

## Foreign Policy

### Dates:

- **1932-1939:** Period of German military expansion.
- **1923:** French occupation of the Ruhr.
- **1929:** Wall Street Crash.
- **1932:** Unemployment reaches 6 million in Germany.
- **1933:**
  - Germany withdraws from the League of Nations and the Geneva Disarmament Conference.
- **1933-1935:** Secret German rearmament.
- **1934:** Failed Nazi-inspired coup in Austria (Dolfuss Affair).
- **1935:**
  - Formal introduction of conscription into the Wehrmacht.
  - Public reveal of the Luftwaffe.
  - Anglo-German Naval Agreement signed.
  - Rome Agreement signed between France and Italy.
  - Stresa Conference held.
  - Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance signed.
  - Temporary Neutrality Act in the US.
- **1936:**
  - Remilitarization of the Rhineland.
  - Start of the Spanish Civil War (until 1939).
  - Four Year Plan established.
  - Rome-Berlin Axis formed.
  - Anti-Comintern Pact signed.
- **1938:** Anschluss of Austria.
- **1938:** Sudetenland Crisis and Munich Agreement.
- **1939:**

- German occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia.
- Another slump in the German economy before the outbreak of war.
- Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed.
- German invasion of Poland; Britain and France declare war on Germany (September 3rd).

### Statistics:

- **1932-1939:** Army increased by approximately 800,000 personnel.
- **1932-1939:** Military spending increased from 1% to 25% of GDP.
- **1932-1939:** Around 1,000 tanks built.
- **1932-1939:** Annual combat aircraft production increased by over 4,000.
- **1932:** Unemployment grew to 6 million.
- Industrial production dropped by over 50% during Brüning's austerity policies.
- **1935:** Anglo-German Naval Agreement allowed Germany to expand its navy to 35% of the size of the British navy.
- Czechoslovakia lost 70% of its heavy industry, a third of its population, and the defenses of the Sudetenland after the Munich Agreement.

From 1932 to 1939, the army increased by around 800,000 personnel, developed 7 capital ships, military spending went from 1% of GDP to 25%, around 1000 tanks were built and annual combat aircraft production increased by over 4000.

Aims of Hitler's foreign policy (as per Mein Kampf)

- Revision of the Treaty of Versailles (regain lost territory, human and economic resources, rebuild the German armed forces).
- 'Gross Deutschland' - unification not only of Austrian Germans with Germany (forbidden by Versailles) but also unification with German minorities in other states like Czechoslovakia and Poland.
- Race - most of his political ideas were race oriented, a Nazi Germany should aspire towards "pure" Germans of the superior Aryan race. Social Darwinism: natural selection, German race must be protected from pollution of inferior blood (Jews).
- Lebensraum: space needed for Aryan race (Lebensraum or living space). This would be conquered in the East - dispossessing the Untermenschen races of Slavs, Russians, Ukrainians and Poles.

- Third reich - conquering living space would allow him to lay the foundations for the third reich.
- anti-communist
- enemies: USSR (bolsheviks and significant jewish population). France (historical enemy and its role in treaty of versailles, hitler claimed that france wanted to destroy germany)
- potential allies: italy and germany had fascist ideologies. britain as hitler admired its empire and its people were deemed racially similar. he also highlighted how britain had opposed the french occupation of the ruhr in 1923.

Did Hitler have a plan to rule the world?

- Intentionalist: hitler had a clear and long term foreign policy plan rooted in ideological convictions like lebensraum, racial hierarchy and destruction of treaty of versailles. Argues hitler had clear programme of expansion and conquest with clear phases.
- Revisionist: hitlers aims were similar to those of wilhelm ii in the first world war. hegemony over europe, creation of a greater germany and rule over russia
- post revisionist: acknowledges role of personal ideology and complex structural forces. hitler had clear long term goals but implementation was shaped by factors like economic pressures, internal power struggles and international diplomacy.
- structuralist school: emphasize chaotic nature of nazi state and downplay role of hitlers personal ideology as factor in foreign policy. hitler was often arguing to external circumstances and pressures rather than following a fixed plan. nazi foreign policy shaped more by internal political, economic and bureaucratic dynamics rather than coherent long term strategy.

Impact of domestic economic issues on german foreign policy in the 1930s?

- Weimar government dependent on US loans and the wall street crash of 1929 had a catastrophic impact on germany as us loans were recalled and all financial support ended.
- Domestic economic crisis caused by great depression, unemployment grew to 6 million in 1932.
- Brunings austerity policies led to wage cuts and more job losses, industrial production dropped by over 50%
- in agriculture, food prices fell and small farmers went bankrupt, banks collapsed.

- Economic situation led to polarization between far left and far right. Hitler promised 'work' and 'bread'. Nazi propaganda claimed Germany had been 'stabbed in the back' by the 'November criminals' who still dominated the Weimar government.
- Hitler criticized Stresemann due to his acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles and Locarno treaties which helped France. Hitler declared that Germany should not have joined the League of Nations as it implemented Versailles. He denounced the Dawes and Young Plan as the agreement accepted reparations.
- Hitler aimed to create a collectivist, authoritarian, nationalist and militarist economy. The central principle was autarky with high tariffs for imports, encouraging domestic substitutes. He implemented state control of trade.
- He aimed to capture resources via war with the USSR.
- He used a mixture of privatized and state-run enterprises (initial privations to raise money for state)
- He oversaw state-directed investments and spending, significant public works and infrastructure programs.
- His economic policies saw a fall in unemployment but the consumer economy lacked recovery.
- By 1936, the economy saw acute problems and then faced another slump in 1939 before the outbreak of war. There is a direct correlation between the more aggressive German foreign policy and its economic difficulties,
- In 1936, Hitler set up the four-year plan with Göring at the helm. It was because rearmament wasn't progressing fast enough, the consumer economy was struggling with shortages of butter, meat and limited imports of raw materials. Hitler believed the only solution was land acquisition and living space and other key economic assets therefore the plan was designed to facilitate autarky, closer party control of the economy in prep for war and to speed up rearmament. The plan put increased pressure on the German economy to avert a crisis via a war of conquest.
- In 1933, Hitler withdrew Germany from the League of Nations and the Geneva Disarmament Conference signalling that Germany would no longer be bound by the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. From 1933-35, Hitler began producing weapons and aircrafts in secret through civilian institutions or abroad. In 1935, Hitler formally announced the introduction of conscription into the Wehrmacht and began expanding the army. In 1935, Hitler publicly revealed the Luftwaffe showing that Germany was openly defying the treaty and accelerating military buildup. In 1935, Hitler signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement which

allowed Germany to expand its navy to 35% of the size of the British navy (violation of treaty but seen as attempt to normalize relations. In 1935, changed name from Reichswehr to Wehrmacht (meaning "defense force").

- French response to German re-armament: sought to contain Germany through a network of alliances (Italy, Russia, Poland and Czechoslovakia). Signed the Rome Agreement in 1935 with Italy after the Dörfus affair (failed Nazi inspired 1934 coup in Austria). They were to act together in case of German rearmament or attack on either of countries or Austria.
- Italy's response: signed the Rome Agreement, joined the Stresa Conference with France and Britain in 1935 which proposed measures to counter German rearmament, they formed the Stresa Front against German aggression but their decisions were never implemented.
- Britain's response: Stresa Front and wanted to contain German rearmament by making concessions (1935 Anglo-German Naval Agreement) and adjusting terms of Versailles Peace Treaty by drawing Germany back into LoN where it could be tied into collective security agreements.
- Soviet Union: cautious of Western powers and Germany but tried to negotiate with both. Signed the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance in 1935 which was an attempt by France to prevent the USSR from aligning with Germany.
- The US: firmly isolationist through the 1930s but the temporary Neutrality Act in 1935 allowed ban of supply of arms to all belligerents.

#### 1936 Remilitarisation of Rhineland (1936)

- The area was demilitarized by the Treaty of Versailles but for Hitler remilitarisation would be an important step in his plan to strengthen Germany (but big gamble if he was forced to withdraw by allies as he would be embarrassed and humiliated at home). He justified it by saying the Franco-Soviet Agreement of 1935 aimed to encircle Germany.
- Britain and France were distracted by Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia thus the LoN only condemned the action without acting against Hitler. The French had the most to fear but they couldn't do anything without British support which never came.
- The remilitarisation matched the revisionist expectations of the traditional conservative nationalist elites while being popular among the masses.

#### Spanish Civil War (1936-39)

- Hitler wanted a friendly government in Spain that would support mineral resources and also provide military bases for German submarines.

- Hitler was able to test out the luftwaffe and see the effects of air attacks on civilians.
- He would be able to pose as the defender of european civilisation against the communist threat.

## Results

- Franco won and ruled for the next 36 yrs
- german troops and luftwaffe gained combat experience
- britains failure to take any strong action led hitler to believe he would not face further opposition to his expansion plans.
- devastating consequences of the bombing at guernica convinced britain that war needed to be avoided at any cost.
- the ussr became more suspicious of britain and france because of their reluctant to take actions against hitler
- most importantly, hitler and mussolini signed the rome berlin axis in october 1936, this was followed up in november with the anti comintern pact against communism and to defend in case of an attack by the ussr.

## Anschluss (1938)

### Causes:

- Pan german nationalism: many germans and austrians shared a sense of national identity and the idea of uniting all german speaking people under one reich was popular. many austrians felt culturally and linguistically closer to germany than other countris
- treaty of versailles and st. germain forbade anschluss but this fueled resentment and a desire among both countries to overturn the terms which were viewed as unjust limitations on sovereignty.
- weakness of austrian government: political instability, economic hardship and authoritarianism weakened the government making the country vulnerable to external influence.
- nazi supporters grew in numbers in austria with the austrian nazi party gaining popularity. many austrian nazis desired unification with germany to bring nazi ideology to austria, they staged uprising and pressured the gov, this undermined austria's independence
- italian support: mussolini reconsidered his position over austria since 1934.

## Events

- a plebiscite was arranged to see whether austrians wanted a free and german, independent and social, christian and united austria. it was likely that a yes vote could be secured letting him break free of his agreement with hitler. Hitler marched into austria after mobilising his army and when schuschnigg found that no help was coming from italy, britain or france.

## Consequences

- hitler became convinced that his strat of ruthless power politics had been vindicated and that it was the only effective policy against his war weary and vacillating opponents.
- promoted italy german friendship.
- germany's strategic position was enhanced with access to entirety of south eastern europe, footstep to czechoslovakia, hungary and yugoslavia.

## Sudetenland Crisis (1938)

### Causes behind hitler's conquest

- Ideological: hitler considered slavs to be untermenschen or inferior race. one of the ethnic groups within czechoslovakia was german, these 3.5 million germans lived in the sudetenland which bordered germany. Henlein was the leader of the nazis in the sudetenland stirring up trouble among the sudeten germans who demanded to be part of germany.
- economical: sudetenland was a mountainous area with mineral resources as well as developed industries (skoda - automobile).
- Political: czechoslovakia was the only successful democratic state created by versailles which proved that ethnically different ppl could live together. czechoslovakia was an enthusiastic supporter of the LON. It was allied to france and russia.

### Munich Agreement

- The german occupation of the sudetenland would take place by 1st october; czechs would be allowed to leave and germans to join the sudeten territories (neither the plebiscite nor this happened)
- the czechs were told that they would receive no help from britain or france if they resisted though france had guaranteed czech borders at locarno, the czechs had no option but to agree.

- Chamberlain got Hitler to sign an Anglo-German declaration after the conference, to settle all matters of international interest through consultation, this meant 'peace in our time' according to Chamberlain.

#### Outcomes

- Czechoslovakia lost 70% of its heavy industry, a third of its population and the defences of the Sudetenland.
- From 1939, Hitler encouraged the Slovaks to ask for complete independence. Emil Hacha was forced to sign over Bohemia and Moravia to Hitler.
- German troops then occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia.
- This action led to a change in British policy towards Germany, they could no longer trust Germany.

#### Consequences of appeasement policy

- It encouraged and rewarded Hitler's aggression, strengthened his domestic position and weakened domestic opposition
- It encouraged Mussolini to be more aggressive
- It facilitated the economic, military and territorial growth of Hitler's Germany
- It led Hitler to believe Britain would not take military action
- Britain did not use extra time to re-arm either
- It strengthened Axis ties
- It isolated and frightened the USSR - no anti-fascist alliance, led to Nazi-Soviet Pact
- Britain changes policy and guaranteed Poland security, Hitler invades Poland in 1939, it was an inconsistent policy

#### Historiography surrounding appeasement:

- Chamberlain was right: many people approved and treated him as a hero when he returned after signing the Munich Agreement, only one minister resigned and many became stronger supporters of him.
- Chamberlain was in an impossible position and he did the best he could in those circumstances (revisionist): can't blame Chamberlain for not knowing that Hitler had planned (Hitler himself didn't know), Chamberlain faced many issues and Hitler was one of them. There was little else Chamberlain could have done in the interest of the British Empire. Some historians claim that it was the right thing to do because it means Britain had the time to build up its armed forces, particularly air defences and the RAF.



- appeasement was a terrible misjudgement even if it was based on good motives: chamberlain should put together a grand alliance of britain, france, the us and ussr
- chamberlain was part of the problem, his own personality and assumptions meant that he couldnt deal with the situation well: counter-revisionist view: he overrated his own abilities in negotiating with hitler and couldnt understand hitler. chamberlain ignored the advice of officials and colleagues. chamberlain betrayed czechoslovakia.
- chamberlain was a guilty man: appeasement was foolish cowardly and immoral. since 1931, british leaders made concessions to japan, italy and germany, strengthening them and weakening britain.

#### Molotov Ribbentrop Pact (1939)

- Hitler wanted to avoid a war on two fronts. He believed that britain and france wont intervene to defend poland if he allied with stalin. the ussr's economic aid would negate the impact of any anglo french blockade. hitler still intended to invade the ussr at a later date, this gave him time to deal with the west first.
- The USSR wouldnt have to get involved in a war in the west, this was important as it faced a threat from the east in japan and the soviet army was weakened through stalins purges. it gave stalin time to prep for the war as there was always hope that germany and the west could fight each other leaving the ussr as the strongest. conquering poland gave them the opportunity to take over finland and baltic states. germany was still the ussr's major trading partner.
- Consequences: it showed that collective security and british policy of appeasement had failed. hitler was now free to move against poland and then attack the west without fear of a 2 front war.
- On 3 september, the british government presented an ultimatum to germany to withdraw its forces by 11 am and when no response came, britain and france declared war; hitler didnt expect this at all.