to support your ideas and a clear judgement at the end.
Was the policy of appeasement justified?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
• examine the nature and need for appeasement
• examine critically the policy of appeasement and identify where it failed in its objectives.

Historical skills:
AO1 – Recall and select knowledge
AO2 – Explanation.

GETTING STARTED

Discuss with a partner the positives and negatives of letting people get what they want.
What kind of a situation does that create?
List the reasons you think that Britain would feel it necessary to let Hitler and Germany get what they wanted.

Why appease?

There are strong differences of opinion between historians about appeasement. After the Second World War, many British historians shared the feeling of shame that Britain had not stood up to Hitler earlier, particularly as Chamberlain’s claim to have brought back ‘peace with honour’ from Munich rested on the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. These historians portrayed Chamberlain as a weak man who was taken in by Hitler. More recently, though, some historians have begun to restore Chamberlain’s reputation by explaining why he acted as he did and how restricted his options were. Consider the arguments given for and against appeasement below, and decide whether you think appeasement was justified.

The arguments for appeasement

1 Sympathy for Germany

At first, many people felt that there was some justice in Hitler’s claims. The British accepted that the Treaty of Versailles was too harsh and Germany had a right to be treated more fairly and to be accepted as a great power. So in 1935 they were happy to sign the Anglo–German Naval Agreement, which ignored the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. When Hitler remilitarised the Rhineland in 1936, there was a feeling that he was just ‘marching into his own backyard’, and when Anschluss occurred in 1938, the Austrians were simply achieving the self-determination denied them at Versailles. Each single step that Hitler took could be justified, and it was always possible to believe that, with just one more concession, he would be satisfied and demand no more.

2 The desire for peace

It was perfectly understandable that Britain and France would want to find peaceful solutions to Germany’s problems, and so avoid another war. Memories of the horrors of the First World War were still strong. Most Europeans placed their trust in the League of Nations and the idea of collective security. Decent, democratic politicians in Britain and France at first simply found it hard to accept that the rise of brutal, militaristic regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan would make it necessary again to prepare for war. To make matters worse, they were still coping with the impact of the Great Depression, and were concerned that their economies were just not strong enough to bear the costs of re-armament.

3 The threat of Communism

In dealing with the aggressive nature of German policies in central and eastern Europe, Britain and France faced a serious problem. They could not actually protect countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland from attack, as they were too far away. The only great power that could protect these countries was the Soviet Union. But with good reason, Britain and France, and more so, Czechoslovakia and Poland, hated and feared Stalin’s communist tyranny just as much as they hated Nazi Germany. Most western politicians could not make up their minds which of Germany and the Soviet Union was the greater threat.

4 Time to re-arm

The strongest argument for appeasement was that Britain was just not ready to fight. A re-armament programme to prepare Britain for war began only in 1936, and was not planned for completion until 1940. When the crises of 1938 occurred, Britain desperately needed more time to build up its strength. By giving in to Hitler’s demands at Munich, war was postponed for a year, and when it did eventually come, Britain had made just enough preparations to survive.
The arguments against appeasement

1 The appeasers misjudged Hitler
The appeasers made the crucial mistake of treating Hitler as they would treat each other – as a rational politician who was open to reasoned argument. They did not realise until too late that they were dealing with a determined, unscrupulous tyrant, who would interpret any concession as a sign of weakness. The more they gave him the more he demanded.

2 Appeasement was morally wrong
Britain and France were so afraid of another war that they allowed Germany to break international agreements without punishment, and finally abandoned Czechoslovakia to its fate in return for meaningless promises. Appeasement was simply another word for weakness and cowardice.

3 The appeasers missed excellent chances to stop Hitler
The appeasers were so busy looking for chances to give Hitler what he wanted that they missed good opportunities to resist him. After the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936, Hitler admitted that any sign of military action by the French would have led him to withdraw his troops immediately. At Munich in 1938, Britain and France abandoned Czechoslovakia, a well-defended and well-armed country which could have put up significant resistance to German attack.

ACTIVITIES

1 Arrange the following statements in order of importance to answer the question Why did nobody confront Hitler?
   - Memory of the horror of 1914–18
   - Economic weakness caused by the Depression
   - Hitler seemed reasonable
   - The feeling that Versailles was unfair
   - French unwillingness to act without Britain
   - British preoccupation with their Empire

2 Discuss your ideas with your classmates and create a whole-class diagram. How far does it compare with your own?

((TO COME – activity based on Source A; could be GradeStudio activity))
Hitler turns to Poland

After the destruction of Czechoslovakia, it was clear that Poland would be Hitler's next target. Germany had obvious claims on some Polish territory. The ‘Polish Corridor’, which split East Prussia from the rest of Germany, had been taken from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, as had the city of Danzig, which was now a ‘free city' under League of Nations control. Hitler wanted these areas back. He also wanted Polish territory as Lebensraum (living space).

Despite this, the Poles enjoyed a friendly relationship with Hitler's Germany until 1939. The Polish government sympathised with the Nazis' authoritarian and anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) policies. They had even taken part in the destruction of Czechoslovakia after the Munich Conference by grabbing Teschen. At first, the Poles found it hard to take seriously Hitler's demands and increasing threats against them. They even thought their best hope of survival was to try and avoid making commitments to either of their two powerful neighbours, Germany and the Soviet Union.

Britain’s promise

Britain's guarantee to preserve the independence of Poland made the Poles feel safer than they really were. There was little that Britain and France could do to stop a German invasion of Poland – it was too far away from them. So the attitude of Poland's other powerful neighbour, the Soviet Union, would be crucial. Would it help Poland against a German attack?

Discussions between Britain, France and the Soviet Union took place through early August 1939, but collapsed because of distrust between the two sides, and also because the Poles refused to let Soviet troops enter their territory in advance of an attack by Germany. The Soviets thought that Britain and France would be happy to see the Soviet Union doing all the fighting if war broke out with Germany.
The Nazi–Soviet Pact

On 23 August 1939 the sensational news broke of an agreement signed in Moscow by the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and Germany, Molotov and Ribbentrop. They had agreed to a non-aggression pact – a promise not to fight each other. Secretly, they had also decided to split up Poland between them. Fascist Germany and the communist Soviet Union gave every appearance of being bitter political enemies. Nobody really believed that the pact made any difference to their mutual hatred. So why did they make an agreement not to fight each other?

Why was the Nazi–Soviet Pact important?

The pact left Britain and France to fight Germany alone. Hitler did not really believe they would go to war over Poland, but almost had second thoughts when Britain's reaction to the pact was the signing of a formal alliance with Poland on 25 August 1939. This time Britain and France would not be able to back down in the face of Nazi aggression. If they did, it would signal to the world that they could no longer be regarded as great powers, and unlike in 1938, re-armament meant that they were now more ready for war. But the Anglo-Polish alliance did not really change anything. It took only a few days for Hitler to recover his nerve and order that Poland be invaded on 1 September. When Hitler ignored Britain and France’s ultimatum to call off the attack, they declared war on 3 September. Nevertheless, within three weeks Poland had been defeated, its armies completely powerless against the Blitzkrieg (lightning war) launched by Germany. Two weeks into the fighting, Soviet armies invaded Poland from the east, at the same time occupying the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).

The pact made war inevitable

The pact was the single most important short-term cause of the Second World War. This means that it explains how and why the war broke out at the time it did. Hitler had planned to invade Poland, and now he knew that he could do so without direct interference from any other great power. Once he attacked, Britain would be forced to honour its guarantee to Poland. Of course, this could not save Poland because there was nothing that Britain and France could do to stop the German invasion, but it would mean war.

ACTIVITIES

1 a Using the information on the page, create a spider diagram that charts the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact. Possible headings could include:
   - Aims of Russia
   - Aims of Germany
   - Role of Britain
   - Terms of the pact
   - Impact of the pact
   b Share your diagram with a partner.

2 ‘Britain’s indecision forced Stalin’s hand; the pact was an investment in Russian security and not an alliance of friends.’
   a How far do you think this an accurate interpretation of the Nazi–Soviet Pact?
   b How far do you think this was a common opinion at the time?
Why did Britain and France declare war on Germany in September 1939?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will:
• examine the long- and short-term factors that prompted the decision to go to war in 1939
• consider the implications of declaring war and assess the difficulties faced by political leaders in such a context.

Historical skills:
AO2 – Analysis
AO3 – Evaluation.

GETTING STARTED

Arrange the events in the correct chronological order.
• German invasion of Poland
• Abyssinian crisis
• Treaty of Versailles
• German invasion of Czechoslovakia
• Nazi–Soviet Pact
• Occupation of Sudetenland and Munich Conference
• Anschluss
• Crisis in Manchuria
• German troops enter the Rhineland.

War is declared, September 1939

Neither Britain nor France wanted to go to war with Germany in 1939. They would have preferred a peaceful solution to the Polish crisis and did their best to persuade the Poles to negotiate with Hitler over the disputed areas, Danzig and the Polish Corridor. The problem was that the Poles did not want to negotiate – they knew from the example of Czechoslovakia that negotiating with Hitler could be fatal. Anyway, once the Nazi–Soviet Pact was signed, negotiations would have been meaningless as Germany and the Soviet Union had secretly resolved to split Poland between them.

A state of war

When Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, Britain and France did not declare war immediately. They delayed, still hoping that there might be a chance to make Hitler change his plans. They both knew they could not save Poland. However, they were both allied to Poland and had to take some action. On 3 September the British government sent Hitler an ultimatum (Source B). The French sent a similar ultimatum. When no replay was received by 11 am, Britain declared war on Germany.

Britain and France went to war because they were forced to. Hitler had finally pushed them to the point at which they had to resist. The alternative was national humiliation and acceptance of German domination of Europe.
ACTIVITIES

1 a Working with a partner, look back through this chapter and make a list of the long- and short-term factors that led to the Second World War.

b Define each factor as either long-term or short-term.

c Now recategorise them into order of priority as causes.

d Now combine the two tasks to create an analysis: how many long-term factors are high priority; how many short-term? What conclusion do you reach?

2 Write an answer to the key question, ‘Why did Britain and France declare war on Germany in September 1939?’, including a judgement on whether you think the war was inevitable.

3 Return to your predictions at the start of the chapter. How many of them came true?

Grade Studio

AO3 – Analyse an event to show two different interpretations

How far do you agree that the Nazi-Soviet Pact was the most important cause of war in September 1939? Explain your answer. [10 marks]

BRAIN BOOST

Why 1939?

• Hitler’s refusal to comply
• New complications with Nazi–Soviet Pact
• Britain’s re-armament programme
• 10 years since Depression
• Invasion of Poland
• Disdain for other nations and members of British government
International Relations – the Inter-War Years, 1919–39

If you have chosen to answer the source-based question on this topic, you will be given a single source, and asked one question which will require you to interpret the source (AO3, though you will also need to use your knowledge and understanding, AO1 and AO2, to help you answer). Here is an example.

Source A
Study the source carefully, and then answer the question which follows.

A cartoon published in a German newspaper in June 1919.

1 a Study Source A. What is the message of this cartoon? Use details of the cartoon and your own knowledge to explain your answer. [7 marks]

Examiner’s tip
The message of the cartoon is what the cartoonist wants to tell the person looking at the cartoon. Usually cartoons have more than one message, but there will always be one main message that is more important than the others. Your task is to work out this main message, and to do so successfully you will need to use your knowledge of what was going on at the time.
Answering the Question

STEP 1: What does the cartoon show? There is no need for you to describe the cartoon, but you do need to notice and understand its details. The people are sad, held behind the barbed wire and controlled by the rifles with fixed bayonets.

STEP 2: What does the cartoon mean in relation to what was happening at this time? Germany had just been defeated in the First World War, which helps to explain the people’s sadness. In fact, you could say that one message of the cartoon is that the Germans were depressed at losing the war, but this is not the main message. Isn’t there something more specific about the events of June 1919?

STEP 3: What does the cartoonist want to say to us? In June 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was signed. The cartoonist wanted to comment on the Treaty. His main message was to denounce the Treaty for its harmful effects on Germany.

STEP 4: How does the cartoonist get the message across to the audience? The question tells you to use details of the cartoon and your knowledge to explain your answer. The cartoon shows the German people as crushed and imprisoned by the military power of the Allies. This is a way of saying that the Treaty is unfair, does not treat the Germans as equals and will give them no hope for the future. The cartoon helps us to understand why the Germans regarded the Treaty as a Diktat, and why they never really accepted it.

Student’s response

Here is one student’s response to the question. Read it and decide how you could improve it.

In the cartoon you can see people walking behind barbed wire. They look very sad. I think it shows that Germany has been beaten in the war and that now they will be like prisoners. The Allies want to make sure that Germany can never attack them again so they are going to keep them prisoners.

 Examiner’s comment

This answer gives us a reasonable interpretation of the cartoon which includes the message that Germans will be like prisoners from now on. However it fails to use the specific context of the cartoon – that it is a comment on the signing of the Treaty of Versailles – and therefore it cannot be identifying the main message that the cartoonist had in mind. An answer like this would receive some marks, but to achieve a top-level answer you would first have to identify what the cartoonist wanted to say about the treaty, and then use details of the cartoon to explain the message.
International Relations - the Inter-War Years, 1919-39

The source-based question will always be followed by a single question asking you to explain why an event or development occurred. This question will not use a source, and will test AO1 and AO2. Here is an example.

1 b Explain why Germany’s armed forces were limited by the Treaty of Versailles. [8 marks]

Answering the Question

STEP 1: Although knowing how Germany’s armed forces were limited by the Treaty will help you answer (by giving you ideas about a range of possible reasons), this is not really what the question is asking. Answers which simply describe the restrictions in the Treaty will only get low marks.

STEP 2: Think of the reasons you will be writing about. One decision you have to make is how many reasons will be needed. It is possible to earn full marks by explaining only two reasons, but perhaps the best advice is to think of three, just in case one of your explanations is not as good as the others.

STEP 3: Work out the explanations for each of your reasons. Try to make sure all of the reasons with their explanations are clearly different and separate from each other.

Examiner’s tip

Make sure you understand the difference between giving a reason and explaining it. This question asks for explanation, and how well you do this will determine the mark you earn. For example, you could say that Germany’s forces were limited to make sure there would not be another war. This is giving a reason, but on its own it is not enough. You need to go on to explain why the Allies wished to avoid future wars with Germany – perhaps by pointing out how costly the First World War had been, both financially and in terms of lives lost.
There is more than one reason why Germany's forces were
limited by the Treaty of Versailles. France wanted Germany to be
weak so that it could never attack again. The fighting on the
Western Front had been mainly in France and the country had
suffered a lot of damage so the French wanted a guarantee this
would not happen again. Another reason was that the British
wanted to make sure that Germany could never challenge
Britain's naval power again.

This answer gives us two reasons, one for France and the other for Britain. For the first it also tells us why the French
wanted Germany to be weak, so this reason is explained. Giving one
explained reason is enough to get the answer into the top level, but not to
earn the highest mark. To do this you
would need to explain at least two
reasons. Here, the second reason is not
developed. If an explanation had been
provided, for example by adding that
the reason why the British wanted to
destroy Germany's naval power was to
safeguard its trade with its colonies
around the world, then this answer
could have scored a top mark.