

OXFORD IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME



# THE MOVE TO GLOBAL WAR

COURSE COMPANION

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### Conceptual understanding

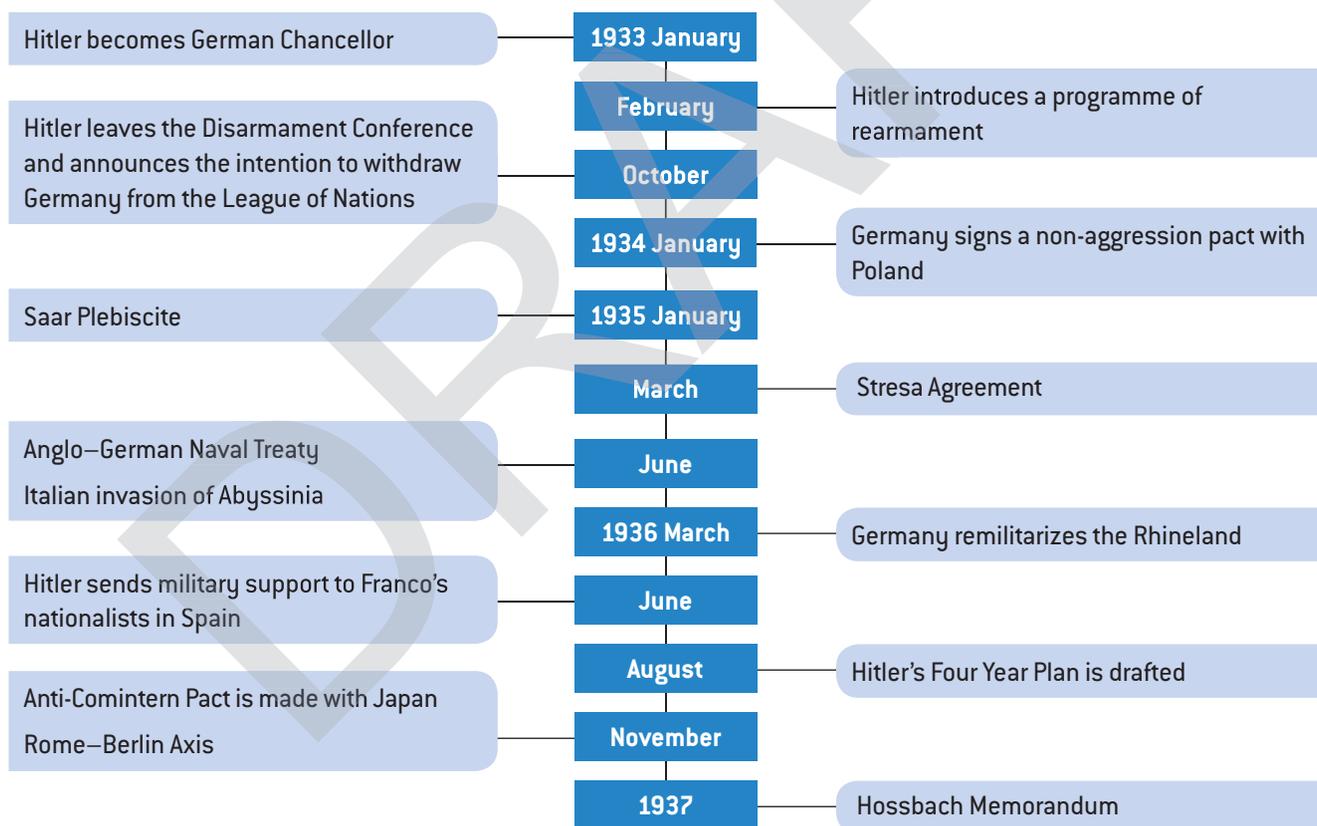
#### Key concepts

- Causation
- Consequence
- Continuity

#### Key questions

- Examine the ways in which Hitler challenged the post-war settlement.
- Analyse the consequences of Hitler's actions for the international situation.

### Timeline



As we have seen, Hitler's main foreign policy aim after achieving power was to destroy the Versailles Peace Settlement, which had to be carried out alongside rearmament. This was achieved between 1933 and 1938 and, in the process, the stage was set for further territorial claims and the outbreak of global war in 1939.

## Changing diplomatic alignments in Europe after 1933

The response of Britain and France to his actions after 1933 would be key for Hitler and his goal of overturning the Treaty of Versailles; Germany's position in Europe was still vulnerable and it remained under the constraints of the Treaty of Versailles. Fortunately for Hitler, the international situation after 1933 worked to his advantage.

### Britain

Britain was pre-occupied not only with the economic crisis but also by events in the Far East, where it was worried about Japanese expansion. Its resources were already overstretched, with its main priority being the safety of the British Empire. Many British politicians also considered the Treaty of Versailles to be unfair and supported some redress of "legitimate grievances". Many right-wing politicians in Britain were also afraid of the communist dictator, Stalin, and had sympathy with Hitler, who they also saw as a buffer to the spread of communism from the East.

### The Little Entente

This was a series of treaties between Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which were concluded from 1920 to 1921, and aimed to prevent Austria and Hungary from regaining territory lost after the First World War.

### France

France was very concerned by the possible German threat but was too weak to act on its own, especially after the failure of its 1923 intervention in the Ruhr. It was also politically divided, following a series of weak governments, and had major economic problems. Lacking support from the USA or Britain in the task of preserving the Versailles settlement, it built a defensive line of fortresses along the Maginot Line between 1929 and 1938. It also developed alliances with countries on Germany's eastern borders: Poland and "The Little Entente" countries – Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.

### The USA

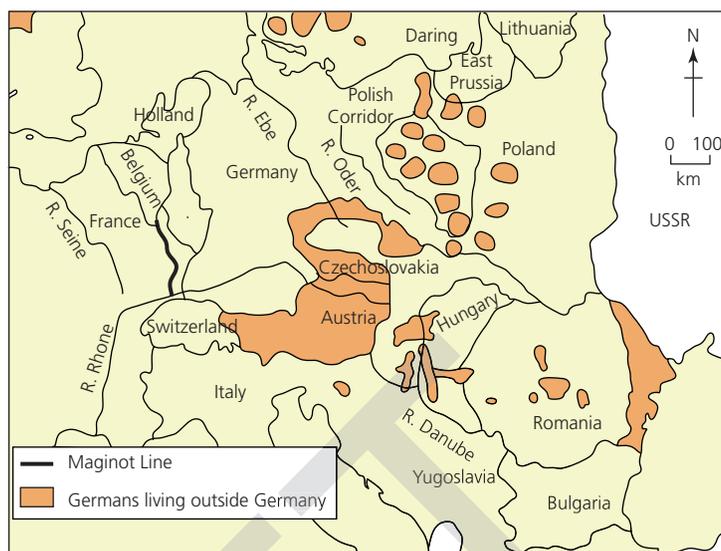
The economic depression meant that the USA was still focused on domestic concerns and was unlikely to change its isolationist stance.

Other factors also worked in Hitler's favour:

- The international economic situation was encouraging national insularity rather than collective security.
- The memories of the First World War were still acute, and the horror of this war made many determined to take any measures necessary to prevent another war.
- The need to avoid another war was reinforced by the military weakness of Britain and France at this time.
- Britain and France were unable to agree on a common policy for dealing with Hitler.

- The League of Nation's perceived failure to deal effectively with Japanese expansion in Manchuria was a blow to both the Washington System and to the League itself.
- The revision of the Treaty of Versailles had already begun; Britain and France evacuated the Rhineland in 1929–30 and German reparation payments were effectively cancelled at the Lausanne Conference of 1932.

However, as the historian Zara Steiner writes, “even allowing for the breakdown of the international regime, Hitler moved with a speed and ultimate purpose that clearly distinguished him from his predecessors” (Steiner, 2011: 95).



## Germany's challenges to the post-war settlements, 1933–38

Although the international situation favoured Hitler's aims, he still had to be careful to avoid an international backlash. He thus followed a cautious policy. Publicly, Hitler claimed that he desired only peace, and he worked carefully to defuse any potential opposition. However, his actions over the next five years undermined collective security: he worked to withdraw Germany from multilateral commitments that might limit his action, he isolated France by undermining existing alliances, and, at the same time, he negotiated alliances with Britain and Italy. Alongside these actions, Hitler was able to effectively to challenge the Treaty of Versailles and to increase the prestige and power of his own dictatorship and of Germany within Europe.

### Challenging the Treaty of Versailles: Withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference

Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations had demanded that national armaments be “reduced to the lowest point consistent with national safety” However, the difficulties in implementing an international disarmament policy meant that it took until 1932 for an international conference to be organized.

When the Disarmament Conference finally convened in Geneva in 1933, there was still little consensus on how disarmament could be achieved. France, in particular, was unwilling to disarm with the new threat of Nazism on its borders. The events unfolding at the same time in Manchuria were also not conducive to thinking about disarmament.

Furthermore, it was clear that Britain and France did not agree about the way that Germany should be treated, with Britain indicating that it was prepared to make concessions to Germany.

German governments prior to Hitler had requested parity of armaments, arguing that Germany would participate only if other countries reduced

their armaments to Germany's level, or allowed Germany to rearm to theirs. When France refused this at the Disarmament Conference in 1933, Hitler pulled out of both the Conference and the League of Nations, claiming that these organizations were part of a French conspiracy to keep Germany weak and incapable of self-defence. In November 1933, a plebiscite gave Hitler 95% approval for his actions, with Germans rejoicing that Germany had at last stood up to the "victors". Hitler's withdrawal from the talks and the League gave him the freedom he needed to launch an assault on the rest of the Treaty of Versailles.

## Source skills

### Source A

#### A speech by Hitler, broadcast on 14 October 1933

"Germany cannot tolerate the deliberate degradation of the nation by the perpetuation of a discrimination which consists in withholding the rights which are granted as a matter of course to other nations ... The men who are at present the leaders of Germany have nothing in common with the traitors of November 1918. Like every decent Englishman and every decent Frenchman, we all had our duty to our Fatherland and placed our lives at its service. We are not responsible for the war but we feel responsible for what every honest man must do in the time of his country's distress and for what we have done. We have such infinite love for our people that we desire wholeheartedly an understanding with other nations ... but, as men of honour, it is impossible for us to be members of institutions under conditions which are only bearable to those devoid of a sense of honour ...

Since it has been made clear to us from the declarations of certain Great Powers that they were not prepared to consider real equality of rights of Germany at present, we have decided that it is impossible, in view of the indignity of her position, for Germany to continue to force her company upon other nations."

### Source B

Craig, G. 1978. *Germany 1866–1945*, pages 678–688. Oxford University Press. New York, USA

"It was necessary to avoid appearing the villain of the piece. When the rupture came, [Hitler's] foreign minister told Nadolny later

in the month, "the lack of an intention to disarm on France's part must be seen to be the cause".

In the end, Hitler effected his purpose by using tactics that foreshadowed those he would employ in the Sudeten affair five years later: he made demands at Geneva that he was reasonably sure that the other powers would not accept. He insisted that equality of status was not enough and that, since the other powers were reluctant to reduce their forces to Germany's level, all controls must be lifted so that it could seek actual equality in its own way. To this kind of intransigence the French, supported by the British government, refused to yield, insisting on a waiting period in which Germany could prove its good faith and give some indication of what its intentions were. This gave Hitler the excuse he needed and, brushing aside an Italian attempt to find a compromise, he announced on 14 October 1933 that Germany was ending both its participation in the conference and its membership of the League of Nations, an institution that he had always regarded as a symbol of Germany's second class status and for whose members, including the German ones, he privately felt contempt."

#### First question, part a – 3 marks

What key points are made in Source A with regards to Germany's attitude towards international cooperation?

#### Third question – 6 marks

Compare and contrast the actions of Hitler regarding the Disarmament Conference as expressed in Sources A and B.



**Examiner's hint:** Highlight the comparisons and contrasts in the sources as shown below. Then write two full paragraphs showing clear linkage between the sources and giving brief quotes to support your points.

### Similarities

- In Source A, Hitler talks about degradation and “perpetuation of a discrimination” and Source B refers to Germany seeing itself as a “second class” member of the League of Nations.
- Source A talks about “equality of rights” for Germany. Source B also says that Germany was looking for “equality”.
- Source A blames “certain great powers” for not allowing Germany to be on an equal footing and Source B specifically names France as a country that “refused to yield”.
- Source B talks of the “contempt” that Hitler had for the League of Nations and this tone is present

in Source A, where the language “deliberate degradation”, “indignity”, “devoid of a sense of honour” shows Hitler’s feelings for Germany’s treatment.

### Contrasts

- Source A blames “certain great powers” for the failure of the Disarmament Conference, but Source B says that Germany was doing this only so that it would not appear to be “the villain of the piece”.
- Source A claims that Germany is the victim of other countries’ actions, whereas Source B talks of the “intransigence” of Germany and claims that Hitler was looking for an “excuse” to leave the League of Nations.
- In Source A, Hitler says he wants “an understanding with other nations”, whereas Source B implies that he did not want an understanding but was putting forward demands “that the other powers would not accept”.

## Undermining collective security: The Non-Aggression Pact with Poland

Germany’s withdrawal from the League was a setback for the concept of collective security. Poland, on Germany’s eastern border, was particularly vulnerable and, alarmed at the West’s failure to stop Germany rearming, entered into a 10-year Non-Aggression Pact with the German government in January, 1934.

The Non-Aggression Pact took the world by surprise. The clauses of the Versailles Treaty that had given German land to recreate Poland were particularly resented in Germany; at Locarno, Stresemann had been unwilling to guarantee the eastern borders of Germany even though he had accepted the western border with France as part of the 1925 Locarno Treaty. For the moment, however, this pact suited Hitler. He was unable to take any action against Poland at this stage and, by signing the pact, he was securing his eastern frontier. It also weakened France’s security system in Eastern Europe. France had signed an alliance with Poland in 1921 and had hoped that this would keep pressure on Germany’s eastern borders. Germany had now broken out of the diplomatic encirclement that the French had attempted to impose on it. The pact also ended any chance of rapprochement between Czechoslovakia and Poland, thus further undermining the collective security system. Moreover, as this was an unpopular move in Germany, the Non-Aggression Pact looked to the international community like an act of statesmanship; it could be used to convince Britain and others that Germany was a peaceful nation.

Of course, Hitler had no intention of keeping to this agreement. Hitler preferred bilateral agreements to collective security agreements, as these could more easily be broken. He declared privately that “All our agreements with Poland have a temporary significance”.

### Class discussion

What do Hitler’s actions in the years 1933–34 over disarmament and Poland reveal about his tactics for achieving his foreign policy objectives in these years?

## Changing diplomatic alignments: Mussolini and Austria

In June 1934, Hitler and Mussolini met. However, the meeting was not a success; Mussolini was unimpressed by Hitler and would not agree to Hitler's position on Austria. *Anschluss*, the unification of Germany and Austria, had always been an important part of Hitler's foreign policy aims, and Hitler tried to persuade Mussolini that Austria should become a satellite of Germany. Mussolini rejected this, however, as he wanted to keep Austria as a buffer state between Germany and Italy. He was also aware that South Tyrol, which had been gained by Italy as part of the Versailles Settlement, had a substantial German minority. (See page XX for more detail on Mussolini's view on this.)



▲ Hitler and Mussolini meet in Venice in 1934

Meanwhile, in Austria, Hitler was supporting the Austrian Nazi Party led by Alfred Eduard Frauenfeld. The Austrian Nazis organized a campaign of intimidation and terrorism, which culminated in the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. This was intended to be the first step of a *coup d'état* that would force the union with Germany.

The attempted coup caused international concern. Mussolini immediately mobilized 100,000 troops and moved them to the Brenner pass, Italy's border with Germany, in a show of strength in July, 1934. Hitler was forced to back down and disown the actions of the Austrian Nazis. The monarchist Kurt von Schuschnigg took over and stabilized the Austrian regime.

At this point, therefore, Hitler was forced to play a waiting game regarding unification with Austria. He did not want to alienate Mussolini, whose support he would need against the Western democracies, and he reassured Mussolini that Austria would not be annexed.

## The growing strength of Germany: The Saar plebiscite, January 1935

In accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, the Saar, a small coal-rich territory, held a plebiscite in 1935. This area of Germany had been under French control since 1919 and was now given the opportunity to return to Germany. The result of the plebiscite was an overwhelming agreement (90.9% of the vote) that the Saar should return to Germany. This was a triumph for Hitler. The voting was supervised by the League and so done fairly, and the result was not surprising given that the entire population of the territory was German. It was nevertheless a great opportunity for Nazi propaganda to reinforce the growing power and strength of Germany and the popularity of the Nazi regime. Historian Gordon Craig writes:

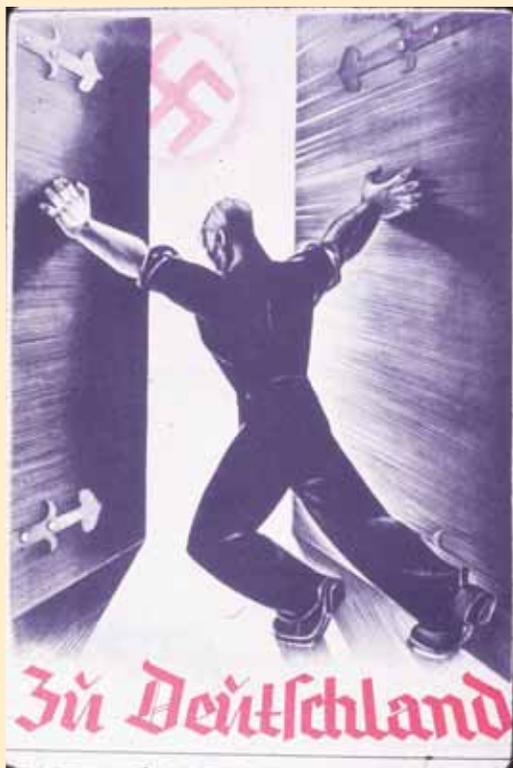
*This success, with which the other Powers made no attempt to interfere, marked the beginning of a new phase in his policy. He had survived the period of extreme vulnerability unscathed, and, thanks to the distractions and differences of the other Powers, his own tactical skill, and a good deal of luck, had been able in the course of two years to free himself from the restraints of the European security system.* — Craig, 1978

### Coup d'état

This is a sudden and violent take over of government, usually by a small group of people. A putsch is another word for a coup [hence Hitler's attempted Munich putsch in 1923]



## Source skills



▲ A poster from 1934, in the lead up to the Saar plebiscite. The words at the foot read “To Germany”.

### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of this poster?

### ATL Communication skills



Go to <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/hitler-acclaimed-in-saar-news-in-a-nutshell>.

Watch the Pathé News clip showing Hitler’s arrival in the Saar. How does Hitler use this event to show his growing power?

### ATL Thinking and self-management skills

Look back at Craig’s assessment of Hitler’s situation by the end of 1935. He identifies several reasons for Hitler’s success:

- Hitler’s tactical skill
- luck
- the distractions and differences of the other powers.

Find examples from the period 1933–36 to support each of these factors.

Which of these factors do you consider to be the most significant in explaining Hitler’s success? (You may want to review your answer to the question on page 84, identifying the different tactics that Hitler used.)

## Challenging the Treaty of Versailles: Rearmament

As early as February 1933, Hitler told his generals that rearmament was the most pressing priority: “the next five years must be devoted to the defence capacity of the Germany people”. In fact, Germany had always ignored the rearmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. With the cooperation of the Soviet Union under the Rapallo Treaty (see page XXX), Germany had continued to build aircraft and to train and expand its army. In this sense, Hitler was continuing what had already been started by previous German governments. However, he now increased the pace of rearmament dramatically.

By 1935, the army had increased from 7 to 21 divisions. Conscription was introduced in the same year; the army increased to 36 divisions and over half a million men. In March 1935, Hermann Göring, one of Hitler’s ministers, revealed the existence of the Luftwaffe, which by this time had around 2,500 planes. Hitler justified this level of rearmament on the grounds that Britain and France had failed to disarm and that Germany needed to be able to protect itself against the growing Soviet Army.

### Joachim von Ribbentrop

Ribbentrop started off as Hitler’s adviser on foreign policy. In 1935 he negotiated the Anglo–German Naval Agreement, and in August 1936 he was appointed ambassador to Britain. He hoped to arrange an alliance with Britain but ultimately failed in this goal; he was not helped by his arrogant behaviour. He became negative towards Britain after this, seeing it as weak. In 1938 he became foreign minister, a post he kept until 1945.

## Challenging the Treaty of Versailles: The remilitarization of the Rhineland



▲ Disputed territories around Germany, 1935–38

Early in 1936, Hitler turned his attention to the Rhineland. This area had been demilitarized under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. In order to provide security for France, no military installations or garrisons were permitted on the left bank or within 50 kilometres of the right bank of the River Rhine.

For Hitler, the remilitarization of the Rhineland would be an important step in his plans for strengthening Germany; he would be able to build fortifications there to prevent an attack from France.

The timing of Hitler's actions in 1936 was led both by domestic and international considerations. In Germany, rising prices and food shortages were causing unrest among the population and Hitler needed to distract

attention from economic problems. Internationally, the Abyssinian crisis provided an ideal opportunity to take action. Mussolini's break with the British and French over this crisis meant that he was now seeking closer ties with Hitler, and so he agreed not to oppose Hitler's takeover of the Rhineland. Hitler also knew that he could take advantage of the fact that Britain and France were distracted by both this crisis and the fallout from the Hoare–Laval Pact (see page XXX).

Hitler's excuse for moving troops back into the Rhineland was the Franco–Soviet Mutual Assistance Treaty (see page XXX), which was ratified on 4 March 1936. He argued that this violated the spirit of the Locarno Pact and threatened Germany with encirclement.

### Source skills

Baynes, N. 1969. *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922–August 1939*. H. Fertig. New York, USA

“To this [the Locarno] Pact Germany made a contribution which represented a great sacrifice because while France fortified her frontier with steel and concrete and armaments, and garrisoned it heavily, a condition of complete defencelessness was imposed upon us on our Western Frontier.

France had not concluded this Treaty with a European power of no significance ... Soviet Russia is the exponent of a revolutionary political and philosophical system ... Its political creed is ... world revolution. It cannot be foreseen whether this philosophy

will not be victorious ... in France as well. But should this happen ... then ... this new Bolshevik state would be a section of the Bolshevik International, which means that a decision as to aggression or non-aggression would not be taken in two different states ... , but orders would be issued from one headquarters, ... not in Paris but in Moscow.

This gigantic mobilisation of the East against Central Europe is opposed not only to the letter but to the spirit of the Locarno Pact.”

### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Hitler, how has France gone against the spirit of the Locarno Pact?



Both Hitler's generals and the German Foreign Office were hesitant about marching into the Rhineland, viewing it as a dangerous action likely to provoke a response from Britain and France. However, Hitler decided to take a gamble, hoping that the diplomatic disarray caused by the Abyssinian crisis would prevent Britain and France from taking any effective action. However, he later said,

*the 48 hours after the march into the Rhineland were the most nerve-wracking of my life. If the French had marched into the Rhineland, we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs.*

German troops moved into the Rhineland on 7 March 1936. In fact, this was not a surprise to the British and the French, who had received intelligence warnings that this was about to happen. However, no action was taken by either the British or the French to stop the remilitarization, despite the fact that the Germans invaded with a relatively weak military force.

The successful invasion was accompanied by a peace offer, which was again intended to make Hitler look as though he was a man of peace and to divert the attention of Britain and France away from his challenge to the post-war settlement. The offer included demilitarizing the Rhineland, providing Britain and France created similar zones on their sides of the frontier as well. He also suggested that he was interested in negotiating new security pacts with his neighbours and returning to the League of Nations.

### Source skills



#### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of this photograph?

**Examiner's hint:** How many marks would you give the following answer?

*The overall message here is that both the German troops and the occupants of the Rhineland were happy about the German action. This can be seen by the expressions on the faces of both the soldiers and the citizens who are also giving flowers to the troops. The Nazi flags that are flying from every building would also indicate support for the remilitarization.*

## ATL Thinking and communication skills

Read the views of historians Kershaw and Craig on the impact of the remilitarization of the Rhineland. Identify and make notes on:

- why this success was important to Hitler's position in Germany
- why it changed the international situation.

### Source A

**Hitler, Ian Kershaw, Longman, 1991, page 124**

"The remilitarisation of the Rhineland was important in the context of rearmament; it matched the revisionist expectations of the traditional conservative-nationalist elites; and it was hugely popular among the masses of the population – even in circles otherwise distinctly cool about the Nazi regime. As the re-establishment of German sovereignty over territory which no one disputed was Germany, it would have been on the agenda of any nationalist German government. And given the well-known divisions between Britain and France in their stance towards Germany, it was an issue which more than most stood a likely chance of success. But precisely the manner in which Hitler achieved his notable triumph was guaranteed to give a massive boost to his leadership position. He had been proved right again, in the teeth of Foreign Office hesitancy and military anxiety. And his popularity among the masses ... had never been higher."

### Source B

**Craig, G. 1978. *Germany 1866–1945*, page 691. Oxford University Press. New York, USA**

"With the [invasion of the Rhineland] ... Hitler had effectively destroyed the post-First World War security system. The German remilitarisation of the Rhineland was a victory not merely in the sense that it enhanced German prestige. Its psychological effect was to reveal the exclusively defensive nature of French strategic thinking, and this had devastating consequences among France's allies. Before the year was out, the King of the Belgians was seeking release from the obligations incurred by the treaties of 1920 and 1925, and his government had abandoned the intention of extending the Maginot Line into Belgium and had set a course back towards strict neutrality. There were tremors in the Little Entente as well, where politicians with an eye to the main chance began to weigh the advantages of getting on to Hitler's bandwagon. All in all, the Führer had good reason to exult, as he viewed the disarray of French fortunes, 'The world belongs to the man with guts! God helps him.'"

## ATL Communication skills



Go to <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/scraps-of-paper>.

Watch the Pathé News clip showing Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland. What impression does the footage and the commentary give about Germany at this time?

## TOK

Review the historians views in Source A and Source B on the previous page. Discuss the use of *reason* in the accounts given by each historian. To what extent are their view influenced by *expectation* and hindsight?

## Increasing the influence of Nazism: The Spanish Civil War

*Spain became the battlefield for a European-wide struggle between the forces of communism and socialism on the one hand and the forces of Fascism on the other.* — Henig, 1985

Mussolini and Hitler were pushed closer together when they both intervened in the Spanish Civil War on the side of Franco.

As you will have read in the previous chapter, the Spanish Civil War began in 1936 with a nationalist revolt led by the army against the republican Spanish government.

Both sides appealed to the international community for help in this conflict. General Franco led the nationalists and he asked for help from Germany and Italy, while the republican government hoped to get support from Britain, France and the Soviet Union.

Germany did not send ground troops but played a key role in transporting Franco's troops from Morocco to Spain at the start of the conflict, and German bombers of the Condor Legion caused havoc by attacking civilian centres, most notoriously Guernica in April 1937. German submarines also attacked government ships in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, in contrast to Mussolini (see page XXX), Hitler placed limits on the extent of German involvement.



Hitler had several reasons for intervening in this civil war:

- He wanted a friendly government in Spain that would supply Spanish mineral resources and also provide military bases for German submarines.
- He would be able to test out his air force and see the effects of air attacks on civilian populations.
- He was able to pose as the defender of European civilization against the Communist threat.
- A pro-Fascist government in Spain would further undermine French security.

### What were the results of this conflict for Hitler's position in Europe?

- The war dragged on for three years, polarizing opinion in Europe.
- It reinforced suspicions between Britain and France on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, thereby preventing a strong anti-Fascist alliance.
- It distracted the West, and Britain's failure to take any strong action (see page XXX) led Hitler to believe that he would not face further opposition to expansion in Eastern Europe.

### Changing diplomatic alignments: The Rome–Berlin Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact

The most important result of the Spanish Civil War on diplomatic alignments was the improved relations between Hitler and Mussolini. Hitler recognized King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy as the “Emperor of Abyssinia” and worked with Italy to prevent a British initiative to update the Locarno Treaties. On the Italian side, opposition to German influence in Austria was now removed. In July 1936, with Mussolini's approval, Hitler signed an agreement with Chancellor Schuschnigg of Austria, whereby Schuschnigg promised to pursue a policy “based on the principle that Austria acknowledges herself to be a German state” in return for a German commitment to non-intervention.

The new atmosphere of cooperation between Germany and Italy culminated in the signing of the Rome–Berlin Axis between Hitler and Mussolini in October 1936. It consisted of a series of secret protocols setting out their mutual interests (see page XXX). This was followed up in November of the same year with an agreement with Japan; the Anti-Comintern Pact was directed against the Communist International and stated that, in the case of an attack by the Soviet Union, the signatories would consult on measures to “safeguard their common interests”. The militant nature of this agreement indicated the beginning of the openly aggressive phase of Hitler's foreign policy.

Hitler was delighted, as these agreements demonstrated that Germany was no longer isolated but an important player on the world stage.

#### ATL Self-management

Refer back to Chapter XX, page XX. Compare and contrast the importance of involvement in the Spanish Civil War for the foreign policies of Mussolini and Hitler.

#### Source skills

**Henig R. 1985. *The Origins of the Second World War*, page 30. Routledge. London, UK**

“In the process [of the Four Year Plan], Germany was to make every effort to become more self-supporting by developing a wide range of synthetic materials, by stockpiling essential raw materials, and by concluding bilateral trade agreements with states in eastern and south-eastern Europe whereby food and raw materials were supplied to Germany in exchange for manufactures and armaments. Romania was a particular target for German advances because she could supply vitally needed supplies of oil.”

#### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Henig, in what ways did Hitler plan to make Germany prepared for war?

### Source skills

#### First question, part b – 2 marks

Refer back to the Nazi postcard on page 83. What is the message of this postcard?

### Class discussion

To what extent had Hitler succeeded in removing the most important restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles by the end of 1936?

## The impact of the economy on Hitler's foreign policy: The Four Year Plan

By 1936, rearmament was not progressing fast enough for Hitler. Indeed, the consumer economy was starting to struggle: there were shortages of butter and meat, as well as shortages of vital imports of raw materials and of foreign exchange. The economics minister, Dr Hjalmar Schacht, favoured spending less on armaments in order to enable more exports to be produced, thus encouraging foreign trade.

However, Hitler believed that Germany's economic problems could only be solved by the acquisition of more land and living space. He decided to go all out for autarky, bringing the economy more closely under party control, in order to prepare for war. This was to be done via a Four Year Plan, which Hitler introduced in September 1936 under the leadership of Göring.

Believing that this would make the pace of rearmament too fast and that it would cause an economic crisis, Schacht resigned. However, there is no doubt that Hitler was now in a strong position. As the historian Ian Kershaw writes:

*By the end of the year [1936], with the German-Italian axis secured ... the creation of the anti-Comintern pact with Japan, the Spanish Civil War all providing renewed evidence of the passivity and uncertainty of the western democracies, and the German economy committed full tilt to preparation for war, the contours of growing international tension and an escalating arms race in the latter 1930s were all set. And out of the various interwoven crises of 1936, Hitler's own power position had emerged buttressed and reinforced. — Kershaw, [year]*

## The impact of Nazism on Germany's foreign policy: The Hossbach Memorandum

*The conference marks the point at which the expansion of the Third Reich ceased to be latent and became explicit. — Williamson, 1995*

On 5 November, Hitler called a special meeting that was attended by his top generals and his war ministers: Hermann Göring (air), Werner von Fritsch (army), Erich Raeder (navy), Werner von Blomberg (defence) and Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath. Hitler told the meeting that what he was to say was to be regarded as "his last will and testament".

We know about this meeting because the main points were compiled and written down five days later by Hitler's military assistant, Colonel Hossbach, from notes that he made at the time. The document was filed without having been seen by Hitler.

At the conference, Hitler gave an overview of Germany's international situation and proposed several actions that now needed to be taken. The following extracts are taken from Hossbach's memorandum:

*The aim of German foreign policy was to make secure and to preserve the racial community and to enlarge it. It was therefore a question of space. The question for Germany was: where could she achieve the greatest gain at the lowest cost? German policy had to reckon with two hate inspired antagonists, Britain and France, to whom a German colossus in the centre of Europe was a thorn in the flesh ... Germany's problem could only be solved by the use of force. If the resort to force with its attendant risks is accepted ... there then*

### Communication, thinking and social skills

Read the full text of the Hossbach Memorandum at:

[avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/hossbach.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/hossbach.asp).

Make bullet point notes on the key points made.

In pairs or small groups, discuss the significance of this meeting.

*remains still to be answered the questions “When”? and “How”? In this matter there were three contingencies to be dealt with.*

### Case 1: Period 1943–5

*After that date only a change for the worse for our point of view could be expected ... Our relative strength would decrease in relation to the rearmament which would then have been carried out by the rest of the world. ... If the Führer was still living it was his unalterable determination to solve Germany's problem of space by 1943–5 at the latest ...*

### Case 2

*If internal strife in France should develop into such a domestic crisis as to absorb the French army completely and render it incapable of use for war against Germany, then the time for acting against the Czechs would have come.*

### Case 3

*If France should be so embroiled in war with another state that she could not “proceed” against Germany. For the improvement of our political-military position our first objective, in the event of our being embroiled in war, must be to overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria simultaneously in order to remove the threat to our plan in any possible operation against the West.*

*If Germany made use of this war to settle the Czech and Austrian question, it was to be assumed that Britain – herself at war with Italy – would decide not to act against Germany.*

While none of the military leaders objected to the planned destruction of Czechoslovakia, Blomberg and Fritsch were unhappy about a policy that could lead to war with Britain and France before Germany was sufficiently prepared. However, all those who were hesitant about Hitler's aims – (Blomberg, Fritsch and Neurath) were ruthlessly removed from power in February 1938 when Hitler appointed himself Supreme Commander of the German army. These changes were accompanied by the retirement of 16 high-ranking generals and the transfer of 44 others, thus removing anyone who might be less than committed to Hitler's goals. As Kershaw writes, *“Following the Reichstag Fire and the Rohm crisis [Night of the Long Knives], the Blomberg-Fritsch affair was the third great milestone on the way to Führer absolutist power”* (quoted in Darby, 2007).

## How significant is the Hossbach Memorandum as evidence of Hitler's foreign policy objectives?

A copy of Hossbach's minutes of this meeting were used at the Nuremberg Trials as evidence of Hitler's planning for war. However, AJP Taylor points out that the memorandum is only a copy and indeed only a fragment of a copy of the original, which has disappeared. Taylor also argues that the purpose of the meeting was not actually to discuss foreign policy aims but to convince conservative military and financial experts of the need to continue with the rearmament programme, and to isolate Schacht, who opposed it. Taylor states that *“Hitler's exposition was in large part day-dreaming and unrelated to what followed in real life”* (Taylor, 1969).

However, other historians would still argue that, while it cannot be used as a road-map for war, the Hossbach Memorandum did clearly set out Hitler's central goal: *“to make secure and to preserve the racial community and enlarge it”*. It also made clear Hitler's war-like and expansionist intentions and Hitler's sense of urgency; this was all taken seriously by those present.

### Source skills

#### Second question – 4 marks

With reference to its origin, purpose and content, how useful is the Hossbach Memorandum as evidence of Hitler's foreign policy plans after 1937?

### Class discussion

Refer back to Hitler's foreign policy ideas in *Mein Kampf* [see page XXX]. What continuities are there in his aims as set out in 1923 in *Mein Kampf* and those as they appear in the Hossbach Memorandum? What change in attitude do you see concerning Britain?

In pairs, review Italy's position on a potential naval war with Britain. What would be the Italian view of the cases discussed in this meeting?

### The Nuremberg Trials

A series of military tribunals, held by the Allied forces after World War II. Key members of the political, military, and economic leadership of Nazi Germany were put on trial charged with crimes against peace and crimes against humanity

## TOK

Think about what an historical fact actually is. Write a brief definition of what a fact in History is. Share your definition with a partner. How is this similar to or different from a fact in the natural sciences. Discuss as a class what could be considered the 'historical facts' in this chapter. Does your discussion suggest anything about the methods of, and challenges faced by, historians?

## Full document feature: Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland

## Source A

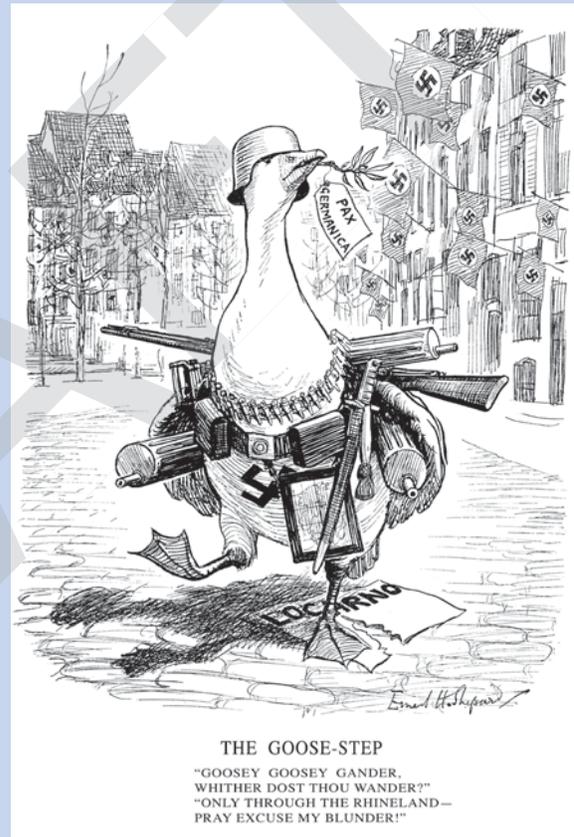
**A British report by the heads of the three armed services on their ability to fight a war against Germany in 1936**

"We would at once emphasise ... that any question of war with Germany while we were as at present heavily committed to the possibility of hostilities in the Mediterranean would be thoroughly dangerous. As regards naval operation against Germany, our minimum requirements could only be carried out by weakening naval forces in the Mediterranean to an extent which would jeopardise our position there vis-à-vis Italy ... As regards the Army and the Air Force, the purely defensive provisions already made in the Mediterranean have drawn upon the resources of these two Services to such an extent that until those reinforcements have returned to this country we should be quite incapable of dispatching a Field Force or providing any proper defence in the air. To bring home these forces with their equipment ... would take in the case of the army two months ... and even longer in the case of the Air Force.

At the moment our coast defence artillery requires modernisation to a large extent, we have no anti-submarine defences for a number of our most important ports, and the number of our anti-aircraft guns and searchlights is quite inadequate to deal with the air threat from Germany."

## Source B

**A cartoon published in *Punch* magazine on 18 March 1936**



## Source C

**Henig, R. 1985. *The Origins of the Second World War*, page 25. Routledge. London, UK**

"On 7 March 1936, token German forces marched into the Rhineland and Hitler announced that the German government was remilitarizing it because of the threat to Germany posed by the Franco-Russian alliance which had just been ratified by the French Senate ... The remilitarization was a further challenge to the Versailles settlement and to the British government's wish to



secure peaceful and orderly revision. For the British government had already gone out of its way to indicate to Hitler that ministers were willing to agree to German remilitarization of the Rhineland as part of a more general package of measures which might include an air pact. German return to the League of Nations, some peaceful revision of Germany's eastern frontiers and the return of former German colonies. Now Hitler had shown once again, in his rearmament policies that he preferred to achieve his objectives by unilateral military action rather than by participating in multilateral diplomatic discussions. ... In retrospect, many politicians and commentators claimed that this was the point at which Hitler should have been challenged, and that after March 1936 he could not be stopped from plunging Europe into war."

### Source D

#### A speech by Hitler to the Reichstag following the remilitarization of the Rhineland, Saturday 7 March 1936

"The German government has continuously emphasised during the negotiations of the last years its readiness to observe and fulfil all the obligations arising from the Rhine Pact so long as the other contracting parties were ready on their side to maintain the pact. This obvious and essential condition can no longer be regarded as being fulfilled by France. France has replied to Germany's repeated friendly offers and assurances of peace by infringing the Rhine Pact through a military alliance with the Soviet Union directed exclusively against Germany. In this manner, however, the Locarno Rhine Pact has lost its inner meaning and ceased to exist ...

In order, however, to avoid any misinterpretation of its intentions and to establish beyond doubt the purely defensive character of these measures, as well as to express its unalterable longing for a real pacification of Europe between states in equal rights and equally respected, the German government declares itself ready to conclude new agreements for the creation of a system of peaceful security for Europe ... After three years, I believe that today the struggle for German equality of rights can be deemed concluded ...

We have no territorial claims to make in Europe. Above all, we are aware that all the tensions resulting either from erroneous territorial provisions or from the disproportion between the size of its population and Lebensraum can never be solved by wars."

#### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Source A, why would it be difficult for Britain to resist German aggression in 1936?

#### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of Source B?

#### Second question – 4 marks

Compare and contrast the views expressed in Source C and Source D regarding Hitler's motives for his actions in 1936.

#### Third question – 6 marks

With reference to its origin, purpose and content, analyse the value and limitations of Source C for a historian studying the reasons for the remilitarization of the Rhineland.

#### Fourth question – 9 marks

Using these sources and your own knowledge, examine the reasons for Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936.



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