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Cambridge International AS Level

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Series editor: Patrick Walsh-Atkins

Cambridge International AS Level

International History 1871–1945



University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107613232

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First published 2013

Printed in the United Kingdom by Latimer Trend

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-61323-2 Paperback

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Introduction

Cambridge International AS Level History is a new series of three books that offer complete and thorough coverage of Cambridge International AS Level History (syllabus code 9389). Each book is aimed at one of the AS History syllabuses issued by Cambridge International Examinations for first examination in 2014. These books may also prove useful for students following other A Level courses covering similar topics. Written in clear and accessible language, *Cambridge International AS Level History – International History 1871–1945* enables students to gain the knowledge, understanding and skills to succeed in their AS Level course (and ultimately in further study and examination).

Syllabus and examination

Students wishing to take just the AS Level take two separate papers at the end of a one-year course. If they wish to take the full A Level there are two possible routes. The first is to take the two AS papers at the end of the first year and a further two A Level papers at the end of the following year. The second is to take the two AS papers as well as the two A Level papers at the end of a two-year course. For the full A Level, all four papers must be taken. The two AS papers are outlined below.

Paper 1 lasts for one hour and is based on *The Search for International Peace and Security 1919–45*. The paper will contain at least three different sources, and candidates will have to answer two questions on them. Students are not expected to have extensive historical knowledge to deal with these questions, but they are expected to be able to understand, evaluate and utilise the sources in their answers, and to have sound background knowledge of the period. In the first question (a) candidates are required to consider the sources and answer a question on one aspect of them. In the second question (b) candidates must use the sources and their own knowledge and understanding to address how far the sources support a given statement. Chapter 5 provides the appropriate level of historical knowledge to deal with Paper 1.

Paper 2 lasts for an hour and a half. This paper contains four questions, and candidates must answer two of them. Each question has two parts: part (a) requires a causal explanation; and part (b) requires consideration of significance and weighing of the relative importance of factors. A question on each of the four topics outlined in the Cambridge syllabus (for example, *International Relations 1871–1918*) will appear in every examination paper.

Examination skills

Chapter 6, which is entirely dedicated to helping students with examination skills and techniques, works through all the different types of exam questions in detail. Students should read the relevant section of the exam skills chapter *before* addressing practice questions, to remind themselves of the principles of answering each type of question. Remember that facts alone are not enough; they must be accompanied by a clear understanding of the questions and must employ a range of skills such as focused writing, evaluation and analysis.

All chapters have a similar structure. They key features are as follows:



1 Key questions pose thought-provoking pointers to the key issues being dealt with in the chapter.

2 Content summary explains the essence of a chapter.

3 Timeline offers an overview of significant events of the period.

4 Key figures offer a detailed profile of key personalities.

5 Notes highlight significant points from within the text.

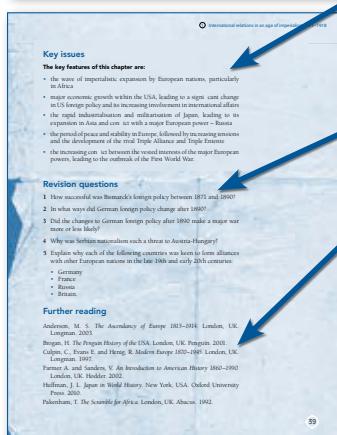
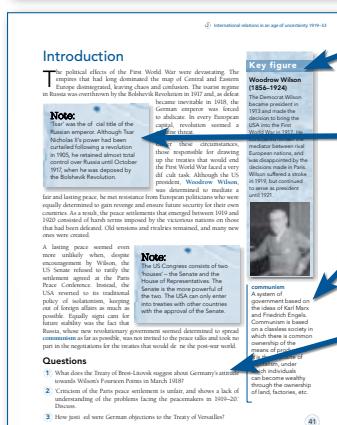
6 Definitions of key terms enhance students' understanding of the text.

7 Questions interspersed within the chapters help to consolidate learning.

8 Key issues outline the key aspects of the content that might be significant for exam preparation.

9 Revision questions help students assess their own understanding and skills.

10 Further reading provides a list of extra resources that will help with gaining a wider perspective of the topic.



Chapter

1

International relations in an age of imperialism 1871–1918

Key questions

- Why, and with what results, was there a growth in imperial expansion during the last quarter of the 19th century?
- How and why did the USA emerge as a world power during this period?
- How and why did Japan emerge as a world power during this period?
- Why, and with what results, did a system of alliances develop between European nations?

Content summary

- Reasons for imperial expansion in the late 19th century.
- The 'scramble for Africa'.
- Disputes over the crumbling Chinese Empire.
- The Spanish–American War.
- The development of American imperialism.
- The rapid modernisation of Japan.
- Japan's wars with China and Russia.
- The aims and objectives of the major European powers.
- The development of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente.
- The implications of these alliances for international peace and stability.

Timeline

Jan 1871	Unification of Germany
Oct 1873	Three Emperors' League formed
Oct 1879	Dual Alliance formed
1880–81	First Boer War
May 1882	Triple Alliance formed
Jun 1887	Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia
Dec 1893	Dual Entente agreed
Apr–Aug 1898	Spanish–American War
1899–1902	Second Boer War
Jan 1902	Anglo–Japanese Treaty signed
Apr 1904	Entente Cordiale created
1904–05	Russo–Japanese War
Aug 1907	Anglo–Russian Entente, leading to Triple Entente
Jul 1914	Outbreak of First World War

Introduction

European nations had a long tradition of increasing their wealth, prestige and power by gaining overseas possessions. As early as the 16th century, Spain had taken control of large parts of South America. In the 18th century, Britain and France had competed for territory in North America and India. By the early 19th century, Britain controlled an empire stretching from New Zealand to Canada.

The period from 1871 to 1914 witnessed a new wave of **imperialism**. This had three main characteristics:

- It was largely focused on Africa and Asia. Explorers had discovered an abundant supply of valuable minerals and raw materials in the African interior. Meanwhile, the crumbling Chinese Empire offered opportunities to increase vital trade links with the Far East.
- Although the rush to acquire new overseas possessions inevitably involved rivalry between European nations, there was a real attempt to prevent this leading to open confrontation and warfare. The Treaty of Berlin (1885), for example, effectively laid down the rules by which European nations should carry out their plans for expansion in Africa.
- The desire for overseas colonies was no longer confined to the great powers of Europe. Massive industrial growth led the USA to seek greater control over Central and South America, as well as access to trading rights in Asia. This required the development of a strong navy and the acquisition of overseas bases from which it could operate. At the same time, Japan experienced its own industrial and military revolutions, which enabled the country to seek greater power and influence within Asia. This brought Japan into direct conflict with one of the major European powers – Russia – and made subsequent rivalry with the USA more likely.

imperialism

The policy of extending a nation's power by gaining political and economic control over more territory. This is sometimes referred to as colonialism.

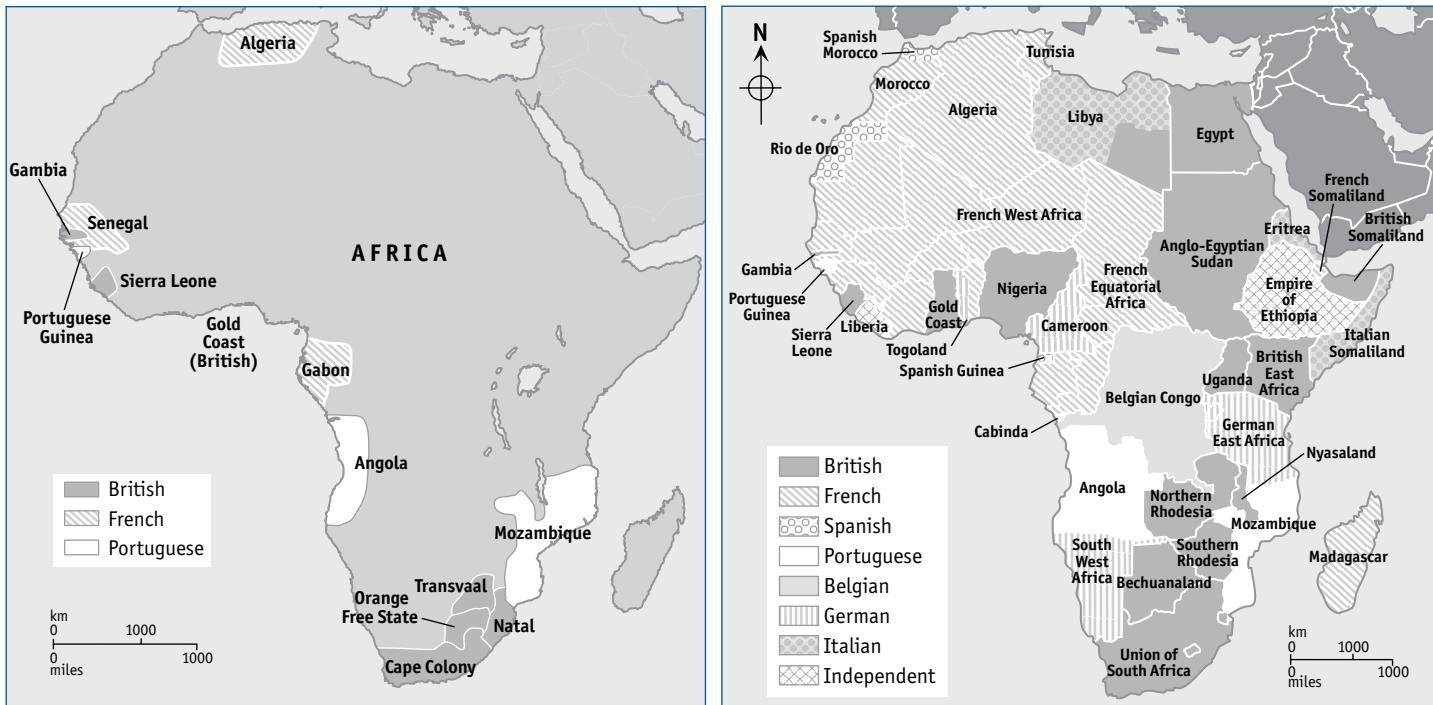
Figure 1.1 Japanese soldiers in the trenches during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905



The 'scramble for Africa'

In 1871, only 10% of Africa was under direct European control, most of it in the coastal regions. The next 30 years witnessed the rapid colonisation of Africa by European powers – a rush for land that contemporary journalists labelled the 'scramble for Africa'. By 1900, over 90% of the African continent was under the colonial rule of European nations.

Figure 1.2 Two maps showing African colonies in 1871 (left) and 1914 (right)



Causes of the 'scramble for Africa'

Historians have long debated the reasons for this rapid growth of imperialism, and have found it difficult to agree on a single cause. Several different – though interrelated – factors were involved, which are outlined below.

Strategic factors

Trade routes with India were vital for Britain. In the early 19th century, the British won control of Cape Colony in southern Africa, and established a port there on the key sea trading route with India. In 1869, the Suez Canal was opened, linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea across Egyptian territory. This meant that steamships could travel to and from India without passing round the southern tip of Africa. However, the instability of the Egyptian government threatened this new trading route and so, in 1882, Britain reluctantly took over the administration of Egypt. Many historians believe that it was the establishment of British power in Egypt that triggered the 'scramble for Africa'.

Medical advancement and exploration

In the 18th century, Africa was known as 'the white man's grave' because of the dangers of diseases such as malaria. The medicine quinine, discovered by French scientists in 1817, proved an effective treatment for malaria, and as fears of contracting and dying of African diseases reduced, more

people ventured to the 'Dark Continent'. Countless expeditions began to remove some of the myths associated with Africa. Explorers were often financed by wealthy businessmen, keen to find new resources and trading opportunities. One of the most famous explorers, Henry Morton Stanley, was hired by the king of Belgium, **Leopold II**, to secure treaties with local chieftains along the course of the Congo River.

Note:

The expression 'Dark Continent' was widely used by Europeans in the 19th century to describe Africa. The name was not given because of the skin colour of its inhabitants, but because of the mystery surrounding the continent. Europeans knew very little about Africa, other than that it seemed to be a dangerous and inhospitable place.

Weaponry

The development of fast-firing rifles, machine guns and heavy artillery gave Europeans a distinct advantage over poorly armed Africans. Land on the continent could be taken with little effective resistance from the native people.

Political factors

By 1871, the map of Europe had been settled and the borders of European countries agreed. Only war could change these, and this was something that all nations were keen to avoid. With no possibility of expansion within Europe itself, countries needed to look overseas in order to increase their wealth, power, prestige and influence. Africa offered the ideal opportunity.

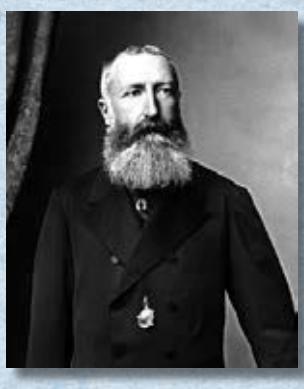
The abolition of the slave trade

Much of Europe's early contact with Africa had occurred because of the slave trade. From as early as the 16th century, ships had sailed from European ports to the coast of Africa. There the Europeans would acquire slaves, either by bartering with local chieftains or simply by capturing native people. The human cargo was then shipped across the Atlantic Ocean and sold to plantation owners in the USA to work as slaves picking cotton or tobacco. By 1871, however, slavery had been abolished in most countries. Denied the huge profits they had gained from the slave trade, many European businessmen sought other forms of trade with Africa.

Key figure

Leopold II (1835–1909)

Leopold was king of Belgium 1865–1909. He financed the colonisation of the Congo Free State (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), which he exploited in order to make money from ivory and rubber. Leopold's regime in Africa was characterised by cruelty towards the native inhabitants, and he was eventually forced to hand control of the colony over to the Belgian government in 1908.

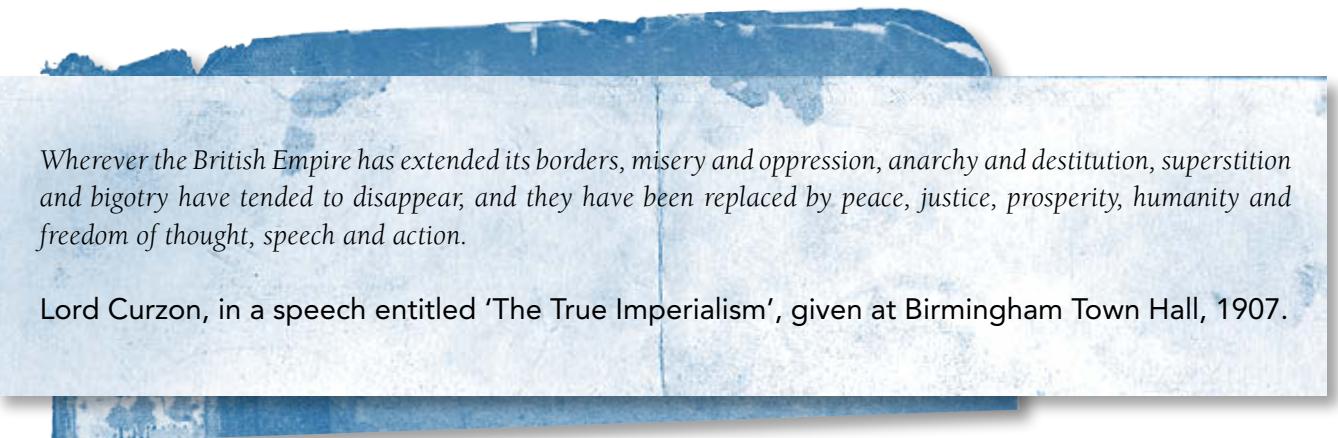


The Industrial Revolution

The rapid increase in the production of manufactured goods associated with the European Industrial Revolution created a need for more raw materials, new markets and greater investment opportunities. In Africa, explorers located vast reserves of raw materials, plotted trade routes and identified population centres that could provide a market for European goods. Meanwhile, developments in railways and steamships made travel both quicker and safer. Iron-hulled, steam-driven ships (which, unlike sailing ships, did not need deep hulls for stability and did not depend on wind power) were able to navigate rivers such as the Congo, the Zambezi and the Niger, offering easier access to the African interior.

A sense of duty

Convinced of their racial superiority, many Europeans believed that they had a duty to bring order, stability and Christianity to the lives of the ‘pagan’ Africans. The missionary-explorer David Livingstone, for example, argued that it was essential to introduce Africans to the ‘three Cs’ – commerce, Christianity and civilisation. The British politician Lord Curzon echoed these sentiments when he justified the expansion of Britain’s empire in a speech in 1907.



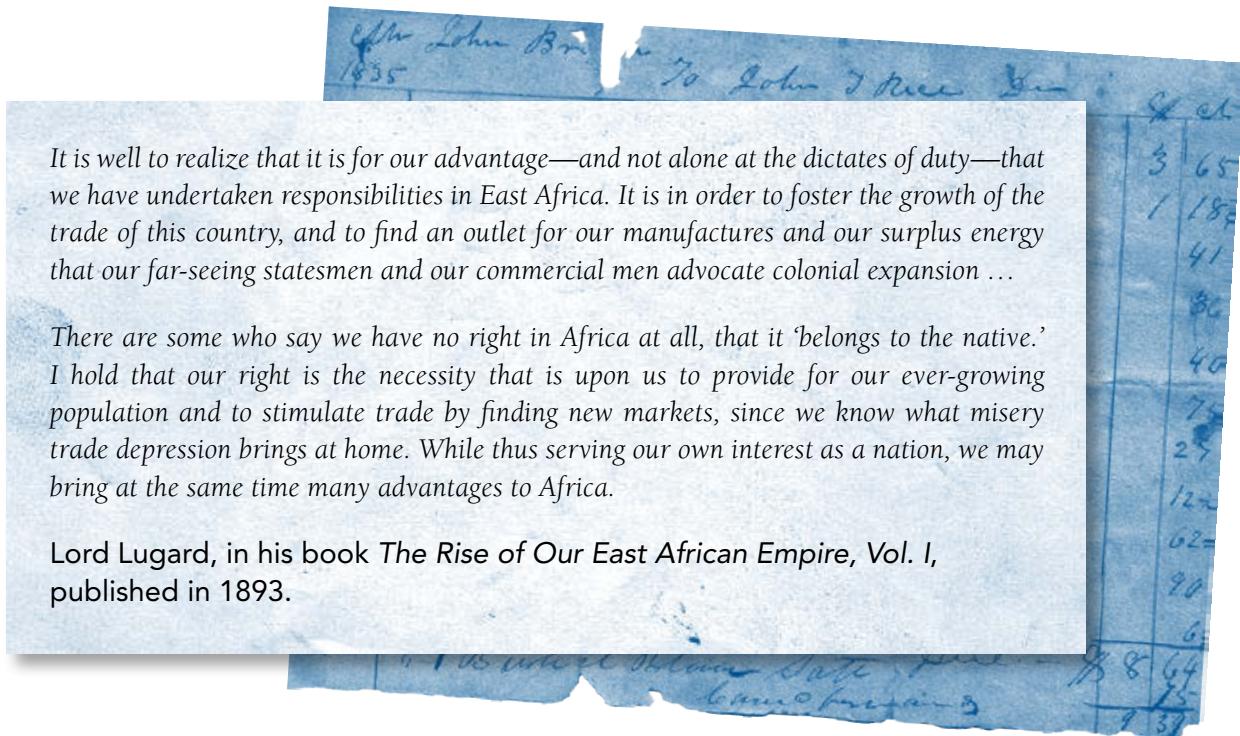
Wherever the British Empire has extended its borders, misery and oppression, anarchy and destitution, superstition and bigotry have tended to disappear; and they have been replaced by peace, justice, prosperity, humanity and freedom of thought, speech and action.

Lord Curzon, in a speech entitled ‘The True Imperialism’, given at Birmingham Town Hall, 1907.

Note:

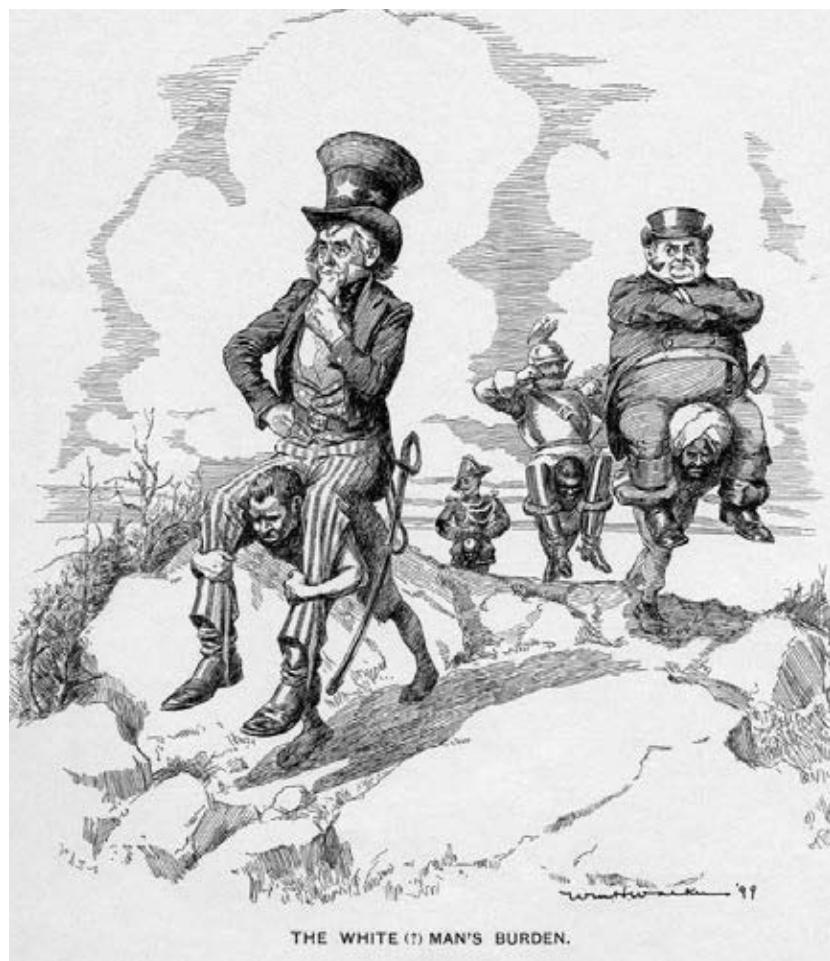
In the early 19th century, scientists such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau developed theories regarding the classification of races. White people were classified as racially superior to other groups. These views, presented through poor science and clearly motivated by political and ideological factors, were widely accepted both in Europe and in the USA.

The claim that Britain and other European nations were taking possession of land in Africa in order to improve the lives of African people provided a convenient justification for actions that were, in reality, motivated by self-interest and characterised by exploitation. Lord Lugard, a British soldier and explorer who was later governor of the British colony of Nigeria, gave a more honest assessment of Britain’s involvement in Africa.



While recognising that Africans may have benefited from the British presence on their continent, Lord Lugard openly accepted that Britain's main motive was to serve 'our own interest as a nation' by enhancing trade. It is interesting to note that he clearly sees nothing wrong in this, claiming that it was Britain's 'right' to take such action and quickly dismissing the views of those who argue that Africa 'belongs to the native'. In asserting that Britain had every right to take possession of African land in order to address its own national interests, Lord Lugard was clearly implying that the rights and needs of Europeans outweighed those of Africans. In this, he was conforming to the widespread belief in European racial superiority.

Figure 1.3 A satirical cartoon from 1899 showing Africans carrying figures from the USA and Britain (Uncle Sam and John Bull) who represent 'civilisation'



The rush for African territory

Key figure

Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902)

Rhodes was a British-born businessman who made a fortune from the extraction of diamonds in South Africa. He was prime minister of Cape Colony between 1890 and 1896, and a strong supporter of British imperialism in Africa. However, he believed that British settlers and local governors in Africa should be in charge, rather than being ruled from London.



Figure 1.4 A cartoon of Cecil Rhodes, published in the British magazine *Punch* in 1892; it links Rhodes' name with the ancient statue known as the Colossus of Rhodes

In addition to the general factors discussed in the previous section, each European nation had its own particular motives for involvement in Africa:

- **Britain:** Britain's original concern had been to protect its vital Indian Ocean trading routes, and this explains its interest in Egypt and South Africa. The discovery of gold, diamonds and valuable minerals in the Transvaal alerted Britain to the economic rewards of acquiring more land in Africa. Determined to stop other European countries, particularly France and Germany, from gaining these mineral-rich areas for themselves, Britain moved quickly to secure as much of East Africa as possible. Encouraged by imperialist adventurers such as **Cecil Rhodes**, Britain took possession of most of East Africa in the last 20 years of the 19th century. This included Egypt, Sudan, British East Africa (Kenya and Uganda), British Somaliland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Orange Free State and the Transvaal (South Africa), Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, British Gold Coast (Ghana) and Nyasaland (Malawi). These countries accounted for more than 30% of Africa's population. Rhodes' ambition in Africa was to build a railway and telegraph line from Cairo in the north to the Cape in the south, thus reinforcing Britain's commercial gain from its African possessions.

- **France:** while Britain concentrated on East Africa, France was more active in the west and north-west of the continent. As a result of involvement in the slave trade, France had established secure control of the coastal regions of Senegal and Algeria. In the late 19th century, the French moved inland in search of raw materials, such as palm oil and timber, and new markets for their industrial output. French politicians believed the development of a large overseas empire was essential to enhancing their country's wealth, prestige and power.
- **Belgium:** Belgium had only won independence from the Netherlands in 1830, and King Leopold II (see page 9) was determined to increase his own wealth and put his country on the map by claiming the enormous Congo basin. The king was prepared to use his own money to pay for a colony that was considerably larger than Belgium itself.
- **Portugal:** determined not to be left behind in the race to acquire African land, Portugal reasserted its long-established claims to Angola and Mozambique.

- **Germany:** Germany did not enter the 'scramble' until 1881, when pressure from businessmen and industrialists forced the government to change its previous policy of opposition to colonising distant lands. A frenzy of activity left Germany in control of Kamerun (Cameroon and part of Nigeria), German East Africa (Rwanda, Burundi and most of Tanzania),

German South West Africa (Namibia) and Togoland (Togo and part of Ghana). By the time Germany entered the race for African possessions, most of the profitable areas had already been taken by other nations, and Germany's colonies in East Africa cost the country considerably more than they were worth.

The Treaty of Berlin 1885

The 'scramble for Africa' may have begun for logical strategic and commercial reasons, but it rapidly descended into a mad rush for overseas possessions. European countries seemed determined to seize as much African land as possible – regardless of its potential value – simply to prevent it falling into the hands of their rivals. It had become an issue of national pride.

This naturally opened up the risk of direct conflict breaking out between competing nations. In an attempt to prevent this, representatives from 13 European states met at the Berlin Conference in 1884–85. Together, they reached an agreement regarding the parts of Africa in which each country had the right to pursue ownership of land without interference. The resulting Treaty of Berlin was designed to regulate European colonisation and trade in Africa. The main articles of the treaty established that:

- in order to take possession of an African territory, a European nation would have to inform other governments of its claim immediately, and demonstrate that the territory was '**effectively occupied**'
- free passage should be given to all ships on the Niger and Congo rivers
- slavery should be abolished throughout the continent.

In many ways, the outcome of the Berlin Conference added further impetus to the race for new land. In particular, there was a clash between the rival ambitions of France and Britain. While France was expanding rapidly eastwards from French West Africa towards its possession in Somaliland, the British were expanding southwards from Egypt towards the Cape. Their paths crossed in Sudan. In 1898, a French expedition under Major Marchand met a British force, led by Lord Kitchener, in the village of Fashoda. Both claimed Sudan for their respective countries. For a time open conflict seemed likely, but in the end neither country was prepared to go to war over Africa, and they reached a compromise. France recognised British possession of Egypt and Sudan, while Britain formally acknowledged the French presence in Morocco. Events such as the Fashoda Incident have led many historians to see the 'scramble for Africa' as a safety valve – a way for European nations to play out their game of power politics without the risk of a major war.

'effectively occupied'

This meant that the land was genuinely under the control of the European nation – it could be properly administered and defended. This was intended to prevent a country claiming an area over which it had no real control simply to prevent rivals attempting to gain it.

Note:

The agreement that slavery should be abolished throughout Africa was included in the treaty to satisfy those who had doubts about the right of European countries simply to take land in Africa. Abolishing slavery provided a suitable justification.

The Boer Wars

As the British experience in South Africa soon demonstrated, ownership of African colonies was neither peaceful nor without far-reaching consequences. Maintaining control of Cape Colony involved constant border wars with native tribes, notably in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. Moreover,

British rule was resented by the Boers – farmers of Dutch descent – who moved inland to settle in Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In 1877, Britain claimed possession of the gold and diamond-rich Transvaal. However, once assured that the Zulu threat had been removed, the Transvaal Boers rebelled and claimed independence. The First Boer War (1880–81) was little more than a series of skirmishes, in which the ill-prepared British troops were defeated. Under the terms of the Pretoria Convention (1881), the Transvaal and Orange Free State were given self-governing status under British oversight.

Note:

The Anglo-Zulu War was fought in 1879 between the British Empire and the Zulu Kingdom. Following a series of bloody battles, including an opening victory for the Zulus at Isandlwana, the British were eventually victorious.

Key figure

Paul Kruger (1825–1904)

Kruger was president of the South African Republic (Transvaal) from 1883 to 1900. After the First Boer War, Kruger played a role in negotiations with Britain to restore self-government to the region. He later led the Boers in their struggle against Britain during the Second Boer War.



Further discoveries of gold deposits in the Transvaal drew many new settlers to the region – most of them British. However, these newcomers were denied political and economic rights by the Transvaal president, **Paul Kruger**. British expansionist ambitions, encouraged mainly by the prime minister of Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes (see page 12), led to the failed Jameson Raid of 1895. The British government hoped that the settlers in the region would rebel against the Transvaal government, and the intention was for British forces – led by the statesman Leander Starr Jameson – to go to their assistance as a pretext for invasion. However, when the rebellion failed to materialise, Jameson led his forces into the Transvaal anyway. They were swiftly driven back by the Boers.

Other European nations resented this British invasion of what they regarded as a small, independent nation. The German Kaiser, Wilhelm (William) II (see page 30), even sent a telegram to Kruger, congratulating him on defeating the raiders. This caused huge indignation in Britain and resulted in a deterioration in Anglo-German relations.

In 1899, Kruger demanded the withdrawal of British troops and full independence for the Transvaal. When Britain refused to grant this, Kruger declared war. After a series of early victories by the Boers, Britain dramatically increased the number of troops in South Africa. They succeeded in relieving several besieged cities, and captured the Transvaal capital, Pretoria, in June 1900. After this, the Boers adopted guerrilla tactics – carrying out surprise raids on British-held railways and storage depots – but after two further years of fighting the Boers were forced to surrender. Britain's victory in this, the Second Boer War, was confirmed by the Treaty of Vereeniging (1902), which placed Orange Free State and the Transvaal firmly under British control.

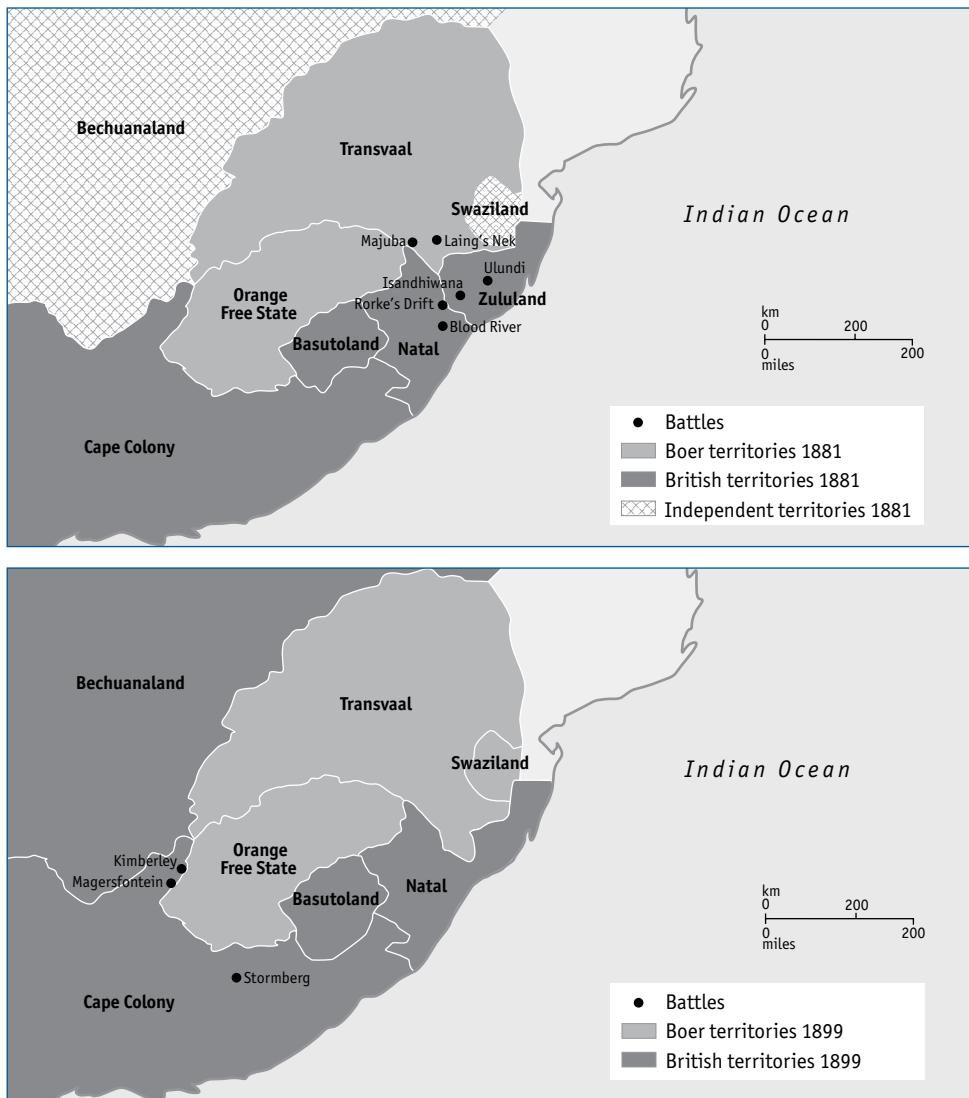


Figure 1.5 Two maps showing South Africa during the Boer Wars, in 1880–81 (top) and 1899–1902 (bottom)

However, victory came at a price. The power of the British Empire had been severely challenged by a relatively small number of Boers, revealing fundamental weaknesses in the British army. The Second Boer War cost the taxpayer more than £200 million – a huge amount of money at the beginning of the 20th century – and 22,000 soldiers of the British Empire died. In addition, Britain was condemned by the international community for its **'scorched earth' policy** during the war, and for the establishment of concentration camps in which the wives and children of Boer fighters were imprisoned. These camps were originally intended to be refugee centres for civilians left homeless by the fighting, but conditions there were poor and they were administered harshly in the hope that this would force the Boers to surrender. With bad hygiene and little food, suffering and death were commonplace in the camps, and 30,000 civilians died during the war.

'scorched earth' policy

This is a battle tactic in which an army burns crops and property in an area to deny the enemy food and shelter.



Figure 1.6 Boers in a concentration camp during the Second Boer War

As a result of this, British politicians – and public opinion in general – grew divided over whether Britain should continue its imperialist policies. Many people believed that Wilhelm II's telegram to Kruger was a clear sign that Germany would support the Boers in the case of future conflict with Britain. Feeling both isolated and vulnerable, Britain began seeking allies elsewhere in the world, starting with Japan (see page 26).

The effects of the 'scramble for Africa'

The European colonisers claimed to have brought benefits to the African people, and there is some truth to these claims:

- They developed states with efficient systems of administration and government.
- They provided education for the native inhabitants.
- They created new systems of transport and communications – building roads and railways, and running telegraph wires across the continent.
- They engineered water and sanitation systems, and provided medical care and hospitals.
- They introduced more efficient methods of farming and new, more productive crops such as maize, pear, cassava, cotton, sisal and plantain.

However, this was not the whole story. As a result of European colonisation, Africa was randomly partitioned according to the needs and wishes of the colonisers, who took no account of existing boundaries. With little knowledge of the local geography, no understanding of the tribal or ethnic groupings of the local people, and a steadfast refusal to take into account the opinions of local chieftains, borders were drawn arbitrarily.



We have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man's feet have ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.

British prime minister Lord Salisbury, in a speech given in 1890.

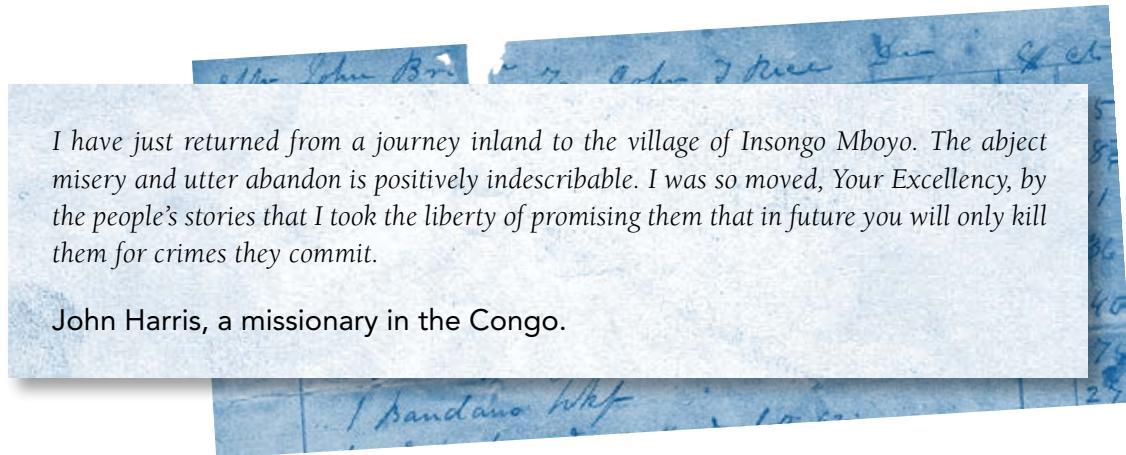
In many of its African possessions, such as northern Nigeria, Britain adopted a form of indirect control and governed through local chieftains. However, other European nations preferred more direct rule. In both cases, government was based on a clear administrative hierarchy, with Europeans at the top and Africans below. The explorer Henry Morton Stanley said of the Africans: 'In order to rule them and keep one's life amongst them, it is necessary to regard them as children.' Such statements reflect the European view that Africans were inferior to them. Traditional African cultures were undermined as the Europeans introduced Western-style education, clothes, buildings and religion. In much the same way, the introduction of money completely changed the nature of the African economy.

No longer able to farm their former land, Africans had little choice but to take jobs as cheap labour on public works such as building roads and railways. In addition, after colonisation there was large-scale exploitation of African resources. Raw materials were mined to support European industrial expansion, preventing Africa from developing industries of its own. European businessmen enhanced their own wealth by investing in African copper, gold, diamonds, ivory and cash crops such as cotton and coffee.

Note:

There are several examples of the division of ethnic groupings as a result of African colonisation. Three of the most significant were: the Maasai people, who were split between the new countries of Kenya (62%) and Tanzania (38%); the Anyi people, who were divided between Ghana (58%) and the Ivory Coast (42%); and the Chewa people, who found themselves in three separate countries after the new boundaries were drawn – Mozambique (50%), Malawi (34%) and Zimbabwe (16%).

At times, this exploitation reached alarming levels of inhumanity. For example, Leopold II of Belgium (see page 9) amassed a huge fortune from rubber plantations in the Congo basin. He used forced labour – effectively a form of slavery, which had been expressly outlawed by the Treaty of Berlin (see page 13). Workers who failed to meet their quotas were beaten, mutilated or killed. The missionary John Harris was so shocked by what he saw in the Congo that he wrote to Leopold's representative in the area.



African resistance to European rule sometimes led to harsh retribution. Many African chieftains were killed or sent into exile for defying attempts by Europeans to take over their land. Chief Mkwawa of the Hehe, for example, was beheaded for opposing German colonial rule in Tanganyika. Between 1904 and 1907, the Herero and Nama peoples rebelled against German rule in German South-West Africa. The Germans drove them out into the Kalahari Desert and left them there. Most of them died of hunger or thirst, and the allegation that German soldiers poisoned desert wells has led to charges of **genocide**.

genocide

The deliberate and systematic destruction of an ethnic, racial, religious or national group. In 1985, the

United Nations labelled the German action against the Herero and Nama peoples as genocide.

The effects of the 'scramble' on international relations

As shown by the Treaty of Berlin, European nations had gone to some lengths to ensure that the rush for land in Africa did not lead to war between them. Nevertheless, this could not disguise the fact that they remained rivals, competing for raw materials, markets, trade and territory. Most notably, the Fashoda Incident (see page 13) led to widespread outrage in both France and Britain, with each country accusing the other of unjustified aggression. Both nations began the process of mobilising their fleets in preparation for war before a compromise was finally reached. Tensions between European nations intensified when Germany entered the race for African possessions. Britain, in particular, saw German acquisitions in Africa as a threat to its own strategic and commercial interests.

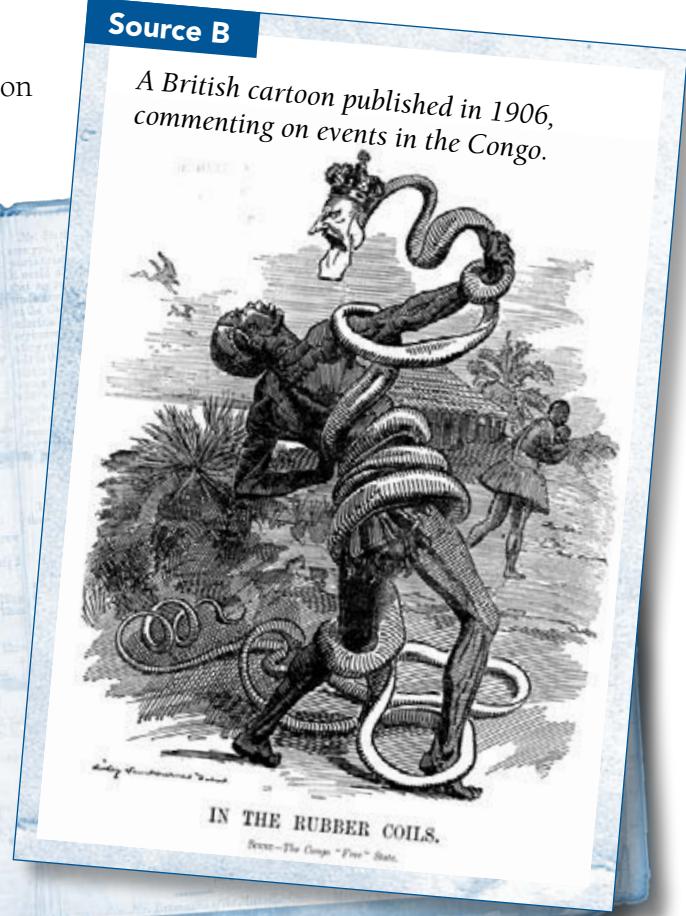
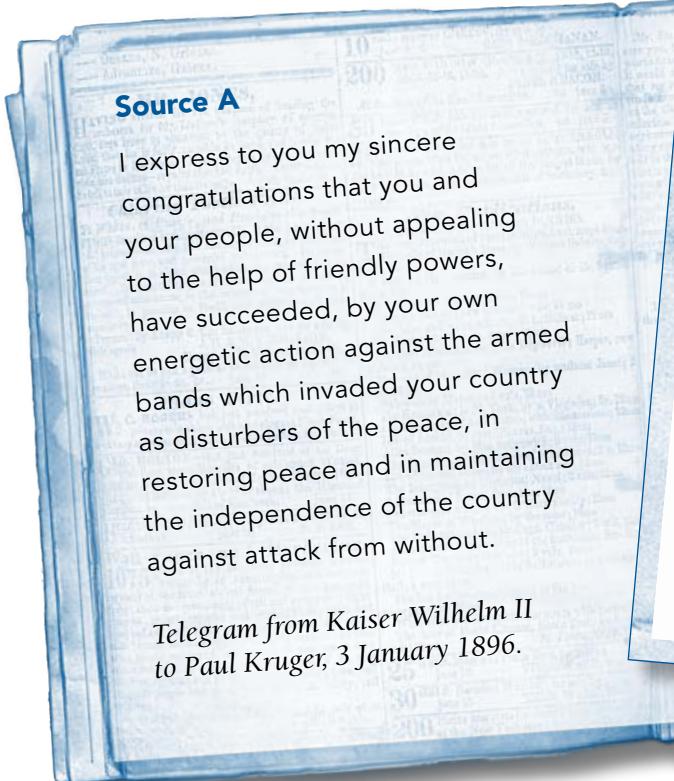
The late 19th century was a period of intense **nationalism**. European governments were determined to protect their own rights and interests. Moreover, public opinion demanded that they did so. National pride was at stake and, increasingly, countries were prepared to adopt aggressive foreign policies to preserve this pride. In this sense the 'scramble for Africa' instigated an arms race, as countries began to enhance their military capabilities in order to defend their empires.

nationalism

The belief that one's own country is superior to other countries, and that its needs and interests should take priority over those of other nations.

Questions

- 1 Why did European nations take part in a 'scramble for Africa' in the period from 1871 to 1900?
- 2 'The Industrial Revolution in Europe was the main reason for the "scramble for Africa" between 1871 and 1900.' How far do you agree?
- 3 What were the aims of the Treaty of Berlin (1885)?
- 4 What were the implications of the Boer Wars for British foreign policy?
- 5 Source A below is the telegram that German Kaiser Wilhelm II sent to the Boer leader Paul Kruger in 1896. Why did this telegram cause such anger in Britain?
- 6 To what extent did the African people benefit from the 'scramble for Africa'?
- 7 Look at Source B opposite, which shows a cartoon published in 1906. What point was the artist trying to make?



The emergence of the USA as a world power

The USA before 1871

In 1871, events in Africa, Asia and the associated rivalries between the European powers were of little concern to the USA. Preoccupied with domestic issues – such as increasing US territory through westward expansion on the North American continent, as well as the American Civil War (1861–65) – people in the USA had little interest in wider international affairs. Throughout the 19th century, the USA followed a policy of **isolationism** and looked inwards, seeking to develop in its own way without outside interference or involvement in foreign issues.

However, the USA could not completely ignore events in the wider world. There was a risk that ambitious European nations would renew their interest in gaining colonies in the New World: North and South America. By the early 19th century, virtually all the Latin American colonies of the once-great Spanish and Portuguese empires had gained independence. Only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained under Spanish rule. Concerns that Spain would try to win back control of its former possessions in South America – and that this would encourage other European powers to extend their empires into the Americas – led the USA to approve the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. This stated that the USA would not interfere in European affairs, and that any attempt by European powers to intervene in the Americas would be viewed by the USA as an act of aggression, and would be dealt with accordingly.

Note:

Lacking a credible navy and army, in reality the USA was in no position to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. However, Britain was willing to use its navy to ensure that no European country sought new possessions in the Americas. This offer was made largely to protect British trading interests, which would have been threatened if South American states had become colonies of Britain's European rivals.

Economic growth and the need for trade

Throughout the last 30 years of the 19th century, the USA emerged as an increasingly influential world power. During this time, the country experienced enormous industrial growth, made possible by rich supplies of raw materials (coal, iron ore and oil) and the expansion of railways. A rapidly

increasing population, enhanced by large-scale immigration, provided both a workforce and a market. Import duties protected US products from foreign competition, and by the end of the century the USA was outstripping its main European rivals in the production of coal, pig iron, steel and cotton (see Table 1.1).

	USA	Closest rival
Coal output (tonnes)	238 million	199 million (Britain)
Value of exports (£)	311 million	390 million (Britain)
Pig iron (tonnes)	14.5 million	7.3 million (Britain)
Steel (tonnes)	12 million	5.4 million (Germany)
Railways (km)	294,500	45,000 (Germany)
Cotton production (bales)	10.6 million	3 million (India)
Wheat (bushels)	638 million	552 million (Russia)

Table 1.1 Industrial output of the USA and its main European rivals, 1900.
(Adapted from Nichol, J. and Lang, S. *Work Out Modern World History*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1990.)

A sudden economic downturn in 1893 alerted industrialists to the dangers of over-reliance on the domestic market, and they argued that the remedy was to sell more goods abroad. Since European nations practised **protectionism** throughout their empires, access to the Chinese market was increasingly viewed as vital for the USA's future prosperity. This would require investment in a strong navy to protect merchant ships. It would also require the acquisition of overseas bases to protect US interests. While many politicians in the USA supported this expansionist view, some argued that maintaining the traditional policy of isolationism, and avoiding foreign entanglements and responsibilities, was the best way to protect US interests.

In many ways, the debate was settled by events in Cuba, where Spain was struggling to maintain control of its long-standing possession in a war against Cuban independence fighters. The USA remained neutral in the conflict until an explosion aboard the US battleship *Maine* in Havana harbour. Although the US government seemed to think that this was an accident, the American press believed that Spain was responsible, and it was heavily critical of the government's weak response to the incident.

protectionism

The policy of placing high tariffs (taxes) on imports in order to protect domestic industries from foreign competition. Protectionism is the opposite of free trade.

To five hundred thousand Cubans starved or otherwise murdered have been added an American battleship and three hundred American sailors lost as the direct result of the weak policy of our government toward Spain. If we had stopped the war in Cuba when duty and policy alike urged us to do, the *Maine* would have been afloat today, and three hundred homes, now desolate, would have been unscathed.

It was an accident, they say. Perhaps it was, but accident or not, it would never have happened if there had been peace in Cuba, as there would have been if we had done our duty. And it was an accident of a remarkably convenient kind for Spain. Two days ago we had five battleships in the Atlantic. Today we have four. A few more such accidents will leave us at the mercy of a Spanish fleet.

An extract from an article published in the *New York Journal*, 17 February 1898.

Key figure

Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919)

Roosevelt became president of the USA when William McKinley was assassinated in 1901, and was elected by a landslide in the 1904 presidential election. He believed that the USA should play a major role in world affairs, and he supported the move towards US imperialism. Roosevelt organised the USA's ownership of the Panama Canal and negotiated the Treaty of Portsmouth at the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.



Such reports did much to turn public opinion in favour of battle with Spain, and in April 1898 the US government formally declared war. Victory in the Spanish–American War left the USA in effective control of a nominally independent Cuba. In addition, the USA gained other former Spanish possessions including the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam. Almost immediately the Filipinos rebelled, and in order to retain control the USA was forced to fight a far longer and more costly war (1899–1902) than the one against Spain. Anti-imperialists, such as the Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, protested against the acquisition of foreign territories, arguing that it was a betrayal of the USA's isolationist traditions. However, Bryan's defeat to the sitting president, William McKinley, in the 1900 presidential elections suggests that the majority of the US public supported the imperialist lobby.

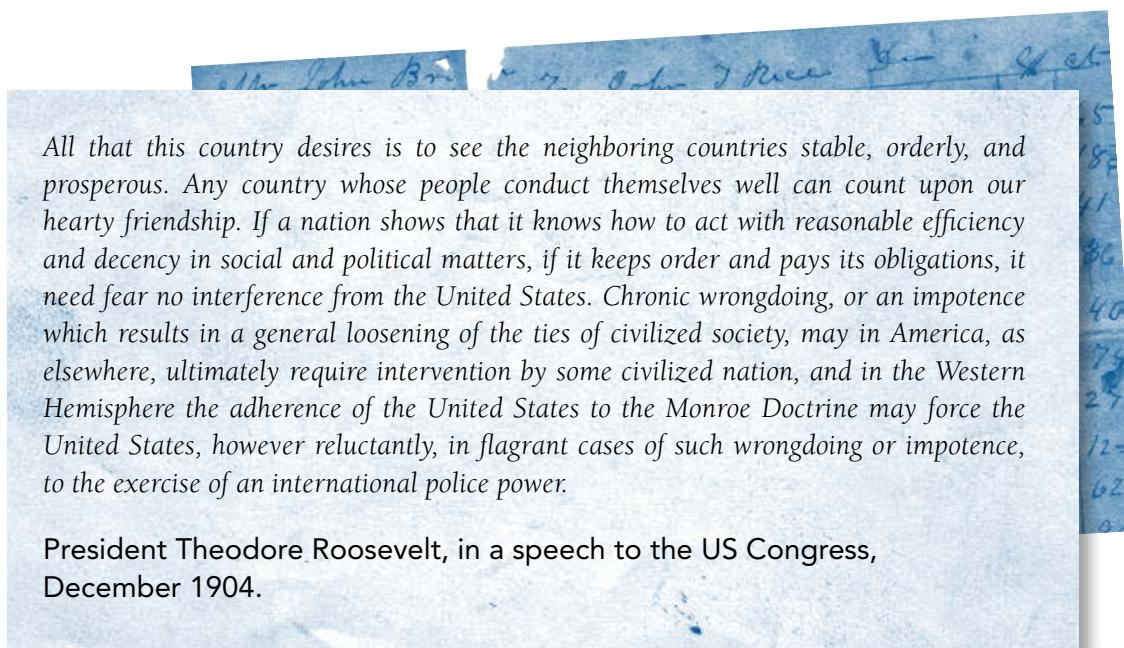
The development of the USA as a world power

Less than a year into his second term, McKinley was assassinated and his vice-president **Theodore Roosevelt** was sworn in. Roosevelt fully supported the new imperialistic direction of US foreign policy. Believing that it was 'incumbent on all civilized and orderly powers to insist on the proper policing of the world', he followed policies designed to extend his country's influence globally:

- He ensured that the USA gained control of the building and operation of the Panama Canal (which opened in 1914). This allowed ships to pass between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans without the long and hazardous voyage around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. In both strategic and commercial terms, this added to the USA's global influence.
- He guaranteed that Cuba would effectively remain under US control by drawing up the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution (1903). Under its terms, the USA was able to dictate Cuba's foreign policy and all its commercial activities. The USA was also granted rights over key land on the island, including the naval base at Guantanamo Bay.
- The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, introduced in 1904, stated that the USA would intervene if any Caribbean state was threatened by internal or external factors.

Note:

The Platt Amendment and the Roosevelt Corollary combined to strengthen the USA's influence in the Caribbean significantly. The Corollary gave the USA the right to intervene in the region whenever it considered its interests (particularly economic) to be at risk, and US influence in Cuba especially remained strong well into the 20th century. The Amendment remained in force until 1934.



The USA in 1914

The USA's attempts to enhance its power-base in the Pacific region and, in particular, to gain trading rights in China, were less successful. Here it met stern opposition from well-established imperial nations such as Britain, Germany, France and Russia, as well as from the newly emerging power of Japan. Nevertheless, by 1914 the USA had emerged as a prosperous and strong regional power, with a growing influence over world financial markets and a new-found commitment to its own form of imperialistic expansion.

Questions

- 1 Why did the USA move away from its traditional isolationist foreign policy in the period 1871–1914?
- 2 How far was President Theodore Roosevelt responsible for the USA's move towards a more expansionist foreign policy?
- 3 Look at the cartoon in Source A opposite. What does it suggest about the emergence of the USA as a world power by the time it was published in 1906?

Source A

A cartoon published in the American magazine Puck in 1906.



The emergence of Japan as a world power

Japan before 1871

bartering

The trading of goods without the use of money; exchanging one thing in payment for another.

In the first half of the 19th century, Japan was still an underdeveloped country with an almost medieval social structure. It had a rigid class system, with the warlike Samurai and their leader, the shogun, holding supreme power. Farming, transport and industry had changed little for centuries, and the economy was still largely based on **bartering** rather than money. Even taxes were paid in rice.

The Japanese did not welcome foreigners, and they successfully resisted pressure to establish trading rights with other nations. Russia (1804), Britain (1842) and the USA (1853) all tried to open up trade with Japan – and all failed. The USA in particular was desperate to find new markets for its rapidly expanding industrial output. The American whaling fleet also needed access to Japanese ports in order to take on vital supplies, especially coal. Confronted with obstinate resistance, the Americans finally sent a fleet of warships in 1854. Samurai swords were no match for modern guns, and the Japanese had no alternative but to open up their borders to trade with the West.

This posed an enormous risk to Japan. With army backing, European merchants had already seized control of large areas of China, imposing their own laws and destroying local culture. Fearing that their country would similarly be divided up between competing foreign powers, in 1867 the Japanese people demanded the restoration of an emperor as head of government, instead of the military shogun. Emperor Mutsuhito and his Meiji government set about modernising Japan in order to resist the imperial powers. By 1869, they had established a centralised administration, uniting all the previously independent regions of Japan under one government.

Rapid modernisation and military development

private enterprise

Businesses owned and managed by individuals, free from government restrictions.

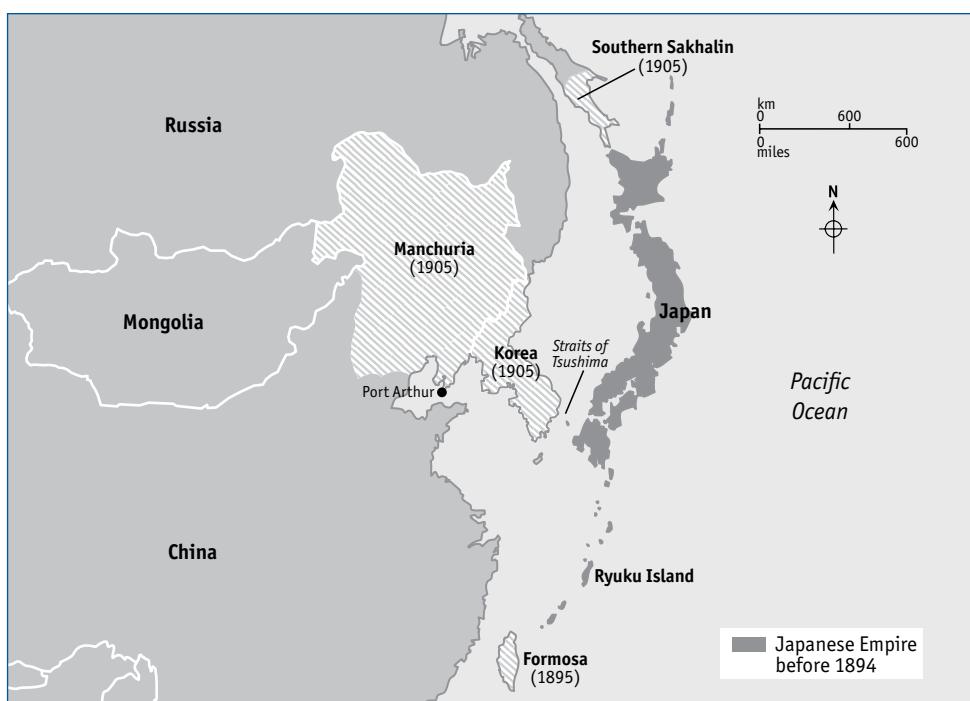
The Japanese realised that to maintain their independence they would have to develop their own military capabilities. This could not be achieved without rapid modernisation and industrialisation. The Japanese modelled their education system, form of government, army, navy and industry on those of the foreign nations whose presence they most feared. Mines, iron foundries, factories and shipyards were quickly developed. Some of these were set up by the government and then handed over to **private enterprise**.

Others were built by former Samurai warriors, such as Iwasaki Yataro, who founded the Mitsubishi shipyards. Railways and telegraph lines were laid to support industrial development and to assist the government with its plans to unify the country. To cover the costs of this swift modernisation, Japan concentrated on promoting its export trade, especially in textiles.

Increasing prosperity assisted the development of Japan's military strength. One-third of the national budget was spent on the army and navy. Military service became compulsory for all adult males and, by 1894, Japan possessed 28 modern warships. In schools, children were taught to be patriotic and to show total obedience to the emperor. The old Shinto religion, which claimed that the emperor was descended from a god, was revived for the same reason.

Modernisation helped Japan maintain its independence, and in a remarkably short period of time it developed from being a country threatened by the imperialistic ambitions of other nations to one capable of becoming an imperial power in its own right.

Figure 1.7 A map showing Japanese expansion 1894–1905



The ongoing disintegration of the Chinese Empire (see page 105) provided the opportunity for Japan to test its new military strength. Disputes over which country should control Korea led to a short war in 1894. The new, modern Japanese army quickly overran Korea, Manchuria and parts of China itself. When the Chinese capital Peking came under threat, China surrendered. By the terms of the Shimonoseki Treaty (1895), Japan gained Formosa and Port Arthur. Korea was declared independent of Chinese influence.

Note:

Russia was the main instigator of the agreement known as the Triple Intervention. France supported Russia in the hope of maintaining their alliance, to avoid becoming diplomatically isolated in Europe. Germany became involved in exchange for Russian support for its own colonial ambitions elsewhere in the world.

Note:

By the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902), Britain and Japan agreed to remain neutral if either country was involved in war. Britain recognised Japan's rights in Korea. Japan agreed to use its fleet to help protect British interests in the Far East. The treaty marked the end of Britain's isolationism. It was renewed and extended in 1905 and 1911.

Figure 1.8 A British cartoon from 1905 commenting on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance



However, Japan was not the only nation with an interest in China. France, Russia and Germany resented Japan's intrusion into an area where they each had vested interests. Russia wanted control of Port Arthur, since it would provide a warm-water (ice-free) port from which to expand its influence in the Far East. The Triple Intervention of these three powerful European nations forced Japan to hand over control of Port Arthur to Russia. This caused considerable resentment in Japan, which decided to build more warships and wait for the opportunity to gain revenge against the Russians.

The Russo-Japanese War 1904–05

Russian expansion in the Far East continued. In 1900, for example, Russia occupied the whole of Manchuria. This caused alarm in Britain, which feared that its own Far Eastern interests were under threat. This was one of the reasons why Britain signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. The treaty was a major achievement for Japan. It was the first time that the country had been recognised as an equal by one of the major European powers, and the agreement clearly established Japan's emergence onto the global stage. In Britain, too, the alliance was greeted favourably.

Japan now felt strong enough to seek a settlement with Russia. The Japanese were prepared to recognise Russian rights in Manchuria in exchange for Japanese rights in Korea. Convinced of their military superiority, the Russians refused to negotiate with the Japanese and, instead, invaded Korea. The Japanese response was rapid, dramatic and devastating, and brought Japan into a war with one of the world's great powers.

On 9 February 1904, Japanese warships entered Port Arthur, where a number of Russian ships were docked, totally unprepared for battle. Two Russian battleships and a cruiser were destroyed by Japanese torpedoes. The Russian fleet was widely dispersed around the globe and Russian soldiers were forced to endure a lengthy overland trip across Asia to reach Port Arthur and take up arms against the Japanese. Under such circumstances, Japan clearly had the advantage. It quickly established control over the local seas, which allowed it to move troops around without resistance. Once Port Arthur was taken the Japanese moved into Manchuria, forcing the Russian troops to retreat to Mukden. After a three-month siege involving over 1 million soldiers on both sides – and at the height of a bitter winter – Mukden fell to the Japanese.

Russia's last hope lay with its fleet in the Baltic Sea, but the ships' journey to the Far East was long, tortuous and eventful. While steaming through the North Sea, the Russian ships mistook some British fishing boats for warships, and fired on them. The British were outraged and for a time the Russian fleet was pursued by a vastly superior fleet of British ships. As Britain was allied to Japan, it seemed likely that the rival fleets would engage in battle. While diplomatic negotiations succeeded in preventing this, Britain denied the Russian fleet access to the Suez Canal, forcing it to take the far longer route around Africa. Laden down with coal to fuel the steam engines, the Russian ships made slow progress and did not arrive in the Straits of Tsushima between Korea and Japan until May 1905.

The battle began on 27 May, as Russian and Japanese ships finally faced each other in the straits. The slow-moving and outdated Russian vessels could not compete with Japan's modern warships, which were under the command of Admiral Togo Heihachiro. By the following day, Japan had defeated the Russian navy. Facing humiliation abroad and revolution at home, the Russian tsar, Nicholas II, signed the Treaty of Portsmouth with Japan. Russian influence in Manchuria was effectively ended, and Japan's rights over Korea were formally recognised.

In the space of less than 50 years, Japan had developed into a modern, industrial country with the military capacity to defeat a major European power. Japan entered the 20th century as an imperial nation, perceived as the champion of Asia against the Western powers. Those powers, keen to protect and extend their own trading activities in the Far East, grew increasingly concerned by Japanese expansion within the region. This concern was heightened by Japan's actions during the First World War (see page 37).

Questions

- 1 To what extent had Japan become a major world power by 1905?
- 2 Explain why Japan was able to defeat one of the major European powers in the Russo-Japanese War.
- 3 Source A opposite is a French illustration from 1904. It shows other countries looking on while the champion of Europe (Russia) takes on the champion of Asia (Japan). What can historians learn from this illustration?

Note:

The Treaty of Portsmouth was signed on 5 September 1905, following negotiations at Portsmouth Naval Base in New Hampshire, USA. It was a sign of the USA's growing importance in international affairs that President Roosevelt played a significant role in bringing Japan and Russia to the negotiating table.

Source A

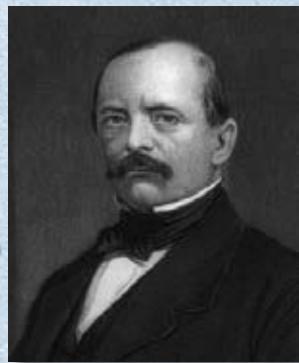
A cartoon published in the French magazine Petit Parisien in 1904.



Key figure

Otto von Bismarck (1815–98)

Bismarck became prime minister of Prussia in 1862. He led the state during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, and afterwards was appointed as the first chancellor of the new united German Empire, a position he held until 1890.



The alliance system in Europe

The unification of Germany

The new German Reich (empire) was established on 18 January 1871, at the Palace of Versailles in France. The separate kingdoms of the North German Confederation and the South German States were unified as a single country – Germany. The man primarily responsible for this was **Otto von Bismarck**.

By the middle of the 19th century Austria controlled many of the states in southern Germany, but in 1866 Bismarck's Prussian troops defeated Austria and destroyed its position as the leading German-speaking power in Europe. In 1867, Austria formed a monarchic union with the Kingdom of Hungary, but its ruling family, the Habsburgs, presided over a disjointed and multinational empire. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 enabled Bismarck to complete his plans to unify Germany, leaving France defeated and bitter. By the terms of the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871), Germany took the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and forced France to pay a vast sum of money in war compensation. Resentment at the loss of its land, and fear of this powerful new German nation, influenced French foreign policy for many years to come.

Figure 1.9 Two maps showing Europe before (left) and after (right) the unification of Germany in 1871



The unification of Germany in 1871 heralded a period of relative stability in relations between the major European powers of Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. None of these countries wanted war with one another and so, as we have seen, their rivalries were played out not in Europe but in the distant lands of Africa and Asia.

Bismarck's policies played a significant part in maintaining this stability within Europe. Although Germany was now the dominant power on the continent – both economically and militarily – Bismarck understood that it remained vulnerable. Situated as it was at the heart of Europe, Germany was open to attack from three sides: from France to the west, from Russia to the east and from Austria-Hungary to the south. The chancellor's main concern was to isolate potential enemies, especially France, which he knew would be looking for revenge after its costly defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Bismarck therefore set out to establish a series of friendly agreements with other European countries, and largely kept Germany out of the race for overseas possessions in an effort to avoid conflict with other potential rivals such as Britain.

Bismarck's alliances

Bismarck's attempts to ensure German security led to a series of alliances.

The Three Emperors' League (*Dreikaiserbund*) 1873

In 1873, Bismarck negotiated an agreement between Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria-Hungary and Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany. In addition to isolating France, Bismarck hoped that regular meetings between the three monarchs would help to reduce disputes between Austria-Hungary and Russia over the Balkans. The Three Emperors' League was largely unsuccessful, mainly because of ongoing disputes between Germany's two allies. By 1879, the league had effectively collapsed.

The Dual Alliance 1879

This was a defensive alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary. Each country agreed to come to the other's aid in the event of an attack by Russia. Germany and Austria-Hungary also agreed to remain neutral if either was attacked by another country, such as France.

The Triple Alliance 1882

This was, in effect, an extension of the Dual Alliance. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy agreed to offer each other mutual support in the event of an attack by any of the other great powers. Italy's reasons for joining the alliance were partly to preserve its own national security, but also because it was angry at France for seizing Tunisia the previous year. Italy had harboured its own aspirations for taking control of this area.

Note:

Russia and Austria-Hungary had rival claims to parts of the Balkans, an area of southern Europe. Austria-Hungary argued that the region was part of the Habsburg Empire. Russia was keen to gain access to a warm-water port on the Black Sea.

The Reinsurance Treaty 1887

Despite the existence of the Triple Alliance, Bismarck's plan to isolate France had not been effective. Austria-Hungary and Italy were traditional enemies, and neither could boast a strong army to come to Germany's aid in the event of a French attack. More importantly, the loss of an effective alliance with Russia meant that Germany remained vulnerable to attack from both west and east if France and Russia should form an alliance of their own. In an effort to avoid this possibility, Bismarck signed the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in 1887. This guaranteed German and Russian neutrality in any war, as long as Germany did not attack France, or Russia attack Austria-Hungary.

All these alliances, so carefully negotiated by Bismarck, were entirely defensive in character and were intended to preserve peace. However, they were formed by treaties whose terms were secret, and this naturally gave rise to concerns amongst the powers not involved in the negotiations. These suspicions grew when Germany began to adopt a more aggressive approach to foreign affairs.

Key figure

Wilhelm II (1859–1941)

Wilhelm became Kaiser of Germany in 1888, and almost immediately came into conflict with his chancellor Bismarck. Boastful and impetuous, Wilhelm was determined to increase German power, despite Bismarck's warnings that this would lead to the country's downfall. Wilhelm's popularity dwindled in the early years of the 20th century, and he abdicated in 1918, towards the end of the First World War.



Uniting against Germany

In 1890, the German Kaiser, **Wilhelm II**, dismissed Bismarck as chancellor and embarked on a less cautious approach to foreign policy. This included actively seeking overseas possessions and developing the German navy. These actions had the effect of pushing France, Russia and Britain closer together.

The Franco-Russian Alliance 1894

When Wilhelm II allowed the Reinsurance Treaty to lapse in 1890, Russia felt threatened. Despite the political differences between France and Russia (France was a republic, while Russia was an absolute monarchy in which the tsar exercised total control), the two countries had enjoyed steadily improving relations. From 1888, France – desperate to avoid being isolated, and fearing Germany's increasing power – provided Russia with cheap loans to finance improvements in its military capabilities. Both countries were afraid of what might result from the Triple Alliance (see page 29) so they began negotiations for an alliance of their own. Like the Triple Alliance, the resulting agreement (the Franco-Russian Alliance) was a defensive one. It stated that if either country was attacked, the other would come to its aid. It was agreed that the Franco-Russian Alliance would remain in place as long as the Triple Alliance existed.

Note:

Under the direction of naval chief Admiral Tirpitz, Germany rapidly expanded its naval capabilities. In 1900, a Navy Law ordered the building of 41 battleships and 60 cruisers. Such activity naturally concerned other European nations, particularly Britain, whose status as the most powerful naval nation in the world had been unchallenged for centuries.

German naval development

Britain remained largely uninvolved in European affairs during the last quarter of the 19th century. Peace on the continent had enabled Britain to increase its overseas possessions without serious challenge. As an island protected by its undisputed naval supremacy, Britain had adopted a policy of ‘splendid isolation’, by which it stayed out of European politics and concentrated on the expansion of its own empire. However, Germany’s naval programme caused panic in Britain. Germany had few overseas possessions to protect and could concentrate its naval forces in the North Sea. In contrast, the British navy was dispersed around the globe to protect its empire. In response to German naval development, therefore, Britain embarked on its own building programme (including the launch of the super-battleship *Dreadnought* in 1906). Germany responded in kind, and a naval arms race developed that only increased the tension between the two countries.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1902

Already concerned by the reaction of the European powers to its involvement in the Boer Wars (see page 14), the threat posed by German naval development led Britain to depart from its isolationist policies and look towards forming alliances with other countries. The first example of this was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. This offered some protection to British possessions in the Far East in the event of war. However, far more surprising – certainly to the Germans – was Britain’s attempts to gain increased co-operation with its traditional enemy, France.

The Entente Cordiale 1904

Following diplomatic talks between British and French officials in 1903, King Edward VII’s successful visit to France in 1904 led to the Entente Cordiale. This was a series of agreements designed to settle a number of disputes that had long soured relations between the two countries. For example, France finally recognised British control of Egypt in exchange for Britain’s recognition of French control in Morocco. The Entente Cordiale provided France with additional security against the threat from Germany and its Triple Alliance cohorts. For Britain, concerned by the massive growth in Germany’s military capabilities, it offered an end to European isolation.

The Anglo-Russian Entente 1907

Just like France and Britain, Russia had become increasingly fearful of Germany’s intentions, and regarded the Triple Alliance as a major threat to its security. Russia was deeply concerned that Austria-Hungary and Germany intended to take over large parts of the Balkans, threatening Russian access through the Dardanelles – a vital trade route that accounted for 40% of Russian exports.

Note:

The Dardanelles was a strait between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

With most of Russia’s own ports iced up for large parts of the year, access through the Dardanelles was essential for Russian trade.

Russia was a vast country, and potentially had the largest army of all the major European powers. However, it was economically underdeveloped and its defeat in the Russo–Japanese War (see pages 26–27) highlighted major deficiencies in an army hindered by ineffective leadership and obsolete equipment. For Britain, Russia's defeat suggested that the country was no longer a serious challenger to its own imperial ambitions in the Far East. Germany was now a much bigger threat. In 1907, therefore, an Anglo–Russian Entente was agreed.

The Triple Entente 1907

The Anglo–Russian Entente effectively tied France, Britain and Russia together in a series of friendly alliances by which the three countries agreed to support each other in the event of any of them being attacked. This became known as the Triple Entente.

By 1907, therefore, Europe was divided into two opposing camps – the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Although both had been created for defensive purposes, each side was deeply suspicious of the aims and motives of the other. As this mistrust grew, the arms race became considerably more sinister.

Figure 1.10 A map of Europe in 1914 showing the two rival alliances: the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente



The road to war

Kaiser Wilhelm II was convinced that the Triple Entente was a conspiracy to encircle and subsequently attack Germany. In 1913, fearful of a combined French and Russian invasion, Germany began increasing its standing army. Austria-Hungary did the same. The French interpreted this as the start of preparations to attack France itself, and in response extended their compulsory military service from two to three years. They also increased expenditure on weapons. With financial assistance from France, Russia began rebuilding its armed forces and developing better transport systems to help with more rapid mobilisation in the event of war. By 1910, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany had all developed offensive plans to be deployed if and when war broke out. Indeed, the German plan had been developed by the military strategist Alfred von Schlieffen as early as 1904.

Note:

Germany's concern had always been the prospect of war on two fronts: against France in the west and Russia in the east. The Schlieffen Plan was based on the assumption that, because of its vast size, Russia would take longer to mobilise – and longer to defeat in a war – than France. The plan therefore aimed to defeat France quickly by a surprise attack through neutral Belgium, freeing the Germans to concentrate on war against Russia in the east.

The period from 1907 to 1914 witnessed an uneasy peace in Europe. In many ways, the alliance system seemed to be serving the purpose for which it had originally been intended: preventing relatively minor incidents escalating into full-scale war. In 1911, for example, when France sent troops to put down a rebellion in Morocco, Germany sent a gunboat in protest – a clear threat of war. Britain's announcement that it would support France over this issue made the Germans back down. In truth, Britain was

acting out of self-interest rather than a duty to enforce its formal commitments to France; gaining control of a Moroccan port would have provided the German navy with a base from which to threaten British trade routes.

It was the vested interests of Austria-Hungary and Russia that finally ended the fragile peace. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a mixture of many different nationalities and ethnic groups, including Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Serbs, Ruthenians, Romanians, Croats, Slovaks, Italians and Slovenes (see map on page 34). Many of these groups had been demanding independence from the empire for some years, but Serbia posed the biggest threat to Austro-Hungarian unity. Serbian **nationalists** increasingly claimed that those parts of the Habsburg lands that contained a predominantly Serb population should become part of a Greater Serbia. If Austria-Hungary gave in to such demands it would undoubtedly lead to the spread of nationalism elsewhere within the empire, with devastating results.

nationalists

People with a common bond such as nationality, culture or language, who want the right to govern themselves rather than being ruled by another country or culture.

It was therefore in Austria-Hungary's interests to remove this problem by going to war with Serbia. The problem was how Russia would react to this move. The Russians would see a declaration of war as an attempt by Austria-Hungary to extend its empire in the area. Desperate to retain its warm-water access from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles, Russia would undoubtedly support Serbia. In an attempt to prevent the problem escalating into a full-scale war, both Britain and Germany used their influence to restrain Austria-Hungary. The willingness of the British government to co-operate with Germany over this issue led the Germans to believe that Britain could be detached from its alliance with France and Russia. Even as late as 1913, Germany was urging Austria-Hungary not to go to war with Serbia.

Figure 1.11 A map showing the main nationalities and ethnic groups in the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the First World War



The situation reached a critical point in June 1914, when a Serbian nationalist assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo. Austria-Hungary resolved to crush Serbia once and for all, and Germany now encouraged this course of action. It seemed that the very system of alliances that had been established to provide peace and security now made a full-scale war inevitable.

In July 1914, Austria-Hungary issued Serbia with a series of demands. Believing that these threatened its independence, Serbia refused to accept all of them. Consequently, on 28 July, Austria-Hungary declared war on the Balkan nation. The following day Russia began mobilising its forces, and shortly afterwards declared war in defence of Serbia and to protect its own interests in the region. Germany issued an ultimatum to Russia – demobilise or face war with Germany as well. Russia refused to back down.

Germany thus declared war on Russia and – due to the necessities outlined by the Schlieffen Plan (see page 33) – on France, too. When German troops entered Belgium on their way to attack France, Britain honoured its 1839 commitment to defend Belgian neutrality, and declared war on Germany.

In the capitals of Europe, the outbreak of the First World War was greeted almost with a sense of relief. Tensions had been simmering for years, and by this point most nations both expected war and had prepared for it. The long period of uncertainty was finally over. In 1914, however, few could have predicted that this would be a war unlike any the world had seen before. Certainly no one could have foreseen the impact it would have on international relations for the remainder of the 20th century.

A European conflict becomes a world war

At the start, it was widely assumed that the war would be a fast-moving affair involving a series of battles between rival cavalry units. Most people believed it would be ‘over by Christmas’. Within a few months, however, it became clear that this outlook was vastly optimistic. The conflict rapidly became a **war of attrition**, in which soldiers of all nationalities found themselves trapped in trenches, risking their lives in order to gain a few metres of land. Modern weaponry had rendered traditional methods of warfare obsolete. Ultimately, the First World War lasted 52 months and caused the death of around 20 million people, many of them civilians.

Initially, the war was a purely European affair involving the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria against the Allied Powers of Britain, France and Russia. Although Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, when the war broke out it decided to remain neutral, arguing that its alliance with Germany was defensive and that Austria-Hungary’s aggression released Italy from any obligation to join the Central Powers. In April 1915, won over by promises from Britain and France that it would gain possession of large areas of territory in the Tyrol and on the Adriatic Sea (Dalmatia and Istria), Italy entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers.

war of attrition

A conflict in which each side tries to wear down and slowly destroy its enemy by a process of constant attacks and steady killing.

Note:

Britain and France hoped that Italy would be in a position to put increased pressure on the Central Powers. In addition to fighting on both the Western and Eastern fronts, Italy’s support for the Allies meant that the Central Powers would now be threatened from the south, too.

What began as a conflict between the major European powers soon began to involve people from far-flung regions of the world, as European nations deployed soldiers from their distant colonies. The British army, for example, included men from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

The USA enters the war

To begin with, the USA saw no reason to become involved in a war raging thousands of miles away. Its isolationist tradition meant that Americans were unwilling to interfere in European affairs. By 1917, however, the situation had changed.

The USA's attempts to maintain its trading links with Europe were increasingly undermined by German U-boats (submarines). Convinced that the USA was supplying Britain and its allies with weapons, Germany regularly attacked US ships crossing the Atlantic. At first, the Germans would issue warnings to the ships so that passengers could be evacuated before the attack began. In 1915, however, the *Lusitania* was sunk without warning, killing more than 120 Americans. In 1916, another American ship, the *Sussex*, suffered the same fate. There was outrage across the USA, and President Woodrow Wilson issued a stark warning to Germany.

Unless the Imperial Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and freight-carrying vessels, the Government of the United States can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the German Empire altogether.

President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech to the US Congress, 19 April 1916.

Note:

Some historians believe that the USA had never really been neutral, and had in fact been supporting the Allied cause by providing weapons and supplies since war broke out in 1914.

In addition, the USA was concerned by intelligence it received that Germany was trying to provoke Mexico and Japan into declaring war against the USA. This seemed to be an attempt by Germany to keep the Americans out of the war in Europe. On 6 April 1917, with no sign of the U-boat campaign ceasing, the USA declared war on Germany. President Wilson described this as 'an act of high principle and idealism ... a crusade to make the world safe for democracy'.

Japan enters the war

Honouring its alliance with Britain, Japan declared war on Germany in 1914. Its primary role was to secure the sea lanes of the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean against the German navy. While the Western powers were fully occupied fighting the war in Europe, Japan took advantage of their absence from the Far East in a number of ways:

- Japan began to supply the region with goods that the Europeans could no longer provide. Between 1914 and 1918, Japan's exports of cotton cloth increased threefold, while its heavy industry was greatly expanded to fill the gap left by the absence of European imports of iron, steel and chemicals.
- Throughout the war, Japan supplied Britain and its Allies with shipping and other goods.
- To assist with this surge in exports, the Japanese merchant fleet almost doubled in size during the war years.
- Japan attacked the German-controlled regions of China's Shantung Province. This enabled Japan to gain greater influence in China without the opposition of the Western powers.
- In January 1915, Japan presented the Chinese with what became known as the Twenty-One Demands. These were designed to dramatically increase Japanese political and economic power and influence over much of China. In effect, China would cease to be an independent country. The Chinese had no doubt that Japan would declare war on them if they refused to meet the demands. Despite a later revision of these demands, Japan was still able to extend its power base in China.
- Between 1916 and 1918, Japan provided the Chinese with a series of loans, thereby increasing its financial, commercial and economic influence over China.
- While the Western powers, particularly Britain and the USA, were greatly concerned by Japanese activities in the Far East, they could do little about it. Japan was a vital ally in the war against Germany.

Note:

Under pressure from the USA, Britain and other countries with a vested interest in China, Japan was eventually forced to reduce its Twenty-One Demands. However, even the revised demands granted Japan similar rights in China to those enjoyed by the other great powers. Japan's use of threats and bullying tactics angered the Chinese and added to the other powers' growing suspicion of Japan.

Historical debate

Did the development of two rival alliance systems (the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente) make a major war inevitable?

Complex issues, such as the causes of the First World War, can be interpreted in different ways. It is not surprising, therefore, that historians often differ in their opinions about key issues. For example, historians disagree about the question above. The American diplomat and historian George Kennan was probably the first to suggest that the existence of the two rival alliances made a European war inevitable. More recently, historians have argued against this. The claims used by historians to support their conflicting opinions on this question are summarised in the table on page 38.

Yes	No
The alliances caused uncertainty, fear and tension in Europe.	Both alliances were based on vague treaties of friendship. They did not compel countries to support each other in war. For example, when Russia was losing its war against Japan in 1905, France offered no help. Italy, though a member of the Triple Alliance, entered the First World War in 1915 <i>against</i> Germany.
There was an ‘arms race’ between the two alliances, leading to the existence of two well-armed rival camps.	Between 1907 and 1914, the alliances actually helped to maintain peace, preventing incidents escalating into war. For example, in 1911 Britain’s threat to support France over the issue of Morocco led Germany to back down.
German leaders were convinced that the Triple Entente was an attempt to encircle and attack Germany.	Although Germany supported Austria-Hungary in its war against Serbia in 1914, it had not done so in 1913.
Germany devised the Schlieffen Plan because of its fears about the intentions of the Triple Entente.	The European powers went to war in order to protect their own interests, not because of the alliance system.
France helped Russia to increase its military strength and speed of mobilisation.	
Austria-Hungary would not have declared war on Serbia without the certain knowledge that Germany would support it.	
The opposing sides in the First World War largely mirrored the two alliances – Germany and Austria-Hungary fought against France, Russia and Britain.	

Questions

- 1 Which side of the argument outlined in the historical debate section above is the more convincing and why?
- 2 Which of the following posed the greatest threat to international peace in the period from 1871 to 1914 and why?
 - Imperial rivalry over the ‘scramble for Africa’.
 - The emergence of the USA as a major world power.
 - The emergence of Japan as a major world power.
 - Rivalry between Germany and France.
 - Rivalry between Britain and Germany.

Key issues

The key features of this chapter are:

- the wave of imperialistic expansion by European nations, particularly in Africa
- major economic growth within the USA, leading to a significant change in US foreign policy and its increasing involvement in international affairs
- the rapid industrialisation and militarisation of Japan, leading to its expansion in Asia and conflict with a major European power – Russia
- the period of peace and stability in Europe, followed by increasing tensions and the development of the rival Triple Alliance and Triple Entente
- the increasing conflict between the vested interests of the major European powers, leading to the outbreak of the First World War.

Revision questions

- 1 How successful was Bismarck's foreign policy between 1871 and 1890?
- 2 In what ways did German foreign policy change after 1890?
- 3 Did the changes to German foreign policy after 1890 make a major war more or less likely?
- 4 Why was Serbian nationalism such a threat to Austria-Hungary?
- 5 Explain why each of the following countries was keen to form alliances with other European nations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries:
 - Germany
 - France
 - Russia
 - Britain

Further reading

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Chapter

2

International relations in an age of uncertainty 1919–33

Key questions

- Why did the settlements of 1919–20 fail to secure lasting peace?
- What attempts were made to improve international relations during 1919–33?
- What problems continued to cause tensions between the USSR, Britain, France and Germany during this period?
- What were the aims and implications of US foreign policy during this period?

Content summary

- The terms and implications of the various treaties that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference 1919–20.
- The reactions of France, Italy, Russia, the USA and Germany to the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference.
- Disturbed relations in the period from 1919 to 1923.
- Attempts to improve international relations 1921–33.
- The reasons for and effects of continuing tensions between France and Germany.
- Relationships between the USSR and the other European nations.
- The problems faced by the ‘successor states’.
- The reasons for and implications of the USA’s return to isolationism.
- The significance of the world economic crisis after 1929.

Timeline

Oct 1917	Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
Jan 1918	President Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’ speech
Mar 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed
Nov 1918	Armistice ending First World War
Jan 1919	Paris Peace Conference begins
Mar 1919	First meeting of Comintern in Moscow
Aug 1921	Treaty of Riga agreed
1921–22	Washington Naval Conference
Apr 1922	Treaty of Rapallo signed
Jan 1923	French occupation of the Ruhr
Oct 1925	Locarno Treaties
Aug 1928	Kellogg–Briand Pact
Oct 1929	Wall Street Crash
1932–33	World Disarmament Conference

Introduction

The political effects of the First World War were devastating. The empires that had long dominated the map of Central and Eastern Europe disintegrated, leaving chaos and confusion. The tsarist regime in Russia was overthrown by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and, as defeat became inevitable in 1918, the German emperor was forced to abdicate. In every European capital, revolution seemed a genuine threat.

Note:

'Tsar' was the official title of the Russian emperor. Although Tsar Nicholas II's power had been curtailed following a revolution in 1905, he retained almost total control over Russia until October 1917, when he was deposed by the Bolshevik Revolution.

Under these circumstances, those responsible for drawing up the treaties that would end the First World War faced a very difficult task. Although the US president, **Woodrow Wilson**, was determined to mediate a fair and lasting peace, he met resistance from European politicians who were equally determined to gain revenge and ensure future security for their own countries. As a result, the peace settlements that emerged between 1919 and 1920 consisted of harsh terms imposed by the victorious nations on those that had been defeated. Old tensions and rivalries remained, and many new ones were created.

A lasting peace seemed even more unlikely when, despite encouragement by Wilson, the US Senate refused to ratify the settlement agreed at the Paris Peace Conference. Instead, the USA reverted to its traditional policy of isolationism, keeping out of foreign affairs as much as possible. Equally significant for future stability was the fact that Russia, whose new revolutionary government seemed determined to spread **communism** as far as possible, was not invited to the peace talks and took no part in the negotiations for the treaties that would define the post-war world.

All countries were keen to avoid the horrors of another war, and many attempts were made to improve international relations during the 1920s. For a time, these seemed to be successful and were greeted with both enthusiasm and relief – particularly in Europe. However, tensions continued to simmer beneath the surface, and these increased when the Great Depression led to major economic problems and high unemployment in all industrialised countries during the 1930s.

Key figure

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924)

The Democrat Wilson became president in 1913 and made the decision to bring the USA into the First World War in 1917. He considered himself the mediator between rival European nations, and was disappointed by the decisions made in Paris. Wilson suffered a stroke in 1919, but continued to serve as president until 1921.



Note:

The US Congress consists of two 'houses' – the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is the more powerful of the two. The USA can only enter into treaties with other countries with the approval of the Senate.

communism

A system of government based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Communism is based on a classless society in which there is common ownership of the means of production. It is the opposite of capitalism, under which individuals can become wealthy through the ownership of land, factories, etc.

The peace settlements of 1919–20

Background to the peace settlements

In January 1918, US president Woodrow Wilson delivered a speech to Congress in which he outlined the country's war aims and his vision for the future. Wilson listed Fourteen Points that, he argued, should form the basis of peace negotiations once the First World War ended.

- 1 **No more secret treaties and alliances between countries:** Wilson was convinced that the secret treaties that had established the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente had contributed significantly to the outbreak of the First World War.
- 2 **Freedom of the seas for all nations in both peace and war:** the German U-boat campaign against neutral American ships between 1914 and 1917 had left a lasting impression on Wilson.
- 3 **The removal, as far as possible, of trade barriers between nations:** countries should be encouraged to practise free trade rather than adopting protectionist policies, which caused anger and resentment among other nations.
- 4 **Reduction of armaments by all nations:** Wilson believed that the European arms race after 1890 had been a major cause of the First World War.
- 5 **The adjustment of colonial claims, taking into account the wishes of the populations concerned as well as those of the colonial powers:** Wilson wanted rival imperial claims to be settled by negotiation rather than conflict. He believed that these negotiations should take into account the wishes of the native people.
- 6 **Russia to be welcomed into the society of nations, and all its land restored:** Wilson believed that it was vital to include Russia in the negotiations to find a lasting settlement to the First World War. He also felt that all the land Russia had lost during the war should be returned to it.
- 7 **The restoration of Belgian territory:** all the land taken from Belgium during the war should be returned to it.
- 8 **The liberation of France, including the return of Alsace and Lorraine:** France should be freed from German occupation. Wilson believed that Alsace and Lorraine – taken from France by Germany in 1871, and a cause of French resentment ever since – should be returned to France.

- 9 **The readjustment of Italian frontiers along the lines of nationality:** a variety of countries claimed ownership of many areas around the Italian border. Wilson believed that these disputes should be settled by reference to the nationality of the local people. Wilson's definition of nationality was based on language – areas that were predominantly Italian-speaking, for example, should belong to Italy.
- 10 **Independence and self-government for the peoples of Austria-Hungary:** those who lived in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire should have independence and the chance to form their own governments.
- 11 **The restoration of the Balkan nations (Romania, Serbia, Montenegro); Serbia to be given access to the sea:** these areas should be granted independence and should no longer be the object of rival claims by the major European countries. In order to allow Serbia to become a viable country, able to trade effectively, it should be given access to the sea.
- 12 **Self-government for non-Turkish peoples in the Turkish Empire, and free passage through the Dardanelles to ships of all nations:** the collapse of the old Turkish (Ottoman) Empire posed the threat of future disagreements between the major European nations, each wishing to claim their share. In order to avoid this, Wilson believed that non-Turkish peoples should be granted independence and their own governments. Access to the Dardanelles had been a major factor in the disagreements between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the years immediately before the First World War.
- 13 **Independence for Poland, including access to the sea:** an independent, self-governing Poland should be created. For it to be economically viable, it should be provided with access to the sea.
- 14 **The creation of a League of Nations to ensure future peace:** Wilson envisioned an international organisation in which member nations could discuss their disagreements and deal with them by negotiation rather than war.

At the time Wilson made his speech, the war was still raging and its outcome far from clear. Indeed, Germany gained an enormous advantage in March 1918. The new Russian leader, **Vladimir Ilyich Lenin**, desperately trying to establish his Bolshevik government, believed that it was essential for Russia to end its involvement in the First World War. He therefore entered into negotiations with Germany and the Central Powers. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on 3 March 1918, was the price he had to pay. The terms of the treaty were extremely harsh on Russia, and certainly not in line with Wilson's Fourteen Points. Russia lost Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia and Finland – areas that contained much of Russia's best farmland, raw materials and heavy industry. In all, Russia lost 25% of its population, 25% of its industry and 90% of its coal mines.

Key figure

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924)

As the leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party, Lenin played a key role in the Russian Revolution of 1917. He fought to establish a communist government in Russia and was head of the Soviet Russian state (the USSR) from 1917 until his death in 1924.





Figure 2.1 A map showing the territory Russia lost by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in 1918

Note:

Lenin's Bolshevik government faced opposition from other revolutionary parties and from those who were keen to restore the monarchy. The Western powers, fearful of revolution in their own countries, provided some support to these anti-Bolshevik groups.

With Russia out of the war, Germany no longer had to fight on two fronts. In addition, by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Germany had gained a vast amount of new land and resources. This allowed it to launch a major offensive on the Western Front, and for a time it seemed as though the Central Powers might secure victory after all.

However, the Allies launched a counter-offensive that lasted throughout the summer and autumn of 1918. German supply lines had been over-extended during the earlier offensive, and German troops were starved of food and vital equipment. Inexorably, they were driven back. Realising that the situation was becoming hopeless, German military commanders decided to launch one last major naval battle against the British in the English Channel. They hoped this would prevent reinforcements and supplies reaching Allied troops in Europe. Convincing that this was a suicide mission for an already hopeless cause, the German sailors mutinied, and this sparked a wider revolution within Germany. Wilhelm II (see page 30) was forced to abdicate, and the new government sought peace terms with the Allies based on Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Problems for the Paris peacemakers

In January 1919, representatives of nearly 30 victorious nations met at Versailles, near Paris. The aim of the Paris Peace Conference was to develop a settlement that would finally end the First World War and, in the words of the French president Raymond Poincaré, 'prevent a recurrence of it'. This was no easy task.

Firstly, events were taking place across Europe over which the peacemakers had no control. Revolutions occurred throughout the former Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Turkish empires. In Russia, the Bolsheviks were engaged in a civil war with counter-revolutionaries who were being supported by the Western powers. Revolution, already a reality in Russia and Germany, seemed a genuine threat in France and other major European nations.

Under these circumstances, it was essential for decisions to be reached quickly. Inevitably, therefore, real power came to rest with the Council of Four, consisting of President Woodrow Wilson (USA), Prime Minister David Lloyd George (Britain), Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau (France) and Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando (Italy). In reality, Italy had little influence and most decisions were made by the 'Big Three'.

Figure 2.2 The men who held the real power at the Paris Peace Conference: from left to right – Lloyd George (Britain), Clemenceau (France) and Wilson (USA)



Perhaps the most significant factor to shape the decision-making process was the disagreements between Britain, France and the USA over how the defeated Germany should be treated:

- Clemenceau wanted to destroy Germany economically and militarily – both as revenge for the devastation France had suffered as a result of German aggression, and to ensure that Germany could never again threaten French borders. Clemenceau's determination to inflict a harsh settlement on the Germans earned him the nickname 'The Tiger'.
- Lloyd George wanted a less severe settlement. It was in Britain's best interests that Germany, a major consumer of British exports, be set on a path to rapid recovery. However, British public opinion was strongly anti-German, and Lloyd George had just won an election on the promise that he would 'make Germany pay'.

Note:

There is a certain irony in the fact that the Paris Peace Conference took place at Versailles. This was exactly where the German Empire had been proclaimed at the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871.

- Wilson, whose country had suffered less severely than its European allies during the war, wanted a lenient peace based on the Fourteen Points and his slogan ‘peace without victory’. He believed that imposing a harsh treaty on Germany would cause resentment and make future conflict more likely.

Note:

The war had become increasingly unpopular in the USA. The Republican Party – the political opponent of Wilson’s Democratic Party – was strongly against US participation in the Paris peace talks, believing that these were essentially a European matter. By the time Wilson arrived in Paris, the Republican Party held a majority in the Senate.

Wilson thought that the greed and selfishness of the rival European nations had been a major contributing factor to the outbreak of war, and saw himself as a mediator between these nations. In truth, Wilson had very little understanding of the complex problems facing Europe in 1919. Moreover, he could no longer claim to fully represent the government of the USA, as the Democrats had lost control of the Senate in the midterm elections. As Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson’s political opponent, pointed out: ‘Our allies and our enemies and Mr Wilson himself should all understand that Mr Wilson has no authority to speak for the American people at this time.’

Figure 2.3 Delegates from many countries drafting the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919



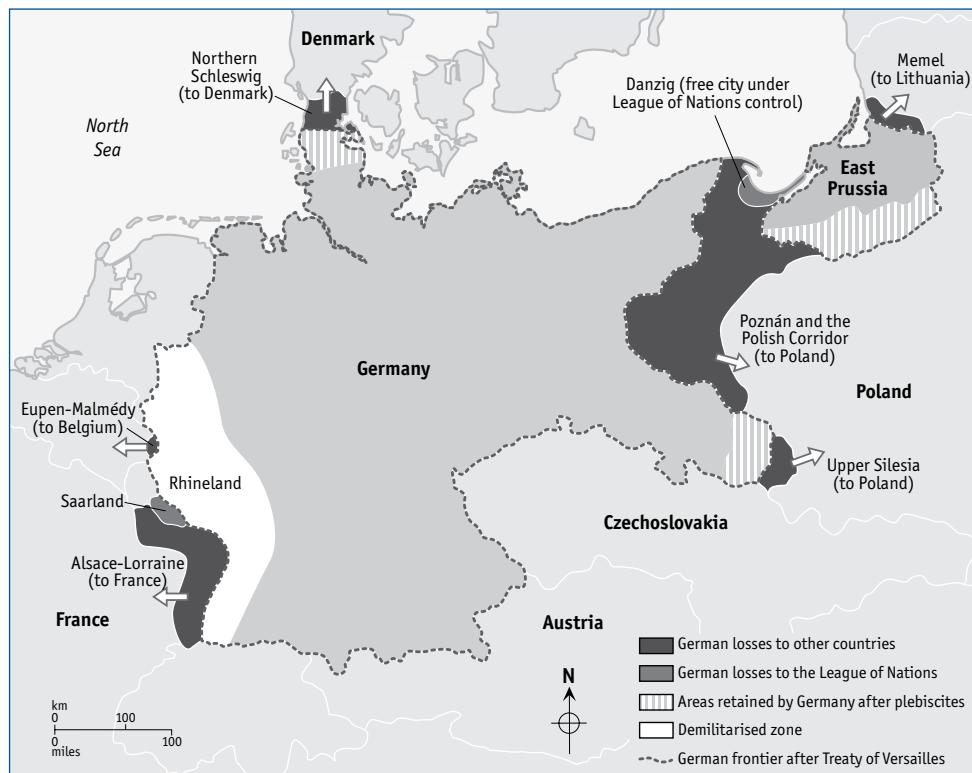
The Treaty of Versailles

Faced with these difficulties, it is perhaps unsurprising that what emerged from the Paris peace talks bore only a limited resemblance to Wilson’s vision of a fair and just settlement. None of the defeated nations had been invited to take part in the peace talks, but the Germans fully expected a reasonable agreement based on the Fourteen Points. When they were presented with the Treaty of Versailles, therefore, they were horrified at the terms.

Despite its objections, however, Germany had no alternative but to sign the treaty on 28 June 1919. In doing so, it accepted the loss of some 70,000 square kilometres (27,000 square miles) of land, containing almost 7 million people:

- Alsace and Lorraine were returned to France.
- Eupen and Malmédy went to Belgium.
- Northern Schleswig went to Denmark.
- The Saar Valley was to be administered by the League of Nations for 15 years, during which France could use its coal mines. At the end of this time, a **plebiscite** would determine whether it should belong to France or Germany.
- The Rhineland, part of Germany along its border with France, was to be demilitarised, meaning that no troops could be stationed there. This gave France the security it so badly wanted, but meant that Germany would be unable to defend this part of its border.
- Much of West Prussia went to Poland, allowing the Poles access to the sea through the Polish Corridor. The effect of this was to divide Germany from its province of East Prussia.
- The port of Memel went to Lithuania.
- Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which Germany had gained through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, were established as independent states.
- Germany lost its African colonies, which became **mandates** under League of Nations supervision.

Figure 2.4 A map showing the territory lost by Germany as a result of the Treaty of Versailles



plebiscite

A referendum (vote) giving people the opportunity to express their opinion for or against a proposal relating to a constitutional issue.

mandates

Territory taken from one of the defeated countries at the end of the First World War and given to another country, which would administer it on behalf of the League of Nations.

In addition to these land losses, the treaty imposed several other humiliating terms on Germany. German armaments were limited to a maximum of 100,000 troops, with no tanks, military aircraft or submarines, and a maximum of six battleships. *Anschluss* (union) between Germany and Austria was forbidden, in an effort to prevent the two German-speaking countries uniting to pose a threat to other nations in the future.

reparations

Money that one country has to pay another as compensation for war damage.

The War Guilt Clause was included in the Treaty of Versailles in order to provide legal justification for making Germany pay reparations to the victorious powers.

self-determination

The principle that people of common nationality should have the right to form their own nations and govern themselves.

Wilson's definition of a 'nationality' (based on a common language) was too simplistic and inappropriate for the situation in Eastern Europe at the end of the First World War.

Another devastating condition of the Treaty of Versailles was the War Guilt Clause. This blamed Germany and its allies for the outbreak of the war, and allowed the victorious nations to impose **reparations** for the damage the war had caused. The actual amount of reparations – £6.6 billion – was not settled on until 1921. This is equivalent to £525 billion (\$834 billion) in 2012 values.

Treaties with the other defeated nations

Having finalised the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, delegates at the Paris Peace Conference now turned their attention to the other defeated nations – Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. In many ways, Wilson's notion of giving independence and **self-determination** to the peoples of the former Habsburg, Turkish and Russian empires was already becoming a reality. The disintegration of those empires had already resulted in the emergence of new states. The Paris peacemakers had the difficult task of trying to formalise the resulting chaos through a series of four treaties.

The Treaty of Saint-Germain was signed with Austria in September 1919. By the terms of this treaty, Austria lost Bohemia and Moravia to the new state of Czechoslovakia; Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina went to Yugoslavia (a new state uniting Serbia with Montenegro); Bukovina was given to Romania, and Galicia to Poland. In addition, Trentino, Istria, Trieste and parts of the South Tyrol were granted to Italy.

The Treaty of Neuilly was agreed with Bulgaria in November 1919. Bulgaria lost territory to Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania.

The terms of the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey (August 1920) included Turkish territorial losses to Greece and Italy. Other parts of the former Turkish Empire were mandated to France (Syria) and Britain (Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan). The treaty also stated that the Dardanelles were to be permanently open to all shipping.

The Treaty of Trianon with Hungary (August 1920) stated that Slovakia and Ruthenia were to become part of Czechoslovakia; Croatia and Slovenia went to Yugoslavia; and Transylvania to Romania.

Reactions to the Paris peace settlement

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles caused great resentment in Germany and had major implications for the future. German objections focused on two main issues. Firstly, German representatives were not allowed to attend the peace talks – they simply had to accept whatever terms were imposed upon them. This came to be known as a *diktat*, or ‘dictated peace’. Secondly, the terms were not based entirely on Wilson’s Fourteen Points as Germany had expected.

There is some justification for Germany’s objections to the treaty terms:

- At a time of intense political instability, 100,000 troops might not be sufficient even to maintain law and order within Germany itself, let alone defend the country against external attack. Moreover, while Germany was forced to disarm, it was clear that none of the other major European powers had any intention of doing so. This posed a potential threat to German security.
- Although they were set up as mandates under the supervision of the League of Nations, Germany’s former colonies in Africa were effectively taken over by Britain, France and South Africa.
- Millions of people who were German in terms of their language and culture would now be living under foreign rule in countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia.
- Although still part of Germany, East Prussia was separated from the rest of the country by the Polish Corridor.
- The War Guilt Clause seemed particularly unfair, given the complicated series of events that had led to the outbreak of war in 1914.
- The amount established for reparations was extremely high and, as the Germans would argue, virtually impossible for them to repay.

However, although the terms were harsh, they were not as severe as Clemenceau had hoped. Germany’s territorial losses in Europe were restricted to those areas it had gained as a result of previous wars. Indeed, Germany remained potentially the strongest economic power in Europe. Many have argued that, having ignored Wilson’s Fourteen Points when inflicting the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on Russia, Germany had little right to expect those points to form the basis of its own peace settlement.

Figure 2.5 A map of Europe in 1920, following the Paris peace settlement



Germany was not the only country dissatisfied with the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference. Several Allied nations felt that the treaties had failed to address their demands and concerns. France did not gain as much at Germany's expense as Clemenceau had hoped. As a result, the French felt that the Treaty of Versailles left Germany strong enough to pose a significant threat to their security.

Russia had not been consulted at all about the terms to be imposed on the defeated nations, and a considerable amount of land that had once made up the Russian Empire was lost to newly created states in the months after the First World War. Finally, Italy felt frustrated and humiliated. Although a member of the Council of Four (see page 45), Italy's demands were largely ignored at the peace talks. Furthermore, the Allies had promised Italy territory along the Adriatic coast if it entered the war on their side, but this promise was not honoured in Paris.

The problem of the successor states

The peace settlement had serious short- and long-term effects on international stability. In the first instance, maintaining a commitment to self-determination was not as straightforward as Wilson had envisaged. His belief that nationality could be gauged by language was too simplistic for the complicated situation in Eastern Europe, where there was a multitude of ethnic groupings, all with conflicting ambitions. The **successor states** that emerged as a result of the break-up of the great European empires all faced similar difficulties in the immediate post-war years. These problems were caused by the multinational composition of their populations, border disputes, economic difficulties and political instability.

successor states

This was the name given to the new national states (Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary) whose existence was confirmed by the Paris peace settlement.

dictator

An absolute ruler who controls a country without using democratic institutions.

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia became home to Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Magyars (Hungarians), Germans, Albanians, Romanians and Macedonians, making religious and ethnic disputes inevitable. Developing effective democratic institutions was virtually impossible. In 1929, the king banned all political parties and proclaimed himself **dictator**. Despite a series of friendly treaties with other countries, Yugoslavia later became involved in border disputes with Greece, Bulgaria and Italy.

Poland

Of Poland's population of 27 million, less than 18 million were Poles and more than 1 million were German-speakers. These statistics, together with the fact that there were 14 different political parties in the country, meant that attempts to maintain true democracy led to weak and unstable governments. In 1926, Jósef Piłsudski led a military coup and established himself as dictator.

In 1920, Polish troops entered Russian territory and took control of Ukraine. Despite the fact that a Russian counter-offensive was only defeated with French help, the Treaty of Riga (1921) added a strip of land some 160 km (100 miles) wide to Poland's eastern border. Border disputes brought Poland into conflict with Germany, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania and Russia.

Czechoslovakia

In addition to Czechs and Slovaks, the new state of Czechoslovakia contained Russians, Magyars, Poles, Jews and more than 3 million Germans. The German-speaking populations of Bohemia, Moravia and the Sudetenland made up a sizeable **minority group** that persistently claimed it was being discriminated against. Despite these potential problems, Czechoslovakia was able to maintain a democratic system of government. Blessed with raw materials, rich agricultural land and productive industries, it remained relatively prosperous throughout the 1920s. Czechoslovakia had taken care to develop protective alliances with Yugoslavia, Romania, Italy and France.

Austria

With most of its industrially productive areas given to Poland and Czechoslovakia by the Treaty of Saint-Germain, Austria experienced enormous economic problems. The country was increasingly reliant on foreign loans, and inflation ran high throughout the 1920s, leading to political instability. The majority of Austrians believed that the solution to their problems was union with Germany, but this was expressly forbidden by the post-war peace settlement.

Hungary

Like Austria, Hungary had lost around two-thirds of its population and much of its industrial land to Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. Under the control of an authoritarian regime determined to regain lost lands, Hungary signed treaties with Italy (1927) and Austria (1933).

The Paris peace settlement: an assessment

Many historians are critical of the peace settlement of 1919–20. They argue that the five treaties were based on a series of compromises that satisfied none of the countries involved. German resentment at the harsh terms imposed by the Treaty of Versailles had far-reaching consequences. However, the Germans were not alone in expressing their frustration and anger at the outcome of the peace settlement. France, Russia and Italy – countries that had played a significant role in the Allied victory in the First World War – were also disappointed. In redrawing the map of Eastern Europe, the peacemakers left around 30 million people living in minority groups under foreign rule, making border disputes inevitable.

minority group

A group of people bound together by, for example, common nationality, language or religion, living in a country dominated by other groups. As a result, such groups often lack political rights and experience discrimination.

However, such criticisms take little account of the difficult circumstances in which the peace settlement was drawn up. Satisfying all the competing demands of the victorious nations was a virtually impossible task. In Eastern Europe, the peacemakers had little option but to formally recognise the situation that had already emerged after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian, Turkish and Russian empires towards the end of the war. In fact, far fewer people were living under foreign rule in 1920 than in 1914. As one American delegate at the peace talks claimed: 'It is not surprising that they made a bad peace: what is surprising is that they managed to make peace at all.'

Questions

- 1** What does the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk suggest about Germany's attitude towards Wilson's Fourteen Points in March 1918?
- 2** 'Criticism of the Paris peace settlement is unfair, and shows a lack of understanding of the problems facing the peacemakers in 1919–20.' Discuss.
- 3** How justified were German objections to the Treaty of Versailles?
- 4** Look at Sources A and B below, both commenting on the Treaty of Versailles. Compare the views expressed about the treaty in these two sources.

Source A

In these conditions, there is no trace of a peace of understanding and justice. It is purely a peace of violence which, for our Fatherland, is thinly-veiled slavery, and out of which will result not peace for the whole of Europe, but merely further bloodshed and tears.

An extract from a speech by a German politician to the Reichstag (German parliament), 1919.

Source B

A British cartoon from 1919.

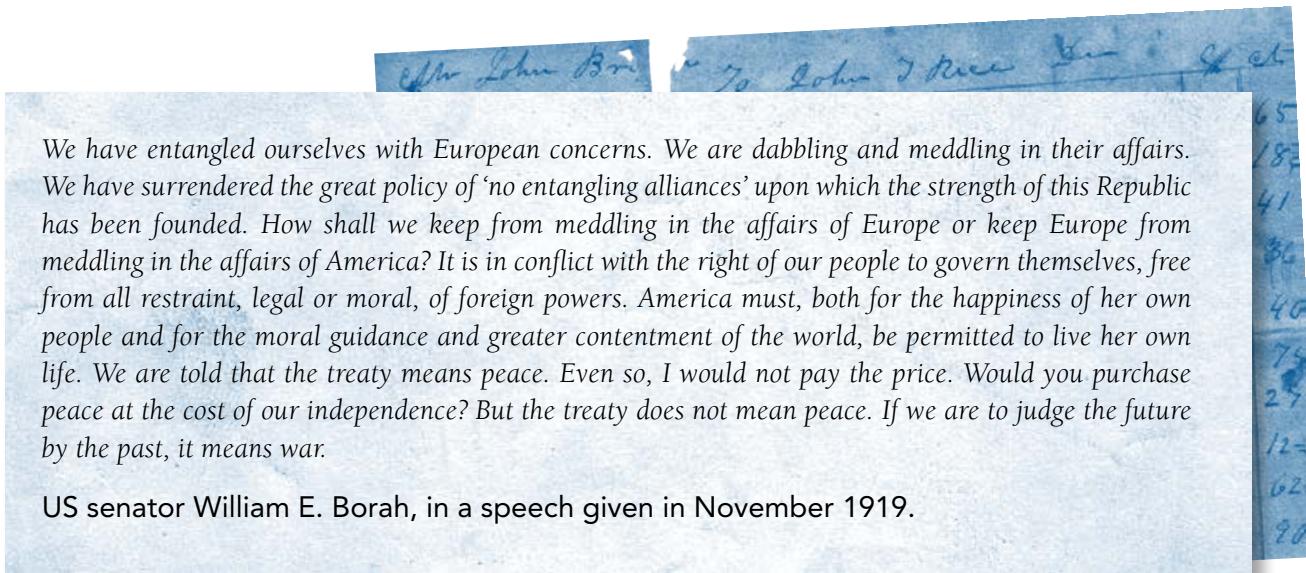


Attempts to improve international relations

Disturbed relations between 1919 and 1923

If drawing up the terms of the peace settlement had been difficult, implementing them proved even more so. International tensions remained high throughout the period 1919–23 for several reasons.

Despite the leading role President Wilson had played in negotiating the various peace treaties, in November 1919 the US Senate rejected the Paris peace settlement and refused to join the League of Nations. Determined not to become involved in another war – and believing that the terms of the settlement made future conflict inevitable – most Americans were convinced that the USA should return to its traditional isolationist policy.



The USA's decision not to ratify the Paris peace settlement and, instead, to make a separate peace with Germany later on, had a profound effect on relations between European countries. In particular, it contributed to France's already significant feelings of insecurity. The French now had no guarantee of US support in the event of an attack by a resurgent Germany. Furthermore, Britain was clearly seeking to withdraw from European affairs. This left France isolated and consequently even more determined to prevent Germany's post-war recovery.

Despite the USA's decision to isolate itself from Europe politically, it continued to have a major effect on European economies. During the First World War, the USA had provided large loans to assist its European allies. Now it insisted on the full repayment of these war debts. For most European countries,

ravaged by the effects of war and struggling to rebuild their economies, the only way to meet these debt repayments was by ensuring that Germany paid its reparations. In the wake of its defeat, Germany was in no position – politically, socially or economically – to meet such demands.

Relations between Britain and France were strained as a result of their different attitudes towards German recovery. Britain encouraged Germany's economic revival, keen to re-establish the lucrative trading partnership between the two countries. However, France was determined to keep Germany as weak as possible for as long as possible.

Russia, now under communist rule, was viewed with suspicion and fear by its former allies and enemies alike. In a European-wide climate of social and economic hardship, many governments feared revolution in their countries in the post-war years. Concern over the potential spread of communism was so great that many Western European nations, as well as Japan, became involved in the Russian Civil War in an attempt to prevent Lenin's Bolsheviks winning control of the country. For France, this meant the loss of another potential ally against a revitalised Germany.

Note:

The Treaty of Lausanne resulted in Turkey taking back some land it had lost, including Smyrna and Thrace, as well as the Aegean islands of Imbros and Tenedos. This went some way to restoring Turkish national pride, which had been badly damaged by the Treaty of Sèvres.

Elsewhere in Europe, border disputes arising from the decisions made at the Paris Peace Conference soon occurred. Turkey defied the settlement completely when its troops retook some of the land awarded to Greece by the Treaty of Sèvres (see page 48). In doing so, Turkey became the first state to successfully challenge the post-war settlement, and in 1923 a revised treaty – the Treaty of Lausanne – replaced the original agreement.

Beyond Europe, tensions increased between the USA and Japan (see page 119). Japanese power in the Far East had grown enormously during the First World War, and now posed a serious threat to US trading interests. A naval arms race seemed inevitable.

Improvements in international relations

Despite these simmering tensions, no country wanted another war. With this in mind, several attempts were made to improve international relations in the period 1919–33.

The Washington Naval Conference 1921–22

Largely focusing on disarmament and naval power, the Washington Naval Conference led to a series of treaties that, at the time, seemed to guarantee peace in the Far East. Japan agreed to withdraw from some of its recently acquired Chinese territory and to limit its navy to three-fifths the size of the British and US navies. In return, the Western powers agreed not to develop any new naval bases near Japan. Britain, the USA, France and Japan also agreed to protect China against invasion. (See pages 119–20 for more information on the Washington Conference.)

The Genoa Conference 1922

One of the main threats to peace was the issue of German reparations. Facing its own massive economic problems, Germany struggled to keep up with the schedule of payments. Determined to keep Germany weak, France insisted that the payments should be made in full. The British prime minister, David Lloyd George, was keen to improve relations between France and Germany, and suggested that a conference be held to address the issue of reparations. However, the Genoa Conference, held in Italy in 1922, achieved nothing. The USA, still pursuing an isolationist policy and determined to avoid involvement in European affairs, declined to attend. In the face of France's refusal to compromise, Germany quickly withdrew from the conference. Feeling increasingly isolated and sensing an opportunity to develop their relationship with Germany, the Russians also backed out.

The Dawes Plan 1924

French anger increased the following year when Germany once again failed to meet its reparations payments. Finally deciding to take action, French troops occupied the Ruhr – one of Germany's most important industrial regions – and seized coal and timber by way of payment. Confronted with this clear threat to peace, a conference was held in London in 1924, chaired by the American lawyer and financier Charles Dawes. Although no reduction was made to the figure of £6.6 billion that Germany would have to pay in reparations, it was agreed that its annual payments would be restricted to what Germany 'could reasonably afford'. To assist with its economic problems, Germany received a sizeable foreign loan, mainly from the USA. Assured that it would continue to receive reparations, France withdrew from the Ruhr and tensions were reduced.

Figure 2.6 Charles Dawes, who created the Dawes Plan to assist Europe's economic recovery



Key figures

Aristide Briand (1862–1932)

Briand was prime minister of France 11 times between 1909 and 1929. As foreign minister, at Locarno Briand adopted a more conciliatory attitude towards Germany.



Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929)

Stresemann became chancellor of Germany in 1923. However, he resigned later the same year and instead focused on his position as foreign minister. He shared the 1926 Nobel Peace Prize with Briand for his part at Locarno.



The Locarno Treaties 1925

The resort of Locarno in Switzerland was the setting for a series of agreements drawn up to create greater stability and security in Europe. The most significant outcome of the Locarno Conference was that Germany, France and Belgium promised to respect their joint frontiers, an agreement that was guaranteed by both Britain and Italy. Essentially, the borders that had been agreed at Versailles were jointly confirmed and accepted. No military action could be taken unless it was considered defensive.

In addition, a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee was agreed. This stated that Britain and Italy would come to the assistance of any country that fell victim to an act of aggression in violation of the Locarno Treaties. Britain thus pledged to come to France's aid in the event of a future German attack – an agreement that finally gave the French the security they had so long desired. However, clauses were included in this agreement that limited Britain's responsibility, including provisions for aggrieved nations to make an initial appeal to the League of Nations. Britain was thus not fully committed to military action from the start.

The Locarno Conference marked a major turning point in international affairs, symbolised by the effective working relationship that had developed between **Aristide Briand** and **Gustav Stresemann**, the foreign ministers of France and Germany respectively. To emphasise Germany's good intentions towards France, Stresemann also accepted the permanent loss of Alsace-Lorraine, Eupen and Malmédy. In doing so, he hoped to win assurances from Germany's former enemies that there would be no future incursions like the Ruhr invasion.

The treaties were greeted with relief across Europe. One British statesman even claimed that 'the Great War ended in 1918. The Great Peace did not begin until 1925.' Stresemann himself stressed the significance of the Locarno Treaties in establishing a spirit of reconciliation and co-operation.

We salute with sincere joy the development of the idea of European peace asserted at this conference and embodied in the Locarno Treaty, which will go down as a turning point in the history of States and peoples. For all their importance, the Locarno agreements will not be fully meaningful unless they mark the start of a period of collaboration and international trust. May the hopes born of the Locarno endeavour be realised.

German foreign minister Gustav Stresemann, in a speech given in October 1925.

However, some historians have been more critical, pointing out that the Locarno Treaties gave no guarantees regarding Germany's borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia. That the French were perhaps less sincere than they seemed to be in forging better relations with Germany is clearly implied by the cartoon opposite, which was published in a British newspaper in 1925. Briand, though greeting Stresemann in apparent friendship, is depicted with a boxing glove on his hidden hand.

The Kellogg–Briand Pact 1928

When Briand proposed that France and the USA should sign an agreement renouncing war, the US secretary of state, Frank Kellogg, suggested that such an agreement might be extended to other countries. The result was the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928, which was signed by no fewer than 65 nations. However, the pact contained no indication of what steps might be taken against any country that subsequently broke the agreement, and this lack of clarity ultimately made it worthless. In reality, the still-isolationist USA was not making any commitment by signing the pact.

Figure 2.8 French foreign minister Aristide Briand (left) and US secretary of state Frank Kellogg (right), the architects of the Kellogg–Briand Pact



Figure 2.7 A British cartoon from 1925 commenting on the Locarno Treaties

The Young Plan 1929

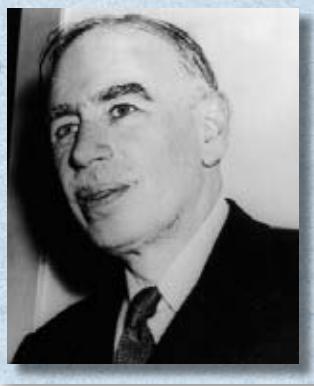
The Young Plan was probably the best example of France's new willingness to compromise. The USA knew that, despite the Dawes Plan (see page 55), once Germany had to meet its full annual payments it would no longer be able to afford its interest payments on US loans. As a result, a committee chaired by the American banker Owen Young met to discuss the possibility of reducing the total figure that had been agreed in the aftermath of the Paris peace talks.

Negotiations were not easy, as the Germans added new demands, including the return of the Polish Corridor and Upper Silesia. However, the outcome of these negotiations throughout 1928–29 was the Young Plan, which reduced the final sum of German reparations from £6.6 billion to £2 billion (a figure that had originally been suggested by the British economist **John Maynard Keynes** in 1919). In essence, this was an admission that the figure set in 1921 was too high. In addition, the international controls over the German economy that had been set by the Dawes Plan were dismantled. These were significant steps for Germany.

Key figure

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946)

Keynes was the leading economist of the early 20th century, and was a member of the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. In his book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), he argued that reparations were vindictive and would lead to problems because of Germany's inability to keep up with the payments.



The World Disarmament Conference 1932–33

However, despite these attempts to improve international relations, old suspicions, resentment and tensions remained. This became clear at the World Disarmament Conference, held in Geneva during 1932 and 1933. All of Europe's leading powers had committed themselves to arms reduction both in the Treaty of Versailles and by the Covenant of the League of Nations. With the exception of Germany, no country had honoured its commitment. The Disarmament Conference was intended to address this issue, in the hope of avoiding the type of arms race that had characterised the build-up to the First World War. Despite lengthy discussions, however, none of the major European powers was prepared to reduce its military capabilities, and the conference ended in disarray. For most countries, national interests and security remained the priority.

Questions

- 1** ‘The USA’s decision not to ratify the Paris peace settlement was the major cause of international tension in the period from 1919 to 1923.’ Discuss.
- 2** What attempts were made to improve international relations during the 1920s, and how successful were they?
- 3** Why was the issue of German reparations so important in the period from 1921 to 1929?

Problems in Europe 1919–33

Relations between France and Germany

France had been invaded by Germany twice in less than 50 years. After a humiliating defeat in the Franco–Prussian War (see page 28) and the devastating effects of the First World War, it is hardly surprising that France's main priority was to ensure that Germany could never again become a threat. This issue remained the primary focus of French foreign policy throughout the interwar years (1919–39).

In the six years following the end of the First World War, France adopted a tough and uncompromising policy towards Germany in an effort to keep the country economically and militarily weak. At Clemenceau's insistence, the Treaty of Versailles severely restricted the size of the German army and the number of weapons it could have. The demilitarisation of the Rhineland meant that Germany would not be able to attack France through that border region. The treaty also gave France rights in the Saar region for a period of 15 years, denying Germany its valuable coal deposits there. In addition, France was insistent that Germany should pay the full amount of reparations. Since this was to be paid over a period of 66 years, the French could be assured that Germany would remain economically weak for a long time to come – too weak to contemplate further aggression against France.

When Germany fell behind in its reparations payments, France was prepared to adopt drastic measures to force the Germans to pay. This resulted in the French occupation of the Ruhr region in 1923 (see page 55). This extreme measure – effectively an act of war – proved counterproductive for two main reasons. Firstly, it caused severe inflation in Germany, leading to the collapse of the German currency (the Mark). Naturally, this made it even harder for Germany to meet its reparations requirements. Secondly, the Ruhr invasion soured France's relations with Britain, which had its own reasons for wanting a swift recovery of the German economy.

After the summer of 1924, by which time it was clear that the Ruhr occupation had failed in its purpose, France began to adopt a more conciliatory approach towards Germany. Accepting that it was unrealistic to expect Germany to keep up with its reparations payments, France agreed to the Dawes Plan as a suitable compromise. Relations between France and Germany significantly improved, aided by the good relationship that grew up between Briand and Stresemann. France's new spirit of co-operation with Germany was clearly reflected in the Locarno Treaties, the Kellogg–Briand Pact and the Young Plan.

Note:

Confronted with the French invasion of the Ruhr, the German government ordered a policy of passive resistance. As a result, German industry in the Ruhr was paralysed. Although the French failed in their aim to seize goods from German factories and mines, the economic effect of the loss of output from such a vital industrial region was catastrophic for Germany.

Despite this, France remained deeply concerned about its national security. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, both Britain and the USA guaranteed to help France if Germany attacked again. However, when the USA refused to ratify the treaty, Britain used this as an excuse to cancel its own commitment. France was left feeling betrayed and vulnerable.

To shore up support, the French began developing a series of alliances with states in Eastern Europe, including Poland (1921), Czechoslovakia (1924), Romania (1926) and Yugoslavia (1927). This network of alliances became known as the Little Entente. France also strongly encouraged the development of an effective League of Nations (see Chapter 5). In truth, neither of these strategies proved particularly effective. France's Little Entente partners were relatively weak, and it soon became apparent that the League of Nations lacked the power to enforce its decisions on anything other than minor issues. By the early 1930s, increasing concerns about national security led France to revert to its original hardline approach towards Germany.

The USSR's relations with the rest of Europe

The Bolsheviks' rise to power in Russia in November 1917 caused alarm across Europe. France and Britain were especially concerned, as they lost a vital ally when the new Russian government withdrew from the First World War by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany (see page 43). It soon became clear that Lenin intended to spread revolution as far as possible. Russian agents and propaganda appeared in all the major European cities.

In March 1919, communists from all over the world were invited to a conference in Moscow, which marked the inauguration of the Third International, or **Comintern**. Its chairman, Grigori Zinoviev, proclaimed that 'in a year the whole of Europe will be communist'. Given the political and economic turmoil that faced Europe at this time, widespread revolution did indeed seem a genuine possibility. Some countries (including Britain, France, the USA and Japan) actively supported the Bolsheviks' opponents in the Russian Civil War, and Russia was not invited to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. By 1921, however, tensions had eased. Although the Bolsheviks were firmly established in Russia, their hopes of a worldwide communist revolution under Russian leadership had not materialised. Lenin now accepted that Russia's future depended on peaceful co-existence and economic co-operation with other countries.

Comintern

The Third International or the Communist International (Comintern) was a communist organisation founded in Moscow in 1919. Its aim was to encourage worldwide communist revolution.

The USSR and Germany

After the First World War, both the USSR and Germany were at risk of becoming politically and economically isolated. This status as Europe's outcasts caused the two countries to establish friendly relations with each other. Following a trade treaty in 1921, full diplomatic relations were resumed between them by the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 (a development that

caused consternation elsewhere in Europe, particularly France and Poland). The Treaty of Berlin in 1926 renewed the Rapallo agreement for a further five years, offering both countries further security. It was not until the early 1930s that renewed tensions appeared. By then, the rise of the German Nazi Party (see Chapter 3), with its strongly anti-communist views, began to cause unease in the USSR.

The USSR and France

The French were particularly resentful of Bolshevik success in Russia. Not only had the revolution robbed France of a potential ally in the event of a future attack by Germany, but it also increased the threat of revolution in France itself. It was largely at French insistence that Russia was not represented at the Paris peace talks. Although formal diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in 1924, the French made little effort to enhance this relationship until the 1930s, when increasing fear of German Nazism forced them to do so.

The USSR and Britain

Britain's relations with the USSR fluctuated throughout the period 1919–33, reflecting the suspicion with which Russia's communist government was viewed by the British. An Anglo-Russian trade treaty in March 1921 made Britain one of the first countries to formally recognise Russia's Bolshevik government. Like France, however, Britain was alarmed when Russia signed the Treaty of Rapallo with Germany in 1922. Fears that the USSR was encouraging independence movements in British-owned India led Britain to break off diplomatic relations with Russia in 1927. These were restored when another trading agreement was reached in 1929. When the trading agreement was cancelled by a new British government in 1932, Russia responded by arresting four Moscow-based British engineers on charges of spying.

Questions

- 1 To what extent was French foreign policy between 1919 and 1929 dictated by fear of Germany?
- 2 Why did France adopt a more co-operative and friendly approach towards Germany after 1924?
- 3 Why were there no Russian representatives at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–20?
- 4 How successful was the USSR in its attempts to establish better relations with the rest of Europe between 1919 and 1933?

American foreign policy

The return to isolationism

In the election campaign of 1916, Woodrow Wilson promised that the USA would not become involved in the First World War. Yet, in April 1917, Wilson's government declared war on Germany. With German submarines sinking American merchant ships, rumours of Germany seeking an alliance with Mexico, and pressure from his political opponents, Wilson arguably had little choice. Initially, events such as the sinking of the *Lusitania* (see page 36) turned public opinion in favour of the war. However, this quickly fell away and by 1918 US involvement in the conflict had become deeply unpopular. Many Americans believed that the war had come about because of the petty bickering and selfish national interests of the major European countries. They felt that the best way to avoid involvement in another war was for the USA to keep out of the affairs of other nations, especially those in Europe.

Although Wilson also believed that European imperialist ambitions had been a major cause of the First World War, he had a very different view on how to prevent wars in the future. His Fourteen Points reflected his rather idealistic perception of the USA's role (see pages 42–43). In particular, Wilson believed it was the USA's duty to dictate the post-war peace settlement by mediating between rival European nations. His aim was to create lasting international stability so that the horrors of the First World War could never be repeated.

With only limited experience in foreign affairs, and little real understanding of European problems, Wilson found that his vision of the future was often undermined. Although his suggestion for a League of Nations was written into each of the separate treaties, the peace settlement of 1919–20 was far from the 'peace without victory' he had envisaged (see page 46).

internationalism

The foreign policy favoured by President

Wilson, whereby the USA would play a leading role in international affairs in order to ensure

future world peace and stability. In the 1920s, internationalism was replaced by the more traditional US policy of isolationism.

If Wilson was disappointed by the Paris Peace Conference, his frustration only increased when he returned to the USA. The American people were wary of any further involvement in European affairs. By rejecting both the peace settlement and US membership of the League of Nations, the Senate also abandoned Wilson's policy of **internationalism**. Instead, the USA reverted to isolationism, and only interfered in international affairs when its own interests were directly at stake.

There were two main effects of this change in attitude. First, it removed France's guarantee of US (and, subsequently, British) support in the event of another German attack. In addition to putting severe pressure on relations between Britain and France, this also set the tone for French foreign policy throughout the interwar years. Second, it undermined both the credibility and the potential effectiveness of the League of Nations.

Between 1921 and 1933, the USA was ruled by Republican governments. The Republicans endorsed isolationism and this was the main reason that the USA never joined the League of Nations and sent no representative to the Locarno Conference. Nevertheless, it was impossible for the USA to keep out of world affairs completely, and in fact it was not in its national interests to do so. As a result, American policies and actions had a profound effect on other countries.

In 1919, the USA unquestionably possessed the strongest economy in the world. It had benefited greatly from the First World War, in particular by taking over markets formally controlled by European nations. Its overseas trade and foreign investment greatly increased. With American industry continuing to grow rapidly and protected by high import tariffs, the USA experienced an economic boom during the 1920s. Inevitably, therefore, the USA wanted to protect its international economic interests. On occasion, this took precedence over strict adherence to isolationism. For example, concern that the growth of Japanese power might threaten American economic interests in the Far East led the USA to organise the Washington Naval Conference in 1921–22 (see pages 119–20).

Economic factors were also behind the USA's decision to demand full repayment of the Allied war debts – a decision that caused considerable resentment in Europe. Since the USA had made huge economic gains as a result of the First World War, Britain and its allies had hoped that these debts would be cancelled. Instead, the Americans insisted that the debts, including interest, were paid in full. The only way the European allies could repay these debts was by using the reparations payments they received from Germany. Germany's failure to meet its obligations presented Britain, France and Italy with a major problem. It was only when the USA provided Germany with substantial loans that the issue was resolved. However, this led to the preposterous situation whereby Germany used US loans to pay reparations to Britain, France and Italy, who then used the same money to repay their debts to the USA. This eventually put serious pressure on the international economy and contributed to the global economic crisis that began in 1929.

The Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression

The 1920s ended in dramatic fashion, with huge international repercussions. What began as a reduction in the buying of **shares** on the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street quickly led to a panic and a rush to sell shares. By 29 October – 'Black Friday' – shares in hundreds of businesses had become virtually worthless and thousands of Americans were financially ruined. Banks were forced to close down as people rushed to withdraw their savings. As demand for goods fell, many factories became unprofitable and also closed down. Unemployment rose alarmingly, causing a further reduction in the demand for goods. The Great Depression that came in the wake of the Wall Street Crash affected not just the USA, but the whole world.

shares

A means of investing money in businesses. Shares in a successful business rise in value. People buy shares at low prices and then sell them when the value rises.

In fact, the Wall Street Crash was a symptom rather than a cause of the Great Depression. The real trigger was fundamental flaws in the USA's economic policy. American industries were heavily dependent on the export market. Their output vastly exceeded what could be sold within the USA itself. Towards the end of the 1920s, foreign demand for US goods began to fall. There were a number of reasons for this:

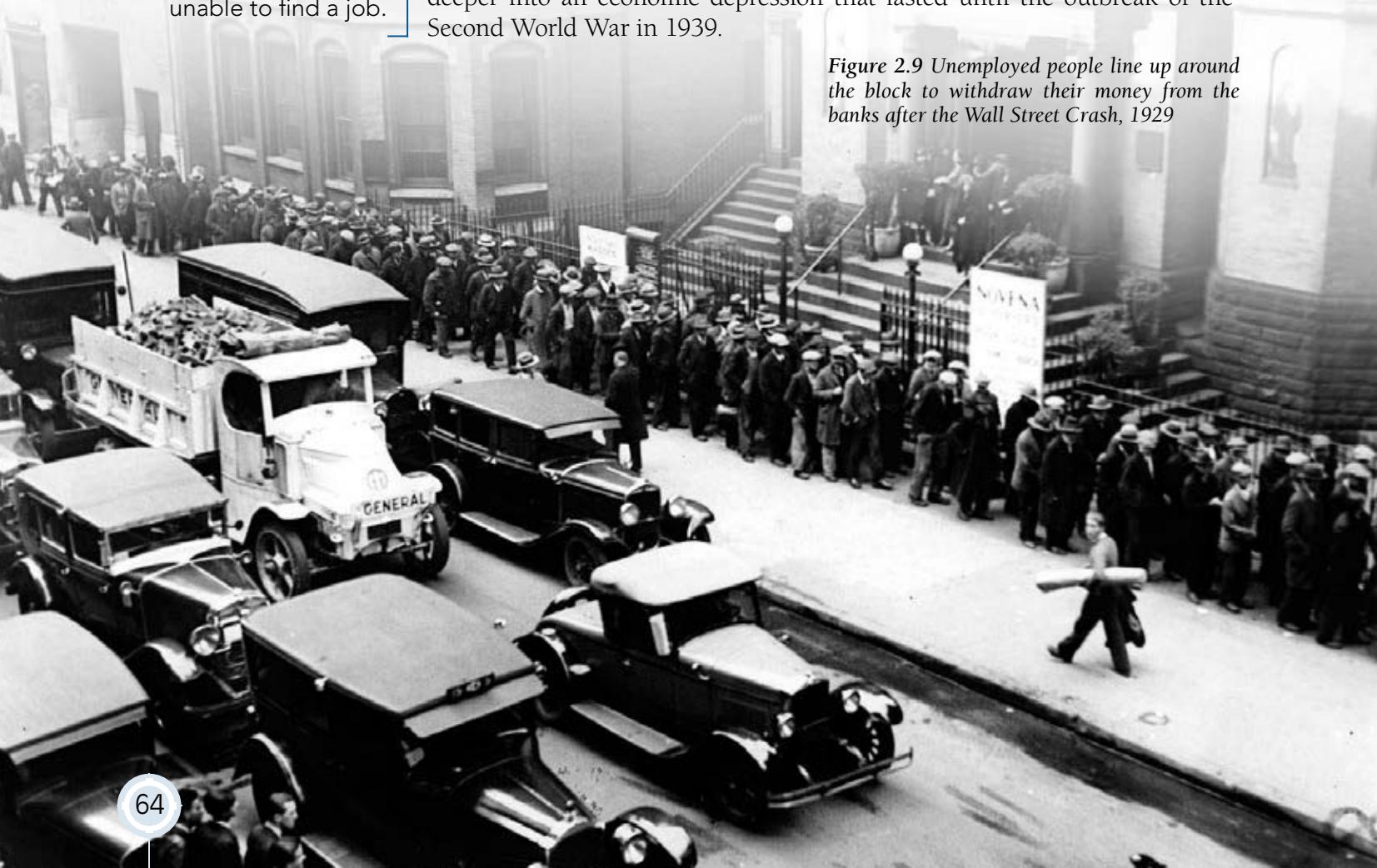
- The USA practiced protectionism – in order to protect its own industries, it imposed high taxes on foreign imports. This effectively prevented other countries from making profits by selling their goods in the USA. Without such profits, these countries were increasingly unable to afford American products.
- Some countries began to impose high taxes on American imports. This had the effect of reducing demand for American products in those countries.
- Some European countries could not afford to buy American goods because they were struggling to repay war debts to the USA.

unemployment benefit

Payments made by a country's government to people who are unable to find a job.

As demand for US products fell, manufacturers began to produce less. This meant that many workers were laid off at a time when there was no **unemployment benefit**. As more and more families were forced to reduce their spending, the demand for goods fell still further, leading to even more unemployment. This vicious circle continued, spiralling the USA deeper and deeper into an economic depression that lasted until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Figure 2.9 Unemployed people line up around the block to withdraw their money from the banks after the Wall Street Crash, 1929



Other countries were soon affected by the Depression, largely because their prosperity was dependent on US loans. As soon as the crash came, the loans stopped. The German economy immediately collapsed and the country could no longer meet its reparations commitments. This in turn affected Britain, France and Italy. As international trade declined, all industrialised countries suffered from the same economic malaise. Spiralling **deflation** affected Europe and Japan alike. High unemployment quickly followed, leading to social unrest and political extremism. Everywhere, the threat of revolution seemed greater than ever before. In countries that lacked a strong democratic tradition, existing forms of government found it impossible to cope.

Historical debate

By inflicting such harsh terms on Germany, the Treaty of Versailles was both unfair and unjust.

Historians have differing opinions about this statement. The arguments used by historians to support their conflicting opinions regarding this statement are outlined in the table below.

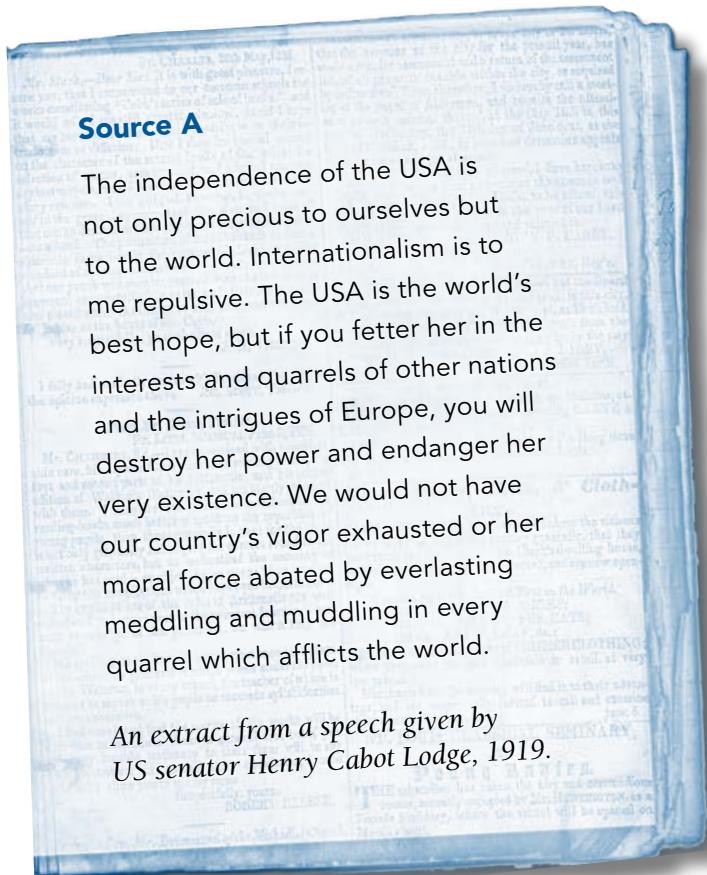
deflation

A general decline in prices, caused by a reduction in the supply of money and credit. During the Great Depression, deflation spiralled out of control. As prices of their products fell, employers reduced the wages of their workers, leading to a further downward turn in prices. As unemployment increased, fewer people were able to buy products, leading to a further reduction in prices. Many businesses collapsed.

Agree	Disagree
The treaty was imposed on Germany without consultation, and was not based on Wilson's Fourteen Points.	Germany had imposed far more severe terms on Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Having ignored Wilson's Fourteen Points then, Germany had no right to expect better treatment in 1919.
Germany was forced to reduce its military capacity at a time when no other country was disarming – this could make it vulnerable to attack and cause further instability in Germany itself.	In the interests of future peace, it was reasonable to prevent Germany being able to wage war again. This was especially important for French security.
Germany lost European territory, which was important both economically and militarily.	Germany's losses were restricted to territories it had gained in previous wars. Germany's losses were not as great as France would have wished.
The Polish Corridor effectively split Germany in two.	Having access to the sea was vital to ensure that Poland was economically viable.
Germany lost its overseas possessions in Africa. These could now be exploited by its European rivals.	Germany had been a latecomer to the 'scramble for Africa'; its African colonies were not especially valuable.
Many German nationals were now living in other countries. In particular, union with Austria was forbidden.	As a result of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian, Turkish and Russian empires, many nationalities were now living under foreign governments. This situation was not unique to Germans.
Germany was forced to take all the blame for the First World War and was expected to pay reparations, which were set at a level that was far too high to be practical.	Considerable damage had been done during the war, and it was reasonable to expect compensation. Even when defeat in the war was inevitable, the Germans had caused damage to French property such as coal mines.

Questions

- 1 Why did the USA reject the Paris peace settlement of 1919–20?
- 2 Why did problems in the US economy after 1929 have an adverse effect on other countries?
- 3 Source A below is part of a speech given by a US senator in 1919. In what ways do the views expressed in this speech differ from those of President Wilson?



An extract from a speech given by
US senator Henry Cabot Lodge, 1919.

Key issues

The key features of this chapter are:

- the problems involved in creating a peace settlement at the end of the First World War
- the effects of the five treaties that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference 1919–20
- the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
- the impact of the USA's decision to return to an isolationist foreign policy
- attempts to ease international tensions.

Revision questions

- 1 Which side of the argument outlined in the historical debate on page 65 is the more convincing and why?
- 2 In what ways might the USA's rejection of the Paris peace settlement have undermined its effectiveness?
- 3 To what extent is it fair to describe the post-war settlement of 1919–20 as 'a bad peace'?

Further reading

- Ambrosius, L. E. *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy in American Foreign Relations*. Basingstoke, UK. Macmillan. 2002.
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- Marks, S. *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918–33*. Basingstoke, UK. Macmillan. 2003.
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- Steiner, Z. *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919–33*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press. 2005.

Chapter

3

International relations in an age of extremism 1919–39

Key questions

- What were the aims and implications of Mussolini's foreign policy?
- Why did a civil war break out in Spain in 1936?
- What were the aims and implications of Hitler's foreign policy?
- Why did the Second World War break out in 1939?

Content summary

- The political and economic impacts of the First World War and the world economic crisis in the 1930s.
- The emergence of extremist governments in the USSR, Italy, Germany and Spain.
- Mussolini's diplomatic approach to foreign policy 1923–34.
- Mussolini's more aggressive foreign policy after 1934.
- The reasons for and implications of Italy's closer relations with Germany after 1934.
- The long- and short-term causes of the Spanish Civil War.
- The international nature of the Spanish Civil War.
- Germany's erosion of the Treaty of Versailles 1933–38.
- The implications of Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia and Poland.
- The causes of the Second World War.

Timeline

Oct 1922	Mussolini becomes leader of Italy
Aug 1923	Corfu Incident
Sep 1923	General Primo de Rivera becomes military dictator in Spain
Jan 1933	Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany
Sep 1933	Non-Aggression Treaty between Italy and the USSR
Oct 1935	Italy invades Abyssinia
Mar 1936	German occupation of the Rhineland
Jul 1936	Spanish Civil War begins
Mar 1938	Anschluss (union of Germany and Austria)
Mar 1939	Germany takes Czechoslovakia
May 1939	Italy and Germany form Pact of Steel
Aug 1939	Nazi–Soviet Pact
Sep 1939	German invasion of Poland/outbreak of the Second World War

Introduction

The economic legacy of the First World War had profound implications across Europe. Unemployment began to rise as countries reduced their industrial output to pre-war levels. Thousands of soldiers returning from the trenches could not find work. At the same time, countries had to repay their war debts. Soaring inflation, high unemployment, falling standards of living and limited prospects for the future combined to cause anger and resentment amongst the unemployed and deprived. It is in such dire economic conditions that extremism thrives. Fear of communist revolution – to which Russia had already succumbed – spread throughout Europe. So too did a different type of extremism, one that saw communism as the arch-enemy. This was **fascism**.

Even in Britain, with its long tradition of **constitutional government**, extremist groups seemed to pose a threat to democracy. The Communist Party of Britain was founded in 1920 and, when economic conditions deteriorated still further during the worldwide depression that followed the Wall Street Crash (see page 63), the British Union of Fascists was established in 1932. Although democracy survived in Britain, other countries with less stable constitutions proved unable to resist the pressures of extremism.

As early as 1922, Benito Mussolini had led his Fascist Party to power in Italy. By 1933, Adolf Hitler had gained supremacy for his Nazi Party in Germany. Between 1936 and 1939 the rival forces of fascism, communism and democracy fought a long and bloody war for control of Spain, culminating in victory for the semi-fascist General Francisco Franco. All three leaders rapidly removed political opposition, establishing dictatorships in which they had ultimate control over the fate of their countries. Even in Soviet Russia, the dream of equality that had inspired the 1917 revolution was shattered. Following Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin assumed leadership. By 1930, he had established himself as a virtual dictator in the USSR.

The emergence of these dictatorships had a major effect on international relations. Fear of communism spreading across the rest of Europe meant that Soviet Russia was isolated and therefore vulnerable. The alliance between Britain, France and Russia, which had proved so vital to success in the First

World War, was no longer possible. The ultra-nationalist and aggressive foreign policies pursued by Hitler and Mussolini posed a significant threat not only to the USSR, but also to other European countries. The Spanish Civil War was an omen of things to come.

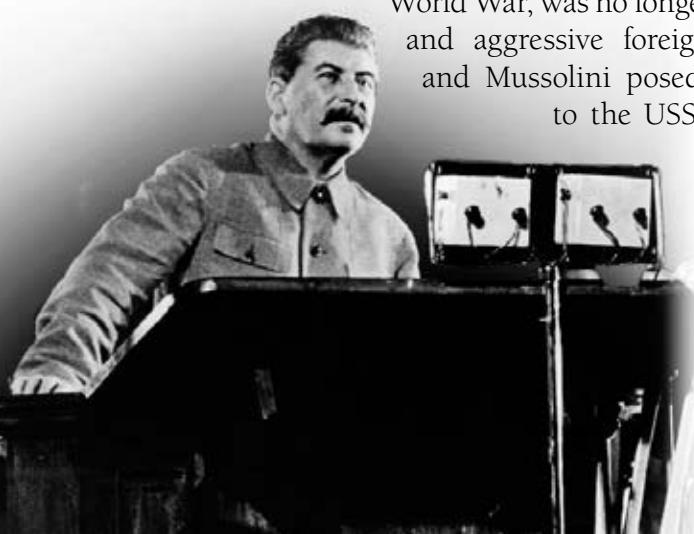


Figure 3.1 Soviet leader Joseph Stalin

fascism

A political ideology in which government is based on extreme authoritarianism and nationalism. Fascists argue that the needs of the nation should outweigh those of individuals. In this sense, it is theoretically the exact opposite of communism.

constitutional government

A form of government in which power and authority are based on and limited by a clearly defined constitution. Government in Britain was (and still is) based on a parliamentary system, which allowed the people to elect members of parliament by casting votes.

proportional representation

A voting system used to elect people to a parliament or assembly. The number of seats won by each political party is in proportion to the number of votes it receives. For example, a party winning 50% of the votes cast would gain 50% of the available seats.

coalition governments

Governments formed by a combination of two or more political parties, none of which was able to gain an overall majority in an election. Such governments tend to be weak and indecisive because of the need for compromise between the different parties.

co-operatives and soviets

These were councils of local factory or agricultural workers, along the lines of those established by Lenin in Russia. Workers would take over their factories or land from the rich owners, and run these industries themselves.

Mussolini's foreign policy

Mussolini's rise to power

To the majority of Italians, the Versailles settlement was a bitter disappointment. Although Italy had gained Trentino, the South Tyrol, Istria and Trieste, its claims to parts of Dalmatia, Adalia, Albania, Fiume and some of the Aegean Islands had been ignored. It seemed that other countries, particularly Yugoslavia, had gained at Italy's expense.

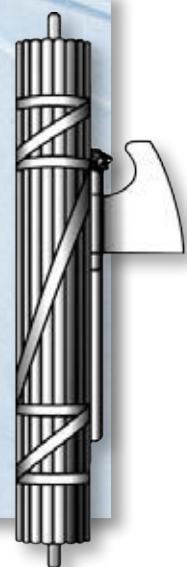
Having borrowed heavily to finance its involvement in the First World War, Italy's attempts to repay these debts led to soaring inflation. The value of the Italian lira fell from five to the dollar in 1914 to 28 to the dollar by 1921. In addition to this massive increase in the cost of living, Italians also faced high unemployment as industry reduced production to pre-war levels, and the number of people seeking jobs was increased by the return of more than 2 million soldiers. Italy's parliamentary system, based on **proportional representation**, was ill-equipped to cope with these problems. With nine or more different political parties, it was impossible for any one party to gain an overall majority. Between 1919 and 1922, Italy had five different **coalition governments**, none of which could provide the decisive leadership necessary to confront Italy's post-war problems.

These circumstances inevitably led to disorder. Strikes organised by trade unions in 1919 and 1920 quickly descended into rioting and looting. Workers began occupying their factories, while socialist leagues of farm workers started seizing land from wealthy farmers and establishing their own **co-operatives**. Factory councils, similar to the Russian **soviets**, appeared in many industrial cities. With the formation of the Italian Communist Party in January 1921, it seemed only a matter of time before a revolution began.

It was primarily the threat of communism that provided **Benito Mussolini**, a former teacher and journalist, with the opportunity to gain power in Italy. On 23 March 1919, he formed a *Fascio di Combattimento* ('Fighting Group') in Milan, and this marked the origins of his Fascist Party. Initially a socialist organisation, the party's failure to win any seats in the 1919 elections made Mussolini realise that he needed to attract financial support from wealthy businessmen and landowners. The Fascist Party emerged as the defender of private enterprise and property, its black-shirted groups regularly attacking communist headquarters and newspaper offices.

Note:

Mussolini wanted to revive the glory of the ancient Roman Empire, and the Italian Fascist Party took its name and symbol from the word *fascis*, meaning a bundle of rods with a protruding axe. This image had been used as a symbol of power by the Senate in Ancient Rome.



Despite its violent methods, the Fascist Party rapidly gained the support of those sections of Italian society that had most reason to fear communism – industrialists, landowners, middle-class property owners, the Roman Catholic Church and the king, Victor Emmanuel III. Although the Fascist Party gained only 35 seats in the 1921 elections (compared to the 123 taken by the socialists), the number of fascist squads throughout the country grew rapidly.

In 1922, the communists called for a general strike. Mussolini boldly announced that if the government did not put a stop to this then his own men would. In October 1922, some 50,000 fascists began what became known as the March on Rome, while others moved into key northern industrial cities. The Italian prime minister, Luigi Facta, wanted to use the army and police to disperse the fascist columns, but the king refused and instead invited Mussolini to form a new government.

Far from the ‘great battle’ portrayed in Mussolini’s subsequent propaganda, the March on Rome had been an enormous bluff. The fascist groups could easily have been held back by the army, and in fact Mussolini remained in Milan rather than leading his men into ‘battle’. Nonetheless, the threat of violence alone led to the creation of the world’s first fascist state, a precursor to later regimes such as those of Adolf Hitler (Germany), Francisco Franco (Spain), António de Oliveira Salazar (Portugal) and Juan Perón (Argentina).

The main characteristics of Mussolini’s style of government can be summarised as follows:

- **Lack of democracy:** Italy became a one-party state. Members of the Fascist Party were seen as the élite of the nation and great emphasis was placed on the cult of their leader, Mussolini himself.
- **Totalitarianism:** the interests of the state were more important than the interests of individuals. Therefore, the government attempted to control as many aspects of people’s lives as possible.
- **Autarky:** the idea that Italy should become economically self-sufficient. In order to achieve this, the government sought to control and direct all parts of Italy’s economy.
- **Extreme nationalism:** although Italy had once been the heart of the great Roman Empire, its power and prestige had been allowed to decline. Mussolini was determined to restore Italy to its former glory.
- **The use of violence:** Mussolini had seen how the mere threat of violence had enabled him to gain power. He believed that violent methods were the key not only to maintaining control in Italy but also to ensuring a successful and glorious foreign policy in which the Italian Empire could be expanded. As he once remarked: ‘Peace is absurd; fascism does not believe in it.’

Key figure

Benito Mussolini (1883–1945)

Mussolini led the right-wing fascist movement in Italy, forming the Fascist Party in 1919 and ruling Italy from 1922 to 1943. He swiftly established a dictatorship and launched a campaign to control all aspects of Italian life. His decision to support Hitler during the Second World War proved fatal, and he was dismissed by the king in 1943. Mussolini was executed by communists in 1945.



Note:

A cult of leadership is a common trait in dictatorships – countries in which only one political party is allowed, where there are no elections and where a single person assumes total control of the running of the country. Stalin's propaganda in the USSR made extensive use of the cult of personality and it became common in fascist states. For example, Hitler took the title *Führer* (leader or guide), Franco became *Caudillo* (leader or chief) and Mussolini took the title *Il Duce* (leader).

Diplomacy 1923–34

In line with the aggressive nationalism that characterised fascism, the main aim of Mussolini's foreign policy was to make Italy 'great, respected and feared'. He declared that 'the 20th century will be a century of Italian power'. In the period from the end of the First World War until Mussolini's rise to power in 1922, Italy had been neither great, respected nor feared. The Paris peace settlement had not granted Italy many of the territorial rewards it had expected as a result of its contribution to the Allied victory. To the majority of Italians, this was both humiliating and a reflection of their government's weakness. Mussolini was determined to establish Italy's credibility as a major European power, and his early actions certainly seemed to reflect these grand aims.

Fiume (March 1923)

The weakness of the Italian government at the end of the First World War was most clearly reflected in events that took place at the Adriatic port of Fiume. Italy's claim to the city and its surrounding area – based on the fact that the majority of its population was Italian – had been rejected by the Paris peacemakers. Instead, they had declared Fiume a 'Free City' that was to be used jointly by Italy and Yugoslavia. Infuriated by his government's meek acceptance of this situation, the Italian poet and nationalist Gabriele D'Annunzio led a force of around 300 ex-soldiers into Fiume in September 1919 and declared it part of Italy.



At first, the Italian government did nothing to oppose this clear breach of the Versailles settlement. By December 1920, however, concerned that the affair was damaging Italy's relations with other European nations, the government sent in troops and forced D'Annunzio to leave the city. To the anger of the Italian nationalists, the government renounced its claim to Fiume. Later, in March 1923, the local government in Fiume became threatened with rebellion and revolution, and Mussolini ordered Italian troops to move in and restore order. Yugoslavia had little choice but to accept the situation, and Fiume effectively became part of Italy.

Figure 3.2 A map showing the position of Fiume in relation to Italy and Yugoslavia

The Corfu Incident (August 1923)

In 1923, a border dispute between Greece and Albania was referred to the League of Nations, which established a commission to determine where the boundary should be. This commission was led by an Italian, Enrico Tellini. Greece consistently showed little willingness to co-operate with the commission, and when Tellini and three of his Italian assistants were killed by unknown assailants in August 1923, Mussolini was convinced that Greece was responsible.

Italy sent an ultimatum to Greece, demanding financial compensation and the execution of those responsible. When these conditions were not met, Mussolini ordered the bombardment and occupation of the Greek island of Corfu, resulting in the deaths of a number of civilians. Despite an appeal to the League of Nations, Greece was forced to apologise and pay the full amount of compensation Italy demanded (50 million lira) in exchange for the withdrawal of Italian troops from Corfu. Although Mussolini had refused to accept the League of Nations' right to determine the outcome of this issue (see pages 144–45), Italy's success in the matter heightened his prestige.

Although they provided good propaganda material, these two early successes were of little real significance. In reality, Italy was in no position to challenge the major European powers of Britain and France at the time. Mussolini's dream of turning the Mediterranean into *Mare Nostrum* ('Our Sea'), for example, faced the insurmountable problem of Britain's naval supremacy. With its powerful naval bases in Malta, Gibraltar and Cyprus, Britain's control of the Mediterranean was indisputable. There is little doubt that one motive for the Italian occupation of Corfu in 1923 was the island's strategic position at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. However, this opportunity was lost when Greece paid the compensation and Italian troops withdrew from Corfu. Mussolini was well aware that, as the only fascist nation and with a reputation for aggressive foreign policies, Italy was in danger of becoming isolated. In the 1920s, being isolated meant being vulnerable.

Note:

Mussolini's staunch nationalism was based on an ambition to restore Italy to its former greatness. His desire to claim the Mediterranean for Italy ('Our Sea') was a part of this campaign, reflecting the period of the great Roman Empire, when Rome controlled the whole of the Mediterranean Sea.

Friendly relations

Between 1923 and 1934, Mussolini adopted a more cautious approach to foreign affairs, gaining a reputation as a statesman with whom the other European nations could safely negotiate:

- He attended the Locarno Conference in 1925 (see page 56), where he forged effective working relationships with representatives from Britain,

France, Germany and Belgium. Italy played a key role in many of the agreements that emerged from the conference and which gave the people of Europe genuine hope that future peace could be secured. For example, Mussolini added weight to the agreement between France, Belgium and Germany to respect each other's frontiers; if one of the three nations broke this agreement, Italy and Britain would assist the country that was being attacked. This was a sign that Italy was being accepted by the other leading European nations as a major power in its own right.

- Mussolini established friendly relations with Greece, Hungary and Albania. Located to the south of Italy's rival, Yugoslavia, Albania was especially important to Mussolini. Economic and defence agreements gave him virtual control over the country, enhancing Italy's strategic position in the Adriatic Sea.
- He was especially keen to establish good relations with Britain. For example, he supported British demands that Turkey should hand over the province of Mosul to Iraq, in exchange for which the British gave Italy a part of Somaliland in East Africa.
- Italy became the second European country (after Britain) to formally recognise the USSR, and Mussolini signed a non-aggression treaty with the Soviets in 1933.

One of Mussolini's major concerns was the weakness of Austria in the post-war world. As a neighbouring nation, Austria's lack of political, economic and military strength meant that it would provide Italy with little protection should Germany regain its power and show signs of aggression. When Hitler's Nazi Party gained power in early 1933, a revival of German military strength and ambition seemed increasingly likely. Consequently, Mussolini provided support to the anti-Nazi Austrian government of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. When Dollfuss was murdered by Austrian Nazis in July 1934, Mussolini sent Italian troops to the border to prevent a German invasion of Austria. This action greatly improved Italy's relationship with France, which was equally concerned by the growing threat from Germany.

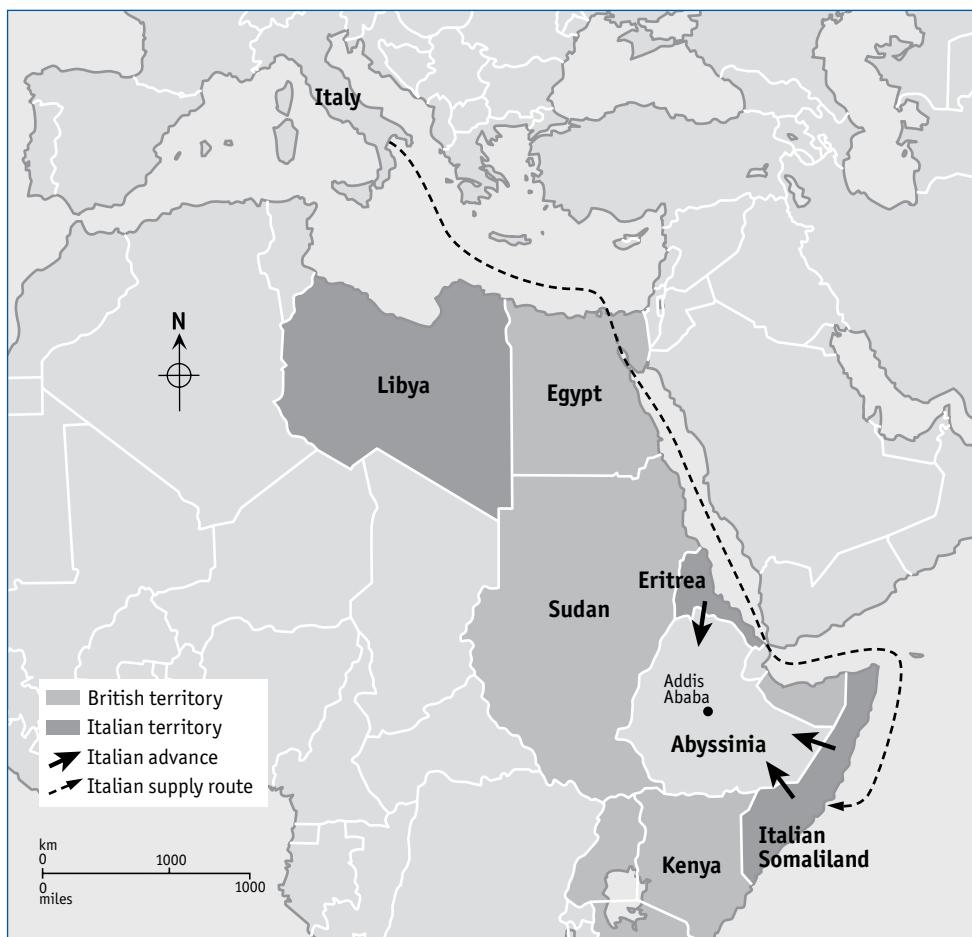
Mussolini's more aggressive foreign policy after 1934

By 1934, therefore, Mussolini was widely respected abroad. However, little progress had been made towards achieving the ambitious aims of which he had boasted when he came to power. The country was in the grip of a severe depression and Mussolini's popularity with the Italian people was declining. There was clearly a need for some spectacular success overseas to give *Il Duce* a propaganda boost.

In October 1935, Mussolini ordered the invasion of Abyssinia (modern Ethiopia) – the only remaining independent state in Africa. This was not the first time Italy had attempted to seize Abyssinia. An invasion in 1896 had

ended in an embarrassing defeat at the Battle of Adowa. Now Mussolini was determined to succeed where others had failed, arguing that this colonial expansion would provide Italy with much-needed raw materials and a new market for Italian products.

Figure 3.3 A map showing Italy's invasion of Abyssinia



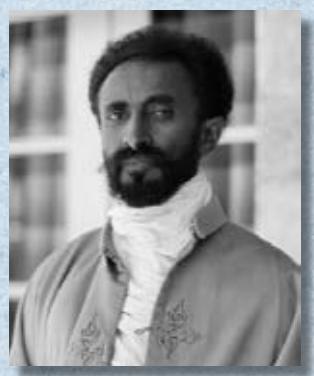
Although the Abyssinians, under their emperor **Haile Selassie**, did all they could to resist, they were no match for troops armed with modern European weapons. An Italian victory was inevitable from the outset. The League of Nations condemned this act of Italian aggression, but took no real action against Mussolini despite impassioned pleas from Haile Selassie. Some economic sanctions were applied, but this was a token gesture and had no ill-effects on the Italian economy. (For more information on the League of Nations' reaction to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, see page 146.)

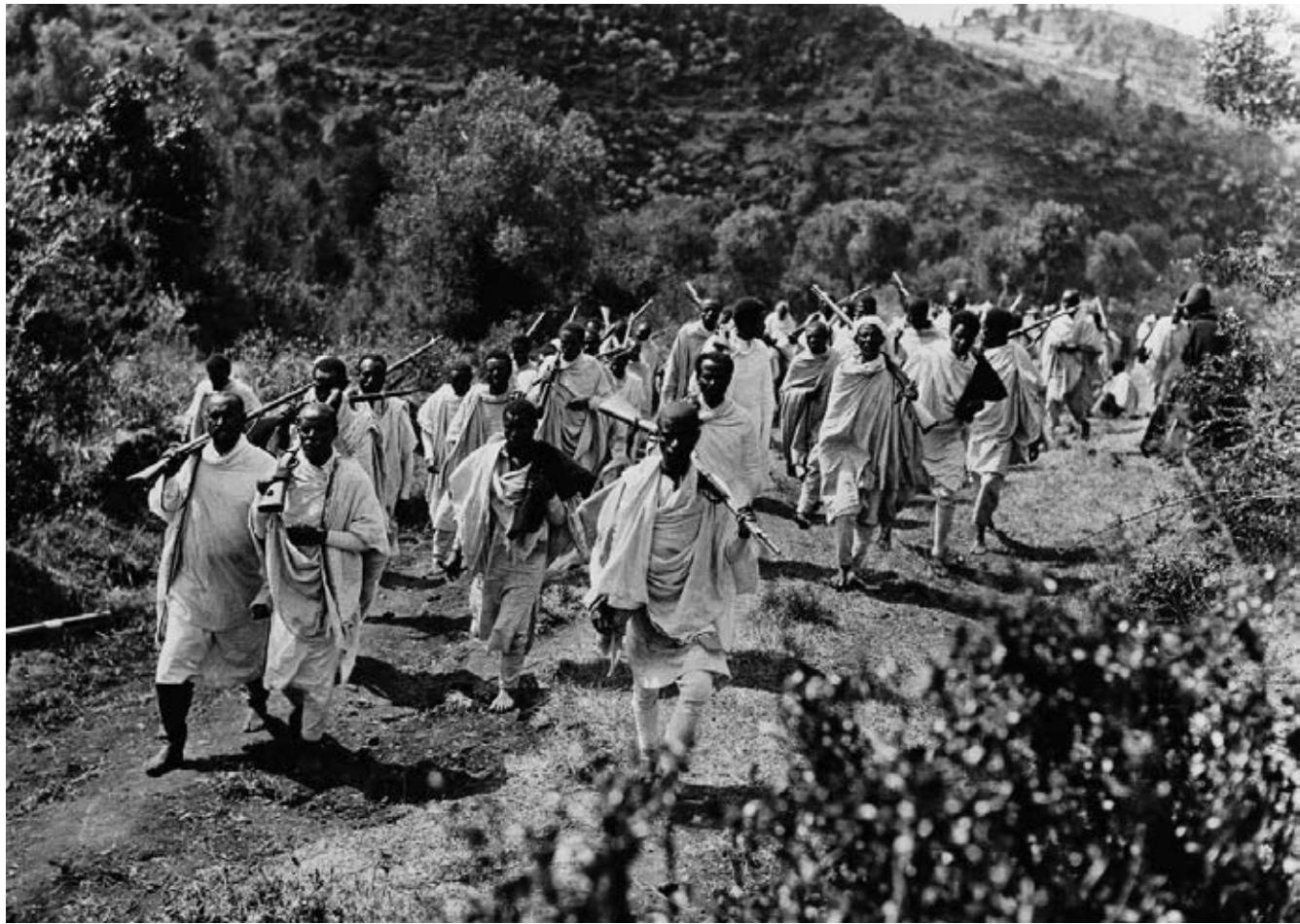
The League's weak response was mainly because neither Britain nor France was prepared to risk going to war with Italy over the independence of an African state. Such matters were considered insignificant compared to the growing menace of Nazi Germany, and Britain and France wanted Italy as an ally rather than an enemy.

Key figure

Haile Selassie (1892–1975)

Haile Selassie ruled first as regent (1916–30) and then as emperor of Ethiopia (formerly Abyssinia) from 1930 to 1974. He encouraged his people to resist the Italian invasion, and pleaded with the Western democracies to come to his country's aid during the conflict. After the Italian victory, Selassie went into exile in Britain but returned in 1941.





Rome–Berlin Axis

An alliance between Italy and Germany. Mussolini said that the Axis was a line drawn between Rome and Berlin, around which 'all European states which desire peace can revolve'.

Anti-Comintern Pact

Essentially an alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy (who joined in 1937) against the USSR, whose Comintern was regarded as 'a menace to the peace of the world'.

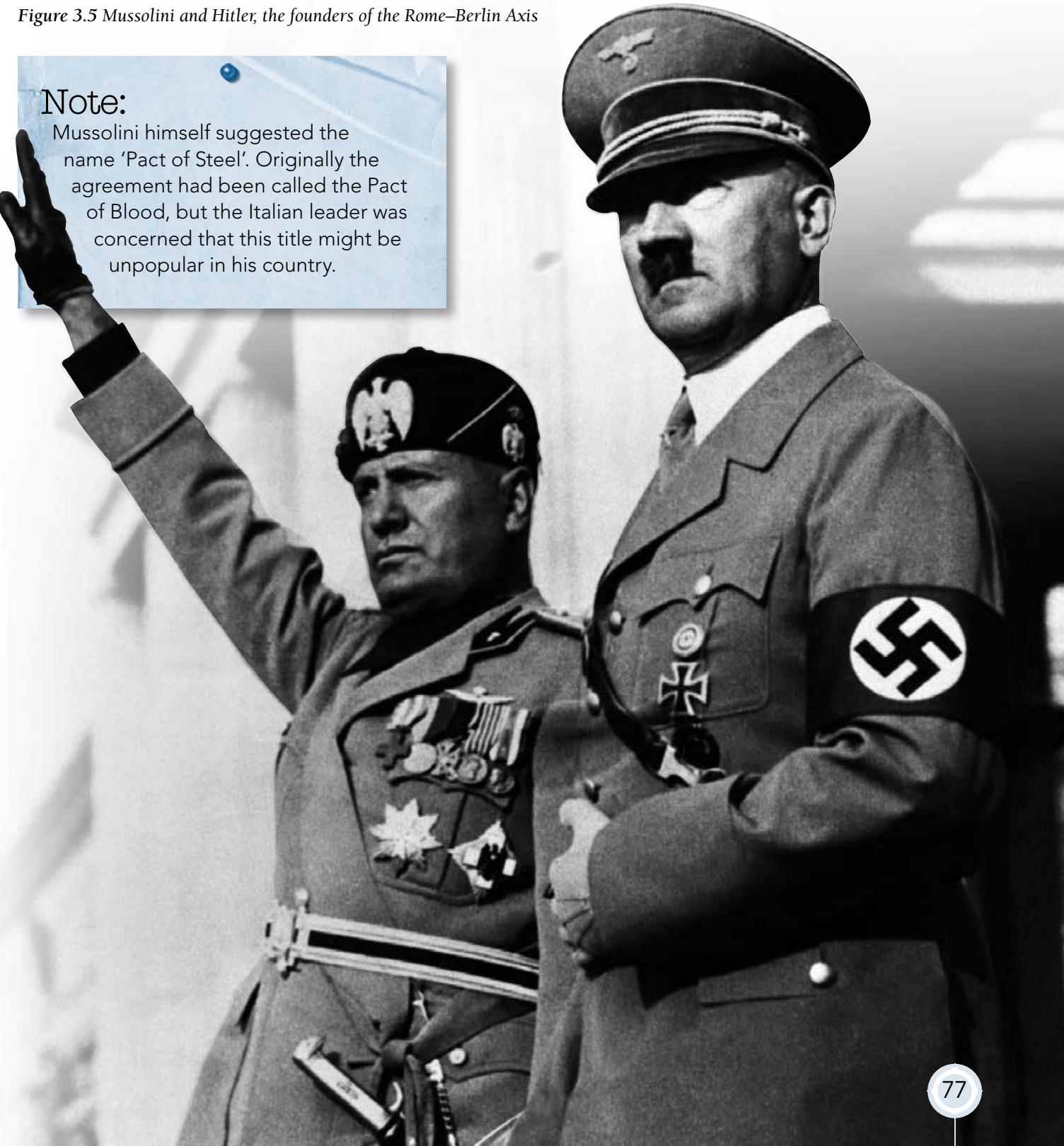
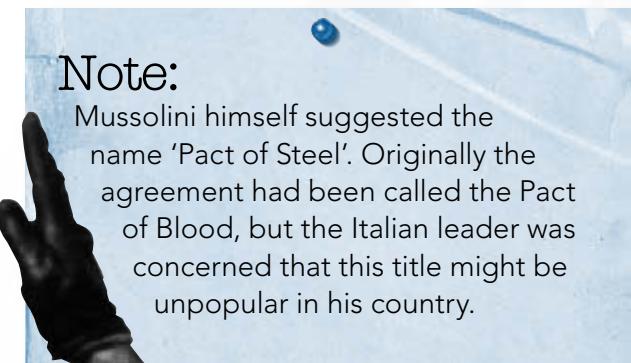
Figure 3.4 Abyssinian men marching off to fight after the Italian invasion in 1935

Ironically, the fact that the League of Nations had imposed sanctions – ineffective though they were – angered Mussolini and led him to forge closer links with Hitler, the one European leader who had not openly condemned Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. Having once referred to Hitler as 'that mad little clown', Mussolini became increasingly infatuated with the German leader's audacious foreign policy, and eventually reached the conclusion that there was more to be gained by a close relationship with Germany than with Britain and France. As a result, Mussolini completely reversed the thrust of his foreign policy. Rather than fearing and resisting the resurgence of German power, Mussolini began to support and in many ways imitate it. The diplomatic approach he had adopted between 1923 and 1934 was replaced by aggression and an even greater desire for glory.

In addition to this, with the dual aims of helping to establish another fascist state in Europe and gaining a naval base in Spain, Mussolini gave considerable military assistance to Francisco Franco, the right-wing nationalist leader during the Spanish Civil War. In 1936, Mussolini formed the **Rome–Berlin Axis** with Hitler. The following year, he joined the **Anti-Comintern Pact** with Germany and Japan.

In April 1939, Italian troops invaded Albania. This was little more than a propaganda exercise, since Albania had long been effectively under Italian control anyway. However, it enhanced Mussolini's image as a conquering hero who was leading Italy back to its former glory. In May 1939, Mussolini signed the Pact of Steel, a formal military alliance between Italy and Germany, pledging mutual support in the event of war. Italy was now committed to providing Hitler's Germany with full military support.

Figure 3.5 Mussolini and Hitler, the founders of the Rome–Berlin Axis



Questions

- 1 What were the aims of Mussolini's foreign policy?
- 2 Why and in what ways did Mussolini's foreign policy change after 1934?
- 3 How successful was Mussolini's foreign policy?
- 4 Look at Sources A and B (opposite and below), which show two different representations of Mussolini from around the same period. Explain how and why these sources give different impressions of Mussolini.

Source B

A painting of Mussolini by an Italian artist, c. 1930s.



Source A

Mussolini depicted on the cover of a French magazine from September 1933.



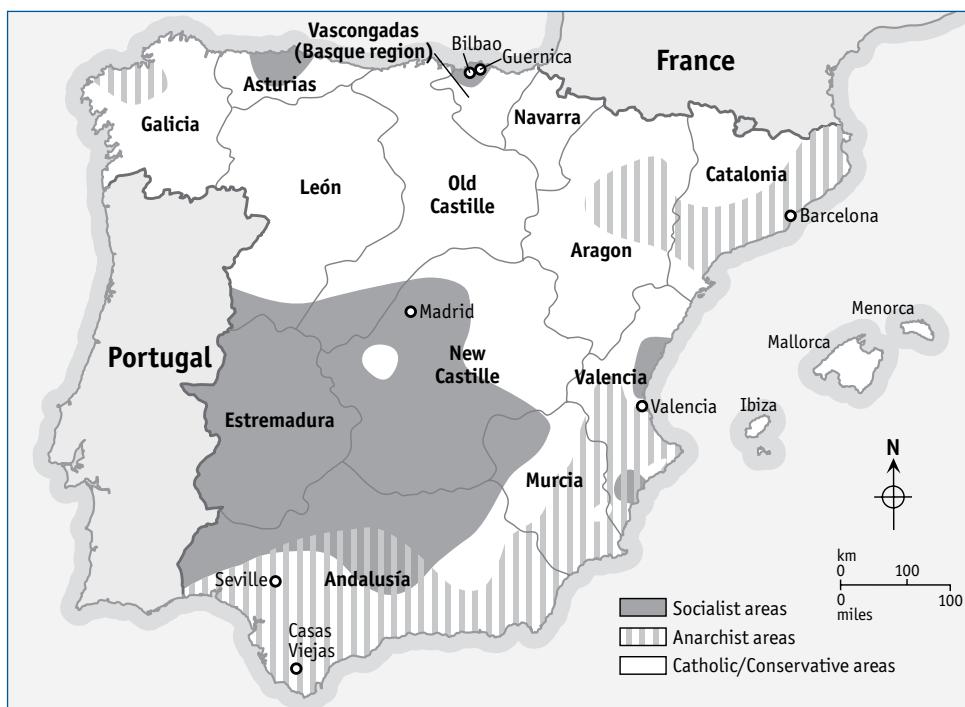
Civil war in Spain

Political instability in Spain

Like Italy, Spain entered the 20th century as a country whose past imperial glories were no more than a distant memory. With the exception of iron foundries around Bilbao and textile factories in Barcelona, Spain had experienced little of the rapid industrialisation that had characterised the increasing power of Britain, Germany and France in the later 19th century. By 1920, Spain was still a largely agricultural country, the majority of its farmland divided up into enormous estates (*latifundia*) owned by a relatively small number of wealthy landowners. In general, these were inefficiently managed and much of Spain's arable land was left uncultivated. Around 2.5 million Spaniards earned their living as landless labourers, providing a seasonal agricultural workforce. Living in poverty, and with no rights and no guarantee of being able to find employment, they made up a large and discontented group that posed a threat to civil order.

In addition to being relatively poor, Spain was a deeply divided country. Transport and communications systems were largely undeveloped, and different parts of Spain – separated by mountain ranges – developed their own cultures, customs and languages. Many Basques, Catalans, Andalusians, Aragonese and Castilians felt that preserving their regional identity was more important than showing allegiance to Spain as a country. Several separatist groups formed, demanding independence for their region.

Figure 3.6 A map showing the regions of Spain in 1930



constitutional monarchy

A monarchy in which the king or queen is simply the head of state, with a largely ceremonial role. Decisions are made by a government elected under a formal constitution.

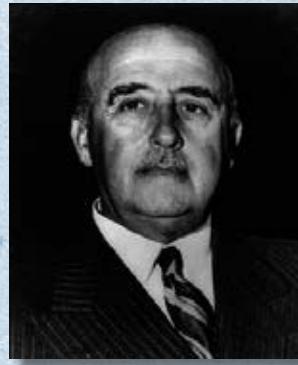
anarchists

Anarchists reject all forms of authority and support a political philosophy that believes there should be no governments at all.

Key figure

Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870–1930)

Rivera led the coup that overthrew the corrupt government in Spain in 1923. Rivera presided over a period of relative stability in Spain, but he resigned as prime minister in January 1930, unable to deal with the problems caused by the Great Depression.



Since 1885, Spain had been governed under the **constitutional monarchy** of King Alfonso XIII. This had never been a particularly efficient system, and it came under increasing threat as a result of political divisions within the country:

- Monarchists wanted to preserve the power of the king and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Liberals wanted to create a modern democracy in which the powers enjoyed by the king and especially the Church were reduced.
- Socialists and republicans wanted to remove the king altogether.
- Communists wanted a Russian-style revolution.
- Separatists wanted independence for their regions.
- **Anarchists** wanted no government at all.

The lack of effective leadership led to a bloodless coup in 1923, when **Miguel Primo de Rivera** seized power. He governed Spain as a military dictator for the next seven years. Realising that this was the only way to maintain some power of his own, King Alfonso supported Rivera, referring to him as 'My Mussolini'. Unlike Mussolini, however, Rivera was not a fascist and his period in power witnessed the development of roads, railways and industry within Spain. However, the world economic crisis that followed the Wall Street Crash led to high unemployment. Having lost the support of the army, Rivera was forced to resign and Spain was plunged into turmoil once again. In the local elections held in April 1931, the republicans gained control of all Spain's major cities. Fearing bloodshed, King Alfonso abdicated and the new Republic of Spain was proclaimed.

Problems facing the new republic

The socialists were now the dominant group in the Spanish parliament (*Cortes*). They faced an ever-deepening economic crisis. With unemployment soaring, wages being cut and standards of living falling, urgent action had to be taken if the government was to retain the support of the working classes. Under the leadership of prime minister Manuel Azaña, they embarked on a radical programme of reforms. These included:

- reducing the power and authority of the Church
- reducing the threat of the army by removing a large number of senior officers
- allowing an element of self-government to the region of Catalonia
- trying to increase the wages of industrial workers
- introducing **nationalisation** of large agricultural estates.

Inevitably, these measures infuriated the Church, the army, wealthy landowners, industrialists and businessmen. A new right-wing party, the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right (CEDA), was formed to defend their interests. At the same time, however, the government's policies also angered many of the more extreme left-wing groups. The anarchists

and communists believed that the government's proposals did not go far enough towards redressing the balance between rich and poor in Spain. Demanding the complete removal of the capitalist system, they organised a series of strikes, riots and assassinations. The heavy-handed methods used by the government in suppressing these threats to law and order lost it the support of the working classes, and Azaña resigned in 1933.

In the elections of November 1933, right-wing groups won an overall majority. CEDA became the main party under the leadership of **José María Gil-Robles**. The new government immediately set about cancelling the majority of Azaña's reforms. This had the effect of drawing the left-wing groups (socialists, anarchists and communists) closer together, and they unified in the Popular Front. This new group organised a general strike in 1934, and the number of riots and acts of violence increased. For example, anarchists caused the deaths of 19 people by derailing the Barcelona–Seville express train. Fearing that a full-scale revolution was about to erupt, the government used the army to crush the opposition with ruthless efficiency.

As the economic situation in Spain continued to deteriorate, it became clear that the country lacked the strong and consistent government required to address the problem. This was confirmed by the elections of February 1936, when the left-wing Popular Front emerged as the strongest party. However, as it turned out the new government seemed just as incapable of maintaining law and order as its predecessor had been.

In July 1936, a leading right-wing politician, Calvo Sotelo, was killed by police. This convinced right-wing groups that a military dictatorship was the only way to deal with the escalating violence in Spain. On 17 July 1936, a group of army generals, working in collaboration with the new fascist **Falange**, began a revolt in Morocco. General **Francisco Franco** (see page 82) was flown in from the Canary Islands to assume leadership of the conflict. Within a day, the revolt had spread to mainland Spain. The Spanish Civil War had begun.

International involvement in the Spanish Civil War

If the army had expected a rapid and straightforward seizure of power, it was bitterly disappointed. Many Spaniards were prepared to resist a military takeover. Anarchist trade unionists in Barcelona defeated the army insurgents and executed their leaders. The republican-led government of Madrid issued workers with guns, which allowed them to overcome local army regiments. By the end of July 1936, Franco's nationalists controlled much of northern Spain and the southern areas around Cadiz and Seville. The republicans controlled the centre and north-east of Spain, most significantly the major cities of Madrid and Barcelona. Realising that taking full control of Spain was going to be difficult, Franco appealed to Hitler and Mussolini for assistance, claiming that he was fighting to prevent a communist revolution in Spain.

nationalisation

This is when the state takes control of factories and/or farms, replacing their private owners, with the intention of making them more efficient. The profits are used to invest in improvements rather than adding to the wealth of private owners.

Key figure

José María Gil-Robles (1898–1980)

Gil-Robles was a right-wing Catholic journalist. He supported Rivera's dictatorship in the 1920s and formed the anti-democratic CEDA in 1933. Gil-Robles supported Franco in the Spanish Civil War, but was forced to dissolve his party in 1937. He played little part in post-war Spanish politics.

Falange

A Spanish fascist party formed in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the former military dictator. The Falange fought on the side of the nationalists in the Spanish Civil War.

Key figure

Francisco Franco (1892–1975)

Franco came from a military family, and by the time of the Spanish Civil War he had risen to the rank of general. He led the nationalist rebels to victory against the republican government in the war. After this he established a military dictatorship that incorporated elements of fascism. Franco remained in power until his death in 1975.



Figure 3.7 General Francisco Franco is met with applause from southern supporters in 1936

Note:

The nationalists and the republicans were the two sides in the Spanish Civil War. The nationalists, led by Francisco Franco, had the support of the army and the Church, as well as monarchists, industrialists and wealthy landowners. The republicans represented the working classes, socialists, communists and anarchists.

Neither Hitler nor Mussolini had any real interest in Spain, but both could see the value of having a third fascist state in Europe, especially one that was situated on France's southern border. Consequently, both Germany and Italy supplied Franco with military equipment and troops. Their involvement in what was basically a private Spanish affair was to have a major impact on international relations.

Public opinion in the democratic states of Britain, France and the USA, already concerned by Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia (see page 75) and Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland (see page 91), tended to see Franco as yet another brutal fascist dictator determined to seize power.

However, when the republican government of Spain asked for British and French assistance against Franco, politicians in those countries adopted a more pragmatic approach. Desperate to avoid any action that might provoke Germany, Britain established a Non-Intervention Committee to ensure that no foreign aid entered Spain. Germany and Italy joined the committee, but both ignored it. Without British or French assistance, the republicans turned to the only country that seemed prepared to help – the USSR. By the end of 1936, therefore, the civil war was no longer an internal Spanish affair. It had become an international battleground for the rival ideologies of fascism and communism.

Reasons for foreign involvement

Italy, Germany and the USSR all had ulterior motives for interfering in the Spanish Civil War. Mussolini was seeking glory, confirmation of his ability to lead Italy back to its former greatness as a major power with a leading role to play in European affairs. Hitler encouraged Italian involvement in Spain in an effort to distract Mussolini from Germany's own plans to force a union with Austria. To prolong the Spanish Civil War, Germany not only supplied Franco's nationalists with men and equipment, but Hitler also allowed German firms to sell arms to the republicans.

Soviet leader Stalin also had a vested interest in prolonging the Spanish Civil War. Sensing that the fascist governments of Germany and Italy posed the greatest threat to the security of the Soviet Union, Stalin had worked hard to maintain good relations with both Britain and France. While he certainly did not want Franco to take control of Spain, which would pose yet another fascist threat to the USSR, he was also aware that neither Britain nor France would tolerate a communist government in Spain. As a result, Stalin authorised just enough aid to ensure that the republicans could maintain their resistance, but not enough to enable them to gain outright victory.

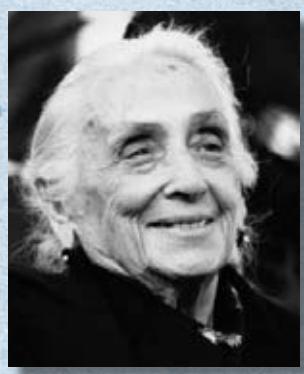
The International Brigades

Oblivious to these diplomatic intrigues, Spain continued to tear itself apart. Franco's well-armed professional soldiers met determined, if disorganised, resistance. The people of Madrid, encouraged by communist leaders such as **Dolores Ibárruri**, prepared to repel the nationalist assault. Both men and women enlisted and were given basic training in methods of warfare. They were supported by International Brigades, communist-organised armies of foreign volunteers. British, French, Italian, German, Polish, Russian and American civilians poured into Spain by sea from Marseilles or along pathways across the Pyrenees. Some were driven by a desire to halt the spread of fascism, but many were simply in search of adventure. Despite Franco's heavy bombing of Madrid and Barcelona, the nationalists failed to take these key cities, and this proved an obstacle to winning total control of Spain. The fighting was bitter, and atrocities were committed by both sides.

Key figure

Dolores Ibárruri (1895–1989)

A communist politician from the Basque region, Ibárruri was elected to parliament in 1936. She became an important republican leader during the Spanish Civil War. She was most famous for her encouragement of the people of Madrid to resist the nationalists, and her fervour earned her the nickname of *La Pasionaria* ('The Passionate Woman').



Increasingly concerned about its own security and diplomatic isolation, the USSR stopped sending supplies and ammunition to the Spanish republicans by late 1938. This naturally helped the nationalist cause. In addition, Franco gained further support from Germany in exchange for a 40% share in the Spanish iron mines. These factors gave Franco the upper hand. In January 1939, Barcelona finally fell to the nationalists. With the fall of Madrid two months later, the nationalist victory was secured.

The reasons for and implications of Franco's victory

More than half a million people died in the civil war, and the fighting caused the country extensive damage. In the final analysis, there were three main reasons for Franco's victory:

- He had managed to maintain the unity of the various right-wing groups that made up the nationalists (the Church, the army, monarchists, the Falangists).
- The republicans were far less unified, the various left-wing groups all having their own, often contradictory, aims. Unlike the well-trained professional soldiers under Franco's command, the republicans were simply armed workers who lacked military organisation and discipline.
- Assistance from Germany and Italy (and, to a lesser extent, Portugal) had proved decisive. Italy had provided over 50,000 troops and considerable air power. Germany had given untold numbers of planes and tanks. The German bombing of the Basque town of Guernica, in which over 1600 civilians were killed, was an example of the lengths to which the nationalists would go in order to create a new fascist state.

Figure 3.8 The ruins of the Spanish city of Belchite, which was destroyed by heavy bombing during the civil war



Adopting the title *Caudillo* (leader), Franco set about establishing a form of government that was in many ways similar to those of Mussolini and Hitler. Repression, military courts and large-scale executions became as common in Spain as they were in Italy and Germany.

However, Spain did not completely follow the typical pattern of a fascist state. This was most evident in the fact that Franco was an ardent supporter of the Church, restoring its control over education. As events unfolded towards the end of 1939, Hitler expected Spanish support, but Franco kept Spain out of the Second World War. While Hitler and Mussolini were ultimately defeated, Franco survived and continued to rule Spain until his death in 1975.

Questions

- 1 Why did a civil war break out in Spain in 1936?
- 2 Why did Italy, Germany and the USSR become directly involved in the Spanish Civil War?
- 3 'The disunity of the republican forces was the main reason why the nationalists were able to win the Spanish Civil War.' Discuss.
- 4 Source A below shows a poster issued during the Spanish Civil War. Which side issued the poster and what was its purpose?

Source A

A Spanish poster from the civil war.



Key figure

Adolf Hitler (1889–1945)

Austrian-born Hitler moved to Munich in 1913 and won medals for bravery in the First World War. He later adopted an extreme right-wing nationalist outlook and joined the German Workers' Party (later the Nazi Party).

Rising through the ranks, Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933 and established his dictatorship. His policies contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Towards the end of the war, facing Germany's certain defeat, Hitler committed suicide.



Hitler's foreign policy

Hitler's rise to power

Although born in Austria, **Adolf Hitler** joined the German army and fought as a corporal in the First World War. Like thousands of other soldiers, in 1918 he returned to a Germany in the grip of political and economic chaos. High inflation and unemployment led to strikes, riots and the clear threat of revolution. The new Weimar Republic seemed unable to cope with these problems.

As just one more unemployed soldier with a limited education and little hope of finding a job, Hitler seemed an unlikely political leader. However, his skill in delivering frenzied, almost hypnotic speeches, gained him a small following, and by 1921 he had become the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis). This evolved from the small German Workers' Party in the city of Munich in the region of Bavaria. To begin with, its members were mainly unemployed youths and soldiers returning from the First World War. Disenchanted and with little hope for the future, these men might have turned to communism, but instead they were drawn to Hitler's magnetic speeches. Despite the simplicity (and in many cases, the falsity) of his arguments, many people found them appealing:

- Hitler claimed that the German army had never been defeated, and blamed politicians (the 'November Criminals') for the end of the war.
- These same politicians had betrayed the country by signing the hated Treaty of Versailles, a dictated settlement that was the root cause of Germany's problems.
- Germany should ignore the Treaty of Versailles. A programme of rearmament would create jobs in the army and munitions factories.
- The new democratic constitution, which was based on proportional representation, would lead to weak coalition governments.
- Germany faced the threat of a communist revolution, which must be resisted at all costs.

Note:

The Weimar Republic was established in Germany in 1919 following the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II (see page 30). The name comes from the city of Weimar, where the new constitution was agreed.

Note:

The 'November Criminals' was Hitler's name for the German politicians who signed the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler claimed that the German army had not lost the First World War, and that the country could have continued fighting if it had not been 'stabbed in the back' by politicians.

Note:

The Stormtroopers were specifically tasked with using violence. Far from hiding these methods, Hitler boasted about them. Worried about the possibility of a communist revolution, the authorities did little to stop them. When the head of the Munich police force was told that such gangs were inciting bloodshed in the city, he replied that it was a pity there were not more of them.

The Beer Hall Putsch

The Nazi Party organised violent gangs known as Stormtroopers, which attacked the meetings of rival political parties and injured political opponents. Sensing that the time was right, and influenced by the success of Mussolini's March on Rome the previous year (see page 71), Hitler declared a national revolution on 8 November 1923. Armed Stormtroopers marched through the streets of Munich and entered a beer hall where the state commissioner Gustav von Kahr was delivering a speech. Hitler had hoped to force von Kahr to express support for the revolution and to

take a leading role in the new government of Bavaria. However, the Stormtroopers were quickly dispersed by the army, and the Beer Hall Putsch (as it became known) ended in failure.

In reality, the putsch was a very small-scale attempt to take power in Munich by force, and was unlikely to have succeeded. Hitler was relatively unknown outside Bavaria at the time, and there was little chance of the revolution spreading beyond Munich itself. Unlike Mussolini, Hitler had failed to ensure that the army would support him before embarking on the revolution.

Imprisonment and release

In the wake of the putsch, Hitler was arrested, put on trial and sentenced to five years in prison. In the event, he only served nine months of this sentence, during which he wrote *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle'), a book in which he outlined his political philosophy. Many historians have subsequently used this book as proof that it was always Hitler's intention to cause a European war. The national revolution had been an ignominious failure, but at least it provided Hitler with national publicity.

Upon his release, Hitler found Germany somewhat revitalised. US loans under the Dawes Plan (see page 55) had helped to stabilise the economy, and Germany was forging better relations with other European nations through the Locarno Treaties (see page 56). While this was good for the country, it did not bode well for Hitler's future success: with the situation improving in Germany, there would be less support for a political party built on extremist views. In the May 1928 elections, the Nazi Party gained only 810,000 votes out of the 31 million cast.

Nazi success in the Great Depression

It was the Wall Street Crash and the ensuing worldwide depression that breathed new life into Hitler's political career. US loans, on which Germany's new prosperity was entirely dependent, suddenly stopped. The country was plunged back into a period of economic chaos and massive unemployment. Support for the Nazis began to grow, and in the elections of 1932 they gained 37% of the total votes cast. Although they still did not have an overall majority in the Reichstag (the German parliament), the Nazis had become the largest single party. On 30 January 1933, Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany.

Note:

The constitution of Hitler's new totalitarian state became known as the Third Reich. Literally translated, the word *Reich* means 'realm' or 'empire'. Between 1919 and 1933, Germany's official name was the Deutsches Reich. Hitler used the term Third Reich because it linked the present with Germany's past glories. The First Reich was the Holy Roman Empire (AD 962–1806). The Second Reich followed the unification of Germany in 1871 and lasted until 1918.

Unlike Franco, who gained power by the use of violence, and Mussolini, who secured control by the threat of violence, Hitler became German chancellor though legal and constitutional means. He effectively exploited the weaknesses in the German constitution that he had criticised so vehemently.

Figure 3.9 Hitler delivering a characteristically impassioned speech in 1935



Aims and strategies of Hitler's foreign policy

Up to this time, Germany had complied with the requirements of the Treaty of Versailles, unpopular though they were with the German people. Although the issue of reparations had caused friction with other countries, particularly France, Germany gradually began to develop better foreign relations. This was particularly evident at the Locarno Conference in 1925, and culminated in Germany being admitted to the League of Nations the following year (see page 147).

Despite this, it was evident to most people what line Hitler would take when it came to foreign policy. He had been making his views abundantly clear since the early 1920s – Germany was to be restored to its rightful position as a major European power. Hitler intended to achieve this by:

- ending Germany's commitment to the Treaty of Versailles
- recovering all lost territory, including the Polish Corridor and the Saar coalfields
- developing the German army, navy and air force
- forming a union (*Anschluss*) between Germany and Austria
- reuniting all German-speaking people under the government of Germany.

By the end of 1938, Hitler had achieved most of these aims – a fact that contributed significantly to his increasing popularity. Moreover, he had done so without dragging Germany into another war. In truth, Hitler's methods were both devious and calculated, dependent on a mixture of threats and conciliatory statements. This is clearly demonstrated by the strategy he adopted at the World Disarmament Conference in 1933 (see page 58). Here, Hitler argued that for reasons of national security, Germany should be allowed to rearm to the same level as other countries. Without this, Germany was vulnerable to attack, particularly by France. He claimed that Germany was a peaceful country, and that it would willingly disarm if only other countries would do the same.

This argument inevitably caused great concern to the French, who had consistently tried to keep Germany weak as a safeguard against any future German attack on France. However, the British felt that Hitler's request was not unreasonable. After all, Germany had complied with the military restrictions imposed upon it by the Treaty of Versailles. None of the other major European powers had reduced their military capabilities in line with the commitments they had made at the Paris peace talks. From Britain's perspective, Hitler was a peace-loving leader seeking no more than just treatment for his country. Nonetheless, France refused to remove its objections to German rearmament, and this allowed Hitler to withdraw Germany from both the World Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, blaming France for his actions. This had the effect of making the French seem unreasonable, as well as causing a rift in relations between France and Britain – both good outcomes for Germany.

Challenging the Treaty of Versailles: Hitler's foreign policy 1934–38

The period from 1934 to 1938 witnessed almost unqualified success for Hitler's foreign policy, despite the fact that his actions were frequently in open defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. By his own admission, they were also gambles with potentially serious consequences; he had no way of accurately gauging what the reaction of other countries might be.

Little by little, Hitler wore away the restraints that the treaty had imposed upon Germany. He achieved this by convincing the major European nations, particularly Britain, that his motives were entirely honourable, justifiable and peaceful, while at the same time isolating countries that were the targets of his desire for the expansion of German power. Whether Hitler was following a meticulously devised plan of action towards war, or simply improvising as opportunities presented themselves, has become an issue of debate amongst historians.

Attempted Anschluss and the return of the Saar

In January 1934, Hitler signed a ten-year non-aggression treaty with Poland. This was intended to convince the Poles that Germany had no plans to take back the Polish Corridor, and to guarantee Polish neutrality if Germany decided to take action against Austria or Czechoslovakia. It had the added bonus of providing Britain with further evidence of Germany's peaceful intentions.

That Hitler fully intended to force a union between Germany and Austria became clear in July 1934. With encouragement from the *Führer*, Austrian Nazis staged a revolt and murdered the Austrian chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss. Hitler's troops were ready to enter Austria on the pretext of restoring order, but in the event they were forced to back down when Mussolini sent Italian regiments to the Austrian border (see page 74). This unexpected setback highlighted the fact that Germany did not yet possess the military strength to risk a war against Italy, and Hitler had no alternative but to deny any involvement in the actions taken by the Austrian Nazis. On this occasion, Hitler's gamble failed.



In January 1935, the Saar region, with its valuable coalfields, was returned to Germany following a plebiscite of the local people. Although the plebiscite had taken place in line with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler fully exploited the propaganda opportunity it provided to enhance his reputation within Germany. To assure the French of his peaceful intentions, Hitler also claimed that the return of the Saar region put an end to all remaining grievances between Germany and France.

Figure 3.10 A map showing the effects of Hitler's foreign policy in Europe 1935–39

Rearmament

Developing his armed forces was Hitler's next objective. In March 1935, he reintroduced **conscription**, claiming that this was in response to increases in the British air force and the announcement that France was to extend its conscription from 12 to 18 months. Hitler also declared his intention to increase the German army to a strength of 600,000 men – six times higher than that permitted by the Treaty of Versailles. Concerned about the possible implications of German rearmament, Britain, France and Italy met at Stresa in northern Italy to discuss the issue. The Stresa Front, as the resulting alliance became known, condemned Germany's actions. It reaffirmed the Locarno Treaties, pledged continued support for Austrian independence and asserted its intention to resist Germany's attempts to increase its armaments. Despite all this, the Stresa Front took no practical action against Hitler.

conscription

Compulsory military service for certain groups of society, such as men between particular ages.

Realising the weaknesses of the Stresa Front, Hitler set about exploiting them. In June 1935, he signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, agreeing to limit the German navy to 35% of the strength of the British navy. While this guaranteed British naval supremacy, Britain was effectively condoning a transgression of the Treaty of Versailles, which limited the size of the German naval fleet. The fact that Britain signed this treaty without consulting either France or Italy clearly demonstrated the fragility of the Stresa Front alliance. With Britain's opposition to German rearmament effectively removed, Hitler continued to increase the size of his army, ordered the building of new battleships and began the process of developing a large and efficient air force. Hitler was symbolically tearing up the Treaty of Versailles – and no one was stopping him.

Hitler's foreign policy thus far had been based on the assumption that none of the other major European countries would take serious action against him, and he had quickly backed down in the one instance where this assumption proved incorrect – when Mussolini rallied troops to prevent a German invasion of Austria. However, in March 1936 Hitler decided to take another gamble. In defiance of both the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Treaties, German soldiers entered the demilitarised Rhineland. Knowing that his army was not yet ready for a full-scale war, Hitler issued strict orders that the troops should retreat if they met French resistance.

The forty-eight hours after the march into the Rhineland were the most nerve-racking of my life. If the French had marched into the Rhineland, we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs, for the military resources at our disposal would have been wholly inadequate for even moderate resistance.

Adolf Hitler, commenting on the remilitarisation of the Rhineland.

Although the French and British governments protested vigorously, neither took any direct action. Hitler claimed that he was merely righting the wrongs inflicted on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, and offered to sign a peace treaty that would last for 25 years.

Later in 1936, Hitler removed Mussolini as a potential hindrance to his plans by forming the Rome–Berlin Axis (see page 76) and gained a further ally by signing the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan. Like Mussolini, Hitler provided military assistance to Franco during the Spanish Civil War. This enabled the German army and air force to gain vital military experience.

In March 1938, Hitler finally achieved *Anschluss* with Austria in clear defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. Following riots and demonstrations organised by Austrian Nazis, which the government of Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg was powerless to control, German troops moved in and declared Austria part of Germany. As before, Britain and France protested but took no direct action. Mussolini's Italy, now a German ally, also did nothing.

Appeasement

In five years under Hitler's leadership, Germany had totally overturned the Treaty of Versailles. It had regained territory in the Saar and the Rhineland, taken possession of Austria and developed large, well-equipped armed forces with experience of modern warfare. German pride and prestige had been restored, and the country had unquestionably regained its status as one of the world's most powerful nations. Moreover, while Hitler's actions had caused increasing alarm across Europe and protests by various countries, no one had taken definitive action to stop him.

This refusal to make any serious move against Hitler's foreign policy is known as appeasement. In hindsight, it seems incredible that he was permitted to so blatantly and constantly disregard the Treaty of Versailles. At the time, however, there seemed compelling reasons to avoid using military force against him:

- Although increasingly threatened by the resurgence of German power, France was politically divided and its army was reluctant to act against Germany without a guarantee of British support. The Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 convinced the French that Britain was an unreliable ally. The Rome–Berlin Axis of 1936 made it clear that France could not rely on Italy's support either. Hitler had been adept at isolating his potential enemies.

Note:

The word 'appeasement' is also used to describe the lack of decisive action by Britain and France against other incidents, such as Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia.

- Public opinion in Britain was strongly against involvement in another war. There was no desire to repeat the horrors of the First World War, while events in Spain had shown that any future conflict would be even worse, with enormous civilian casualties caused by the bombing of major cities.
- Both France and Britain were suffering from the effects of the world economic crisis. Neither could afford the high costs of extensive rearmament in preparation for war.
- British businessmen and industrialists had a vested interest in the resurgence of the German economy, since it would restore strong trading links between the two countries.
- Many British politicians believed that the Treaty of Versailles had been too harsh on Germany and that Hitler was addressing genuine grievances. They were convinced that Hitler's aggression would cease once this unfair treaty had been destroyed.
- Communism was still perceived as the biggest threat to European democracies such as Britain and France. Many politicians felt that Hitler's Germany was a vital buffer against the westward expansion of the Soviet Union.

Under these circumstances, many politicians in Britain and, to a lesser extent, France were able to convince themselves that Hitler's actions were justifiable and that he wanted peace as much as they did. As the British politician Lord Lothian said in 1935: 'I am convinced that Hitler does not want war. What the Germans are after is a strong army which will enable them to deal with Russia.'

Questions

- 1 What were the aims of Hitler's foreign policy?
- 2 How successful had Hitler been in achieving his foreign policy aims by the end of 1938?
- 3 'Hitler could and should have been stopped long before 1938, when his army was still too weak to fight a war against the combined forces of Britain and France.' Why, then, did Britain and France take no direct action to stop him?
- 4 Describe, with appropriate examples, the methods that Hitler used in order to achieve his foreign policy aims prior to the end of 1938.

The road to war

Czechoslovakia

Having effectively isolated potential opposition from Europe's other major powers, and convinced that they would take no action against him, Hitler now set about bringing more German-speaking people into the Third Reich. There were around 3.5 million such people living in the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia. Under their leader, Konrad Henlein, they claimed that they were being discriminated against by the Czech government. Riots and demonstrations broke out, many of them orchestrated by the Nazis. Edvard Beneš, the Czech president, believed that Hitler was deliberately stirring up trouble in order to justify an invasion of Czechoslovakia in the guise of restoring order.

Key figure

Winston Churchill (1874–1965)

Churchill became a politician in 1900 and by the First World War was serving as First Lord of the Admiralty, in command of the British navy. He openly opposed the policy of appeasement pursued by Chamberlain.

After the failure of appeasement and the outbreak of the Second World War, Churchill became prime minister. He led Britain through the war years and was voted in again as premier in 1951.



Hitler's instinct that Britain and France would do nothing to hinder his designs on Czechoslovakia proved correct. The British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, and his French counterpart Édouard Daladier, desperately followed a policy of appeasement with Germany. They put pressure on the Czech government to make concessions to Hitler. Chamberlain believed that Germany's claim to the Sudetenland was reasonable – another error of the Treaty of Versailles that needed correcting. The Czechs were naturally reluctant to hand over a part of their country that was so vital to its industrial infrastructure. If Chamberlain genuinely believed that Hitler's plans for Czechoslovakia would end with the acquisition of the Sudetenland, he was wrong. Hitler had already informed his generals that 'it is my unalterable decision to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future'.

As the prospect of war increased, a four-power conference was held in Munich on 29 September 1938. Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier discussed the best way of resolving the problem of Czechoslovakia. It was agreed that Germany should take immediate possession of the Sudetenland. The Czech government was not invited to the meeting – it was simply informed that if it refused to abide by the decisions reached at Munich it could expect no assistance from either Britain or France. With resistance hopeless, the Czech government agreed. Beneš resigned.

At a private meeting on 30 September, Chamberlain and Hitler signed a document renouncing warlike intentions and agreeing to deal with any future issues by negotiation. Chamberlain used the huge press coverage of his return to Britain as an opportunity to demonstrate how successful he had been in gaining an understanding with Hitler. Holding up the signed piece of paper, he explained 'I believe it is peace for our time'. The British public was relieved that the threat of war had been averted, but many were not convinced that Hitler could be trusted to keep his promises. One of these was the politician **Winston Churchill**, who described the Munich meeting as 'a total and unmitigated defeat'.



Figure 3.11 Neville Chamberlain declaring ‘peace for our time’ on his return from the Munich Conference in 1938

It quickly became apparent that Hitler had no intention of honouring the agreements made at Munich. Having incited riots by encouraging Slovakia to seek independence from the Czech government in Prague, Hitler warned that Germany might have to take action to preserve law and order. The new Czech president, Emil Hacha, was summoned to Berlin and informed that Prague would be bombed if he did not allow the German occupation of what remained of Czechoslovakia. Hacha had little choice but to submit and ‘invite’ the Germans to restore order in Czechoslovakia. On 15 March 1939, German troops crossed the Czech border. Once again, Britain and France took no action.

Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. A country that had been created as part of the Paris peace settlement had survived for just 20 years. Hitler was now convinced that Britain and France would never declare war on Germany. This time, however, his instincts were wrong. Whereas his earlier actions could be justified by the claim that he was redressing the unfair terms of the Treaty of Versailles, his acquisition of Czechoslovakia was different. He had seized territory over which Germany had no justifiable right and broken the promises he had made at Munich. No longer could Hitler claim that he had only peaceful intentions.

Even those who had appeased him for so long realised that it was time for confrontation. If Chamberlain’s initial reaction to Germany’s acquisition of Czechoslovakia had been weak, within 48 hours he was beginning to talk more forcefully against German aggression. Speaking in Birmingham on 17 March 1939, Chamberlain considered the possibility that Hitler’s actions might be ‘a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force’. As a direct warning to the German chancellor, he continued: ‘No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, Britain has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it were ever made.’ In line with this new approach, Britain introduced conscription.

Note:

In defence of his initial decision not to take action against Germany over the situation in Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain argued that the guarantee of Czech frontiers given at Munich did not apply, because technically the Germans had been ‘invited’ into the country.

Note:

Many German generals (including Brauchitsch, Halder and Keitel) thought that Hitler was pushing his luck. They believed that any further aggressive action, in particular against Poland, would inevitably lead to a war against Britain and France – a war that many military personnel believed Germany would lose.

Poland

Despite the warnings of his army generals, Hitler remained convinced that he could continue his aggressive foreign policy without other major European powers intervening. He argued that it would be impossible to maintain the German economy ‘without invading other countries or attacking other people’s possessions’.

Hitler now turned his attention to Poland. In April 1939, he insisted on the return of Danzig and German access across the Polish Corridor. In some ways these were understandable demands. Danzig’s population was largely German-speaking, while the Polish Corridor had

split East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Considering recent events in Czechoslovakia, the Poles were naturally concerned that Hitler’s demands were the first step towards a full invasion of Poland. Moreover, such moves were in defiance of the non-aggression treaty that Germany had signed with Poland in 1934.

The role of the USSR

Believing that Britain and France would do nothing to defend Poland from a German attack, the main obstacle to Hitler’s plans was the USSR. Much of Poland had belonged to pre-revolutionary Russia, and Stalin might well resist any German attempt to take possession of it. Indeed, Stalin had long been convinced that Hitler’s ultimate intention was to attack the USSR, and an invasion of Poland could be seen as preparation for this. In an attempt to ensure the security of the USSR against a resurgent Germany, Stalin had consistently tried to secure agreements with Britain and France, but these had failed due to the Western democracies’ fear of communism. Just as Stalin feared and hated Germany’s fascist government, so Hitler had spent his entire political career denouncing communism.

To the astonishment of the rest of Europe, Germany and the USSR signed a treaty of friendship and non-aggression on 24 August 1939. The Nazi-Soviet Pact (also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, after the foreign ministers of the USSR and Germany who carried out the negotiations) meant that Germany would be able to attack Poland without the interference of the USSR.

In exchange for Stalin’s non-intervention in Germany’s invasion of Poland, Hitler promised that the USSR would receive eastern parts of Poland, Finland, Estonia and Latvia. It is unlikely that Hitler intended to honour this promise, and Stalin was fully aware of this. However, the Soviet leader needed time to build up his armed forces in preparation for war against Germany, and the pact bought him that time. Besides, if Britain,

France and Germany became embroiled in a long war, this might be to the USSR's advantage. Stalin informed one of his senior officials: 'Of course, it's all a game to see who can fool whom. I know what Hitler's up to. He thinks he's outsmarted me, but actually it's I who have tricked him.' The rest of Europe understood that this was a treaty of convenience between two dictators who neither liked nor trusted each other.

With Soviet neutrality now assured, there seemed to be nothing stopping Hitler from carrying out his planned invasion of Poland. Although Britain had guaranteed support for Poland, Hitler remained convinced that this was a bluff. On 1 September 1939, German troops crossed the border into Poland. To Hitler's surprise, at 11 a.m. on 3 September, Britain declared war on Germany. France followed shortly afterwards. The Second World War had begun.

The causes of the Second World War: a summary

Historians generally agree that several factors combined to cause the outbreak of the Second World War:

- Problems created by the Paris peace settlement, and in particular the German resentment caused by the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- The failure of the League of Nations to deal effectively with problems, particularly aggressive acts by countries such as Germany, Italy and Japan.
- The world economic crisis that followed the Wall Street Crash, which played a major role in enabling fascist dictators to gain power.
- The fear of communism, which assisted the rise of fascist dictatorships and effectively prevented an alliance between Britain, France and the USSR against German aggression.
- Appeasement, which gave Hitler the opportunity to develop large and well-equipped armed forces, and led him to believe that he could carry out increasingly provocative acts without opposition.
- Stalin's willingness to sign the Nazi–Soviet Pact, which effectively made the German invasion of Poland inevitable.
- Germany could argue that it had a legitimate claim to the Sudetenland, Danzig and access to the Polish Corridor, but Hitler's decisions to take the whole of Czechoslovakia and invade Poland had no such justification, and made war unavoidable.



Figure 3.12 A cartoon from a British newspaper in October 1939; walking together as if in friendship, Stalin (left) and Hitler (right) are clearly depicted as lacking trust in each other

Questions

- 1 In what ways was Hitler's conquest of Czechoslovakia different from his earlier foreign policy successes?
- 2 Why were both Hitler and Stalin willing to sign the Nazi–Soviet Pact, even though they disliked and distrusted each other?
- 3 Explain why many of Hitler's generals were concerned by Hitler's foreign policy actions in 1939.
- 4 Source A below is a cartoon from a US newspaper published in 1939. Explain what the artist is trying to say.

Source A

A cartoon from a US newspaper published in 1939.



Historical debate

The liveliest debate amongst historians regarding the causes of the Second World War concerns the long-term motives and ambitions of Hitler's foreign policy. Various arguments have been put forward:

- In the period immediately after the Second World War, historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper argued that Hitler had always intended for Germany to become involved in a major war. They claimed that his long-term aim had consistently been the conquest of Russia, and that the acquisition of Poland was merely the prelude to an attack on Stalin's USSR. Sooner or later, this policy was bound to lead to a war against the other major European powers. Evidence for this theory comes from Hitler's own words in *Mein Kampf*, which he wrote long before he came to power in Germany and in which he stated that the German population was too large for the boundaries in which it was constrained. His solution was ***Lebensraum***. It is also known that Hitler explained his expansionist ideas to key army personnel at a meeting in 1937; this is recorded in the Hossbach Memorandum, a summary of the meeting made by Colonel Friedrich Hossbach.
- Other historians, most notably A. J. P. Taylor writing in 1961, challenge this theory, arguing that Hitler had never intended a major war. They state that Hitler was an opportunist, taking advantage of situations as they occurred, and that his foreign policy had not been based on a step-by-step plan of conquest. Such a plan would have been impossible, they claim, because Hitler could not have predicted how Britain and France would react to developments such as rearmament and the occupation of the Rhineland. The idea of *Lebensraum* was merely a propaganda tool to gain further support for the Nazi Party and was never intended as a plan for aggressive action.
- Alan Bullock suggests that Hitler never wanted a world war and, least of all, a war against Britain. The weak British response to Hitler's aggression between 1933 and early 1939 had convinced him that Britain would not interfere with his designs on Poland, leaving the way open for a German attack on the USSR. He had every reason to believe that Britain and France would do nothing to support Stalin's communist regime.
- Martin Gilbert, on the other hand, argues that Hitler *did* intend to fight a major European war in order to remove the stigma attached to Germany's embarrassing defeat in the First World War. 'The only antidote to defeat in one war,' Gilbert claims, 'is victory in the next.' Ian Kershaw agrees, stating that 'Hitler had never doubted, and had said so on innumerable occasions, that Germany's future could only be determined through war'.
- The German historian Eberhard Jäckel argues that Hitler consistently worked for 'the establishment of a greater Germany than had ever existed before. The way to this greater Germany was a war of conquest fought mainly at the expense of Soviet Russia.'

Lebensraum

The literal translation of the word is 'living space'. In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler argued that Germany should take land to the east in order to provide more space for the expanding German population. This would mean seizing land from Poland and the USSR.

Key issues

The key features of this chapter are:

- the emergence of fascist governments in Italy, Germany and Spain
- the Spanish Civil War as a 'dress rehearsal' for the Second World War
- the aggressive foreign policies of Italy and Germany
- the reasons for and the implications of appeasement
- the causes of the Second World War.

Revision questions

- 1 'The aims of Hitler's foreign policy were such that Germany would inevitably end up fighting a war against Britain at some point.' How far do you agree?
- 2 To what extent was the policy of appeasement adopted by countries such as Britain and France responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War?
- 3 To what extent was the USSR responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War?
- 4 What were the reasons for the changing relationship between Italy and Germany throughout the 1930s?
- 5 Read Sources A (below) and B (opposite). Using these sources and details of the historical debate on page 99, assess how far Hitler was responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War.

Source A

Responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man, the German Chancellor, who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions.

British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, in a speech given to the British parliament at the outbreak of the Second World War, 1939.

Source B

The current versions of Hitler are, I think, two. In one view, he wanted a great war for its own sake – Germany the greatest Power in the world and himself a world conqueror on the pattern of Alexander the Great or Napoleon. He was a maniac. The other view makes him more rational. In this view, Hitler had a coherent long-term plan which he pursued with unwavering persistence. He intended to give Germany a great colonial empire in eastern Europe by

defeating Soviet Russia, exterminating all its inhabitants and then planting the vacant territory with Germans.

Surely, if Hitler was planning a great war against Soviet Russia, his war against the Western Powers was a mistake.

An extract from the 1991 edition of A. J. P. Taylor's book Origins of the Second World War.

Further reading

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Chapter

4

China and Japan in an age of development 1919–45

Key questions

- What were the implications of the 'warlord era' in China?
- How effective was the Kuomintang in achieving its aims?
- Why did communism gain support in China?
- Why and with what effects did Japan become a military dictatorship in the 1930s?

Content summary

- Yuan Shih-kai and the disintegration of China.
- The May the Fourth Movement.
- Sun Yat-sen, the Kuomintang and the Three Principles.
- Chiang Kai-shek and the success of the Kuomintang.
- Unity and disunity between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.
- Mao Zedong and the Long March.
- Reasons for growing dissatisfaction with the Kuomintang.
- Reasons for the growth of the Chinese Communist Party.
- Wars between China and Japan during the 1930s.
- The implications of military rule in Japan; the widening of the Second World War.

Timeline

1894–95	War between China and Japan
1904–05	Russo–Japanese War
Jan 1912	Abdication of last Chinese emperor
Aug 1912	Kuomintang established
Jan 1915	Japan issues Twenty-One Demands
May 1919	May the Fourth Movement begins in China
Jul 1921	Chinese Communist Party formed
Sep 1931	Japanese invasion of Manchuria
Nov 1931	Mao Zedong announces Republic of China
Jan 1933	Japan withdraws from League of Nations
Oct 1934	Long March begins
1937–45	Sino–Japanese War
Dec 1941	Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

Introduction

Confronted with external challenges from the West and internal pressure from a series of large-scale rebellions, China's collapse began in the middle of the 19th century. By 1912, its last emperor was forced to abdicate, ending a system of government that had lasted for thousands of years. The newly proclaimed republic was unable to prevent the ongoing disintegration of China into separate provinces, where powerful warlords and their private armies established unchallenged control. Rival political groups emerged, which relied on their increasingly large armies to try and restore order and unity in China.

For Japan, China's plight created a power vacuum in East Asia that presented both a danger and an opportunity. There was a significant risk that the Western powers (the USA and European nations, especially Russia) would seek to exploit China's weakness in order to enhance their own economic and political influence in the region. This would undoubtedly pose a threat to Japan. Conversely, China's inability to defend itself offered Japan the chance to establish itself as the supreme power in East Asia. With the dual aim of protecting its own security whilst increasing its regional power, Japan became involved in wars against China (1894–95) and Russia (1904–05). It sought conquest in Taiwan (1894), South Manchuria (1905) and Korea (1910). It also enhanced its international prestige through a treaty with Britain in 1902. Eventually, during the First World War – when the Western powers were otherwise engaged – Japan emerged as a major power in East Asia.

Japan's seemingly aggressive rise caused alarm in Europe and the USA, which feared for their own economic interests in the Pacific region. These fears were largely allayed by Japan's willingness to compromise at the Washington Naval Conference in 1921–22, but as Japan descended into military dictatorship in the 1930s it once again embarked on an aggressive foreign policy that led to conflict, firstly with China and subsequently with the Western powers.

Note:

Throughout this chapter, traditional spellings are used for Chinese names. During the 1950s, the Pinyin system was devised to transcribe Chinese names into other languages. As a result, the names of people and institutions could be written in two different ways.

For example, the Kuomintang is written as Guomindang in the Pinyin system. The Pinyin version is given in brackets after the first mention of key people and institutions.

The implications of the 'warlord era' in China

dynasties

Royal families. Each dynasty in China was founded by a powerful warlord and lasted only as long as it remained strong enough to defeat its rivals. The Manchu (Qing/Ch'ing) Dynasty ruled China from 1644 until 1912.

Note:

The Great Wall of China became a symbol of the country's desire to remain isolated from the rest of the world. The wall was a series of fortifications made of stone, brick, wood and earth along China's northern borders. Construction of the wall began in ancient times, but most of the modern structure dates from the 14th century.

Yuan Shih-kai and the disintegration of China

For centuries, China had changed little. With a civilisation dating back thousands of years, the Chinese considered themselves superior to people from other nations, and wanted nothing more than to be left alone. China's internal economy was well organised and efficient, with merchants dealing in the products of agriculture and highly skilled craftsmen. The majority of people belonged to one of the traditional four occupational groups: scholars, farmers, artisans and merchants. Their lives were guided by the calm and peaceful philosophies of Confucius and Taoism. Ruled by a succession of **dynasties**, China was self-contained, with no need or desire to trade with other countries. This secretive and isolated country changed enormously in the last half of the 19th century.

Figure 4.1 A map of China showing its provinces and major cities, as well as the route of the Long March (see page 115)



Foreign interference

The Industrial Revolution in Western Europe brought with it an ever-increasing need for raw materials and new markets. There was potential for these in China, and European merchants and businessmen found China's reluctance to trade both mystifying and irritating.

What the Europeans could not get by agreement, they achieved by force. Between 1839 and 1842, Britain fought the Chinese in the Opium Wars, forcing China to hand over Hong Kong and to grant Britain trading rights in other major ports. Other European countries quickly followed Britain's lead, forcing China to open ports for trade and to lease land for development. Major cities such as Shanghai, Canton, Foochow and Ningpo were internationalised; foreigners built railways and factories, and refused to obey Chinese laws. Whole provinces, including Sinkiang and Shantung, fell under the influence of European 'barbarians'.

Note:

British and other European merchants gained considerable wealth by selling opium in China. Concerned about the number of people falling victim to the drug, Chinese officials tried to prevent its sale in China. British troops went in and inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Chinese during the Opium Wars of 1839–42, and China was forced to remove the trading restrictions.

Internal rebellions

As well as incursions by foreigners, China faced internal problems. The first of these was the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). The Manchu Dynasty government in the Chinese capital, Peking (now Beijing), had to enlist the assistance of regional warlords – together with British and French forces – in order to put down a rebellion in which some 20 million people were killed.

Weaknesses in the Manchu regime also became evident during the Boxer Rebellion (1898–1901), in which Chinese nationalists took up arms, angered by the government's failure to prevent foreigners gaining increasing influence within China. The Manchu government eventually supported the rising and declared war on the foreign powers. An eight-nation alliance involving Britain, Russia, Japan, France, the USA, Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary took Peking and defeated the rebellion. The Chinese government was forced to pay £67 million in compensation (over a period of 39 years) for the damage that had been done to foreign-owned property during the uprising.

Note:

The Taiping Rebellion was led by Hong Xiuquan, who claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. Hong established the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in the province's capital, Nanking, and demanded social reform in China. His army won control of large parts of southern China before it was eventually defeated.



Figure 4.2 German cavalry soldiers ride into the Chinese capital, Peking, at the end of the Boxer Rebellion in 1901

As foreigners gained more and more influence, and the authority of the Chinese government was increasingly challenged by its own people, it became clear that the Manchu Dynasty was losing control. Seizing the opportunity to expand its own power within the region, Japan forced a war against China in 1895, occupying Korea – a country that had traditionally been within the Manchu Dynasty's sphere of influence. A further humiliation occurred during the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–05 (see pages 26–27), in which these two foreign powers fought on Chinese territory for control of Manchuria. China was disintegrating.

The erosion of traditional China

At the same time, China's traditional customs were being undermined. Schools began offering a Western style of education, thousands of young Chinese were sent abroad to be educated, and hundreds of European books were translated into Chinese. China also began the process of industrialisation. Coal mines, iron foundries and cotton factories were established, and roads and railways were constructed. China was becoming westernised – a process that was accompanied by increasing demands for reform.

The end of the Manchu Dynasty

The Manchu Dynasty's weaknesses were fatally exposed in 1908, when the Empress Tzu-hsi (Cixi Taihou) died, leaving her three-year-old son Pu Yi heir to the throne. In October 1911, a revolution began amongst soldiers in Wuchang, who were incensed that the government was continuing to pay compensation for the Boxer Rebellion to the hated foreigners. The rebellion rapidly spread, and most provinces declared themselves independent of the central government in Peking. The Manchu government offered some resistance and, for a time, it seemed that China might descend into a full-scale civil war. However, this was averted when Pu Yi abdicated. On 1 January 1912, a monarchy that had lasted for nearly 2500 years formally ended. China was now a republic – a republic, however, with no tradition or experience of constitutional forms of government.

The rise and fall of Yuan Shih-kai

The president of the new Republic of China was **Yuan Shih-kai** (Yuan Shikai), a man with considerable military experience who commanded the support of the army. Ruling as a military dictator, Yuan was able to maintain order in China. In 1915, however, he made an error of judgement that cost him his position. Convinced that his role as Chinese leader was secure, Yuan proclaimed himself emperor. Revolutionary groups within China had no wish to see the restoration of a monarchy. More significantly, this move lost him the vital support of the army. Yuan Shih-kai's fall from power in 1915, and his death the following year, removed the one person who might have preserved order and unity in China.

Note:

The revolution that led to the end of Chinese monarchy and the birth of the Chinese Republic began on 10 October – the tenth day of the tenth month. In China, this is known as Double Ten Day.

Key figure

Yuan Shih-kai (1859–1916)

During the Boxer Rebellion, Yuan fought against the Chinese rebels. This gained him the respect of the foreign powers, who provided him with loans that allowed him to develop his Beiyang Army into the most powerful force in China. After becoming president of the new republic, Yuan ruled autocratically, but brought a measure of stability to China. However, his move to make himself 'Great Emperor of China' ensured his overthrow.



Figure 4.3 Yuan Shih-kai at his inauguration as president of the Republic of China in 1912

Japanese influence and the warlord era

To add to China's problems, external threats emerged once again in 1915. Japan submitted a list of Twenty-One Demands (see page 37) – backed by the threat of war – that were designed to give Japan extensive political and economic rights within China. Under pressure from the USA, Japan was eventually forced to compromise on some of these demands, but they still resulted in a significant increase in Japanese power and influence within China. It was clear that China was unable to resist the bullying tactics of its powerful neighbour.

Denied a strong central government, and increasingly vulnerable to foreign intervention, China disintegrated into hundreds of small states – each controlled by a warlord and the private army at his command. These warlords were more concerned with their own political powers than with China's national interests, and they fought against each other in bloody campaigns, causing misery and hardship to China's mainly peasant population.

The May the Fourth Movement

Having fought with the Allies during the First World War, the Chinese assumed that at the end of the conflict they would be able to reclaim the territories in Shantung Province that Germany had occupied since the 19th century. However, Chinese warlords secretly made a deal that gave Japan rights to the former German territories in exchange for financial support for the warlords' own territorial ambitions. The Treaty of Versailles ignored China's claims and acknowledged Japanese rights in Shantung Province.

This led to the rise of the nationalist May the Fourth Movement, which began with a series of student protests in 1919. Around 5000 university students took to the streets of Peking to demonstrate against the Versailles Treaty and the power of the warlords. They argued that China had become a fragmented country, dominated by warlords who were more concerned with extending their own political power than in defending national interests.

This upsurge in Chinese nationalism spread across China, and there were demands for modernisation and political reform. In fact, this was a form of nationalism that rejected traditional Chinese culture and values, which protesters believed had been a cause of China's political weakness in confronting the intrusion of foreigners. The way to restore China's unity and strength was to adopt the ideas embraced by the very foreigners the Chinese so despised. In particular, the May the Fourth Movement wanted industrial development and a democratic form of government. The battle to restore the integrity and maintain the unity of China had begun.

Note:

Many demonstrations took place in China between 1915 and 1921. This became known as the New Culture Movement. It was anti-Japanese and highly nationalistic, demanding that Shantung Province be returned to China. The movement also wanted China to undergo modernisation – economically and politically. Although its achievements were limited, many believe that the New Culture Movement marked the start of communism in China.

Questions

- 1 Why were Europeans and Americans so keen to gain influence in China during the 19th century?
- 2 Explain why China became a republic in 1912.
- 3 'Internal rather than external factors best explain why China had disintegrated by 1918.' Discuss.
- 4 What was the significance of the May the Fourth Movement?

The Kuomintang and its aims

The growth of the Kuomintang under Sun Yat-sen

Key figure

Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925)

Sun Yat-sen was educated abroad and graduated as a doctor of medicine. He became a professional revolutionary, touring Europe and the USA to raise funds for an organisation called the Save China League. Risking imprisonment, he returned to China several times to campaign for a revolution against the Manchu Dynasty, but he was in the USA when the revolution finally took place in 1911.



Perhaps the most influential figure in the nationalist campaign in China was **Sun Yat-sen** (Sun Yixian). Dismayed by China's backwardness and fragmentation, Sun became increasingly convinced that his country needed to adopt Western styles of democracy, agriculture and industry. He founded the Revive China Society in Hawaii in 1894 and, in 1905, merged with other anti-monarchist groups to form the Tongmenhui (Revolutionary Alliance), which was committed to overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty and forming a republican government in China.

In 1912, after the revolution removed the Manchus from power, the Revolutionary Alliance joined with other parties to form the Kuomintang (KMT). Sun Yat-sen was elected provisional president of the new Republic

of China and began efforts to limit the influence of Yuan Shih-kai (see page 107), who controlled the army. However, Sun's attempts failed and he was soon ousted by Yuan, who declared himself emperor in 1915. China descended into a chaos of warlord conflicts, and in 1917 Sun established a government at Canton in southern China. However, his authority was largely confined to the local region.

The KMT was not a communist group, although Sun realised the advantages of working with the recently formed Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In particular, this brought valuable assistance and advice from Soviet Russia. Russian advisors helped create a more efficient structure for the KMT across southern China, and were important in developing the party's army into a more effective fighting force. A military academy was established at Whampoa to train KMT officers. To head the academy, Sun chose **Chiang Kai-shek** (Jiang Jieshi), who was sent to Moscow to receive military training. Chiang's brief was to ensure that the KMT could both defend itself against attack by warlord armies and also begin to expand its power base beyond the Canton area.

Note:

Sometimes written as Guomindang (GMD), Kuomintang translates as Chinese Nationalist Party or the National People's Party.

Note:

Officially formed in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has its origins in the May the Fourth Movement. Most of its early members were intellectuals, keen to foster Chinese nationalism and develop Marxist ideas.



Figure 4.4 Chiang Kai-shek (left) and Sun Yat-sen (right) at the opening of the Whampoa Military Academy in 1924

Key figure

Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975)

General Chiang Kai-shek received military training in Japan prior to the First World War. As an ardent nationalist, he joined the KMT and quickly became an influential member. He was charged with developing the KMT's military capabilities and emerged as leader of the party following Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925.



The Three Principles

Although they enjoyed a close friendship, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek had very different backgrounds and characters. Sun, the son of a peasant farmer, spent much of his life in the West, exposed to Western methods of education and political ideologies. He developed a firm belief in the importance of democracy and social reform. Chiang, on the other hand, was the son of a wealthy landowner. Educated in China and Japan, he was steeped in Chinese traditions and culture, believing that their preservation was vital to the country's resurgence. Sun was the intellectual thinker, the revolutionary philosopher. Chiang was the soldier, the man of action. They did, however, have one thing in common: total commitment to Chinese nationalism and the development of a unified country independent of foreign influence and interference.

Sun Yat-sen's political philosophy and aims are most clearly expressed in what he referred to as the 'Three Principles'. These were:

- **Nationalism:** China should become a strong and unified country, respected abroad and free from foreign interference.
- **Democracy:** China should adopt a democratic system of government, in which the people could elect their own leaders rather than being controlled by dynasties or warlords. To prepare the Chinese people for democratic self-government, an effective education system would be required.
- **Land reform:** China should adopt more efficient agricultural practices. While there should be some redistribution of land to the peasants, Sun was opposed to the confiscation of property from wealthy landowners.

However, by the time Sun Yat-sen died in 1925, little progress had been made towards these ambitious goals. Much of China remained firmly under the control of regional warlords, whose constant feuds brought disunity and disorder. Although well established in the south, the KMT had no authority in the rest of the country. Chiang Kai-shek, who emerged as the new leader of the KMT following the internal power struggle that occurred after Sun's death, realised that the warlords would have to be defeated if China was to be unified.

The KMT's progress under Chiang Kai-shek

In July 1926, Chiang began what became known as the Northern March – a military advance by KMT forces with the aim of destroying the power of the regional warlords and creating a unified China under a KMT government. By the end of the year, the KMT had defeated two warlord armies and won control of all land in China south of the Yangtze River. This rapid success of the KMT forces can be explained by a number of factors:

Note:

During the Northern March, Chiang's KMT forces were assisted by Soviet military advisors. Stalin believed that a united China would be of benefit to the USSR – a friendly country that would end the Soviet Union's isolation.

- KMT forces, known as the National Revolutionary Army (NRA), were far better organised than their enemies, the armies of the warlords.
- The KMT was supported by the Chinese Communist Party and received the help of military advisors from Soviet Russia.
- The NRA was equipped with modern weapons from the USSR and Germany.
- Ordinary Chinese people were weary of the violence incited by the warlords. They welcomed and supported the KMT forces – peasants, factory workers, shopkeepers, merchants and businessmen could all see the benefits of a KMT victory.
- Many Chinese people joined the KMT forces as they marched through southern China. The army at Chiang's disposal grew from 100,000 in July 1926 to over 250,000 by the end of that year.

Much of the new support for the KMT came from peasants and factory workers, attracted by the communists' promise of land redistribution and industrial co-operatives. Chiang opposed such measures, and began to see the communists as an embarrassing ally. As a result, all communists were expelled from the KMT and a 'Purification Movement' began. Many thousands of communists and trade union and peasant leaders were murdered. Despite this split within the National Revolutionary Army, KMT forces continued their march northwards, taking control of Hankow, Shanghai and Nanking during 1927. Peking fell to KMT troops in 1928. Although some warlords continued to cause chaos in parts of China well into the 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek had largely removed their power, checked the influence of the Chinese Communist Party and, in effect, become the political and military leader of China.

By the end of 1928, Chiang had achieved Sun Yat-sen's first principle – nationalism. It was clear, however, that he had little interest in democracy and social reform. Ultimately, most Chinese people were disappointed in the KMT government, and support for Chiang began to decline. There were several reasons for this:

- The government proved to be both inefficient and corrupt.
- The KMT made little attempt to organise mass support.
- It quickly became clear that the government wanted to protect the interests of businessmen, bankers, factory owners and wealthy landowners.
- Conditions in factories and other industrial establishments remained poor. Although some laws were passed, such as banning child labour in textile factories, these were not enforced.
- The large peasant population saw no improvement in their living and working conditions. There was no redistribution of land. While peasants suffered terrible hardships as a result of droughts and bad harvests in the early 1930s, landowners and profiteering merchants charged high prices for wheat, and rice stockpiled in the cities.
- Although some progress was made in the building of roads and schools, the vast majority of Chinese people gained little under the KMT government.

Questions

- 1 What were Sun Yat-sen's political aims?
- 2 Outline the differences that appeared in the KMT after Chiang Kai-shek replaced Sun Yat-sen as leader.
- 3 Why had the Northern March achieved so much success by 1928?
- 4 Why did Chiang Kai-shek end the KMT's close collaboration with the communists after 1927?

Note:

The Purification Movement followed Chiang Kai-shek's decision in 1927 to end the collaboration between the KMT and the CCP. It led to a purge of communist leaders, who were seen as a threat to the KMT's aims and ambitions. The event that best characterised the nature of this purge was the violent suppression of CCP organisations in Shanghai, which became known as the Shanghai Massacre, or the 12 April Incident.

Support for communism in China

Mao Tse-tung

In many ways, it seemed unlikely that the philosophies of Karl Marx would find any support in a country such as China. Marx's vision of a godless society based on equality was far removed from China's long-established hierarchical social structure, traditions, culture and religion. However, to many Chinese intellectuals – convinced that Chinese traditions had contributed to the disintegration of their country in the first place – the fact that communism offered something completely different made it appealing. In addition, the vast majority of the Chinese population, suffering from hunger and extreme poverty during the warlord era and feeling betrayed by a KMT government that had promised much but delivered little, saw in communism the hope of a better life.

Founded in 1921 by Chen Duxiu, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began as a movement of intellectuals with the support of Soviet Russia. Lacking the military strength required to gain political power in its own right, it was prepared to work closely with the KMT to achieve the reunification of China and the type of political and social reform advocated by Sun Yat-sen. Chiang Kai-shek's decision in 1927 to end this close association left the CCP weak and exposed.

Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) had been present at the meeting that established the CCP in 1921. By 1927, he held senior posts both within the CCP and the KMT, and had earned a reputation as a highly effective organiser of trade unions and peasant associations. Endangered by Chiang's Purification Movement (see page 113), Mao took to the mountainous regions of Kiangsi Province, where he developed and commanded a Revolutionary Army of Workers and Peasants. By 1931, Mao had joined his army with that of Zhu De, creating the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of China, later known simply as the Red Army.

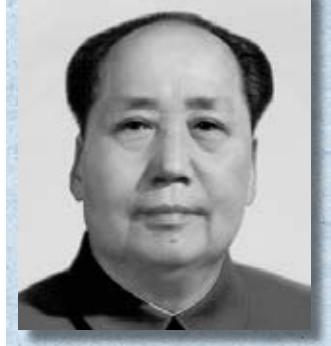
The same year, Mao helped to establish – and was elected chairman of – the Soviet Republic of China. Impressive though this sounds, the reality is that Mao controlled only a very small area, with an army consisting of ill-equipped and poorly trained peasants. Nonetheless, Mao posed a threat to the KMT's control of China, and Chiang carried out five 'extermination campaigns' against him between 1930 and 1934. These campaigns forced Mao to fight a guerrilla war against the more organised armies of the KMT.

Mao also faced opposition to his leadership of the Communist Party in Kiangsi. His strategy of trying to win the support of the peasants, rather than gaining influence in the industrial towns controlled by the KMT, was not universally popular amongst fellow communist leaders. Mao's determination to retain

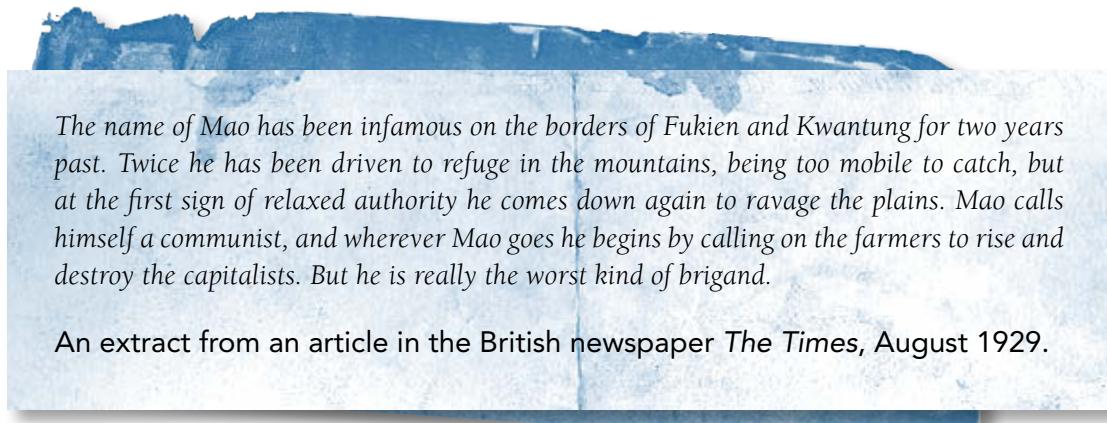
Key figure

Mao Tse-tung (1893–1976)

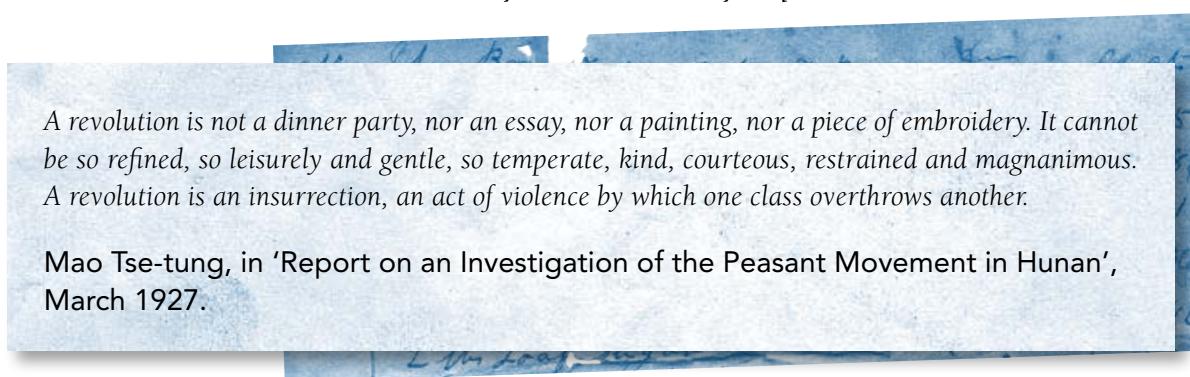
Mao was the well-educated son of a wealthy peasant farmer. While working in the library of the university in Peking, he was exposed to Marxist political philosophy. He became a communist, convinced that China's future lay in the hands of the peasants and working classes. He was impressed by Lenin's achievements following the Russian Revolution of 1917, and became convinced that his own country should follow a similar path.



control led to the systematic and violent suppression of all opposition. As the world learned of events unfolding in Kiangsi Province, foreign journalists began depicting Mao as a terrorist whose methods were no different from those of the warlords.



Mao had a rather more pragmatic attitude towards the use of violence. He believed that the resurgence of China could only be achieved as a result of revolution – and revolution inevitably and unavoidably required violence.



The Long March

In early 1934, however, Mao was more concerned with survival than revolution. His base was surrounded by KMT armies determined to complete the destruction of Chinese communism, and Mao realised that he had to escape and seek a safer power base elsewhere. In October 1934, almost 100,000 communists broke through the KMT lines and embarked on the Long March, a journey of some 9700 km (6000 miles) lasting 368 days (see the map on page 104). Such an epic trek inevitably involved difficulties and hardship:

- The communists were constantly pursued by KMT forces. In one battle alone, at Xiang, the Red Army lost 45,000 men.
- Initially, the retreat from KMT forces was a disaster. With the whole group moving together in a straight line, its path was predictable, which made it relatively easy prey for the KMT. Mao changed his strategy and split the Red Army into smaller units moving in unpredictable directions.

- The route took them across difficult terrain, including 18 mountain ranges and 24 rivers.
- In the mountainous regions near the border with Tibet, the marchers were attacked by Tibetan tribesmen.
- In some of the more isolated regions, the marchers faced the armies of the Chinese warlords.

Figure 4.5 Chinese communists on the Long March



Eventually, the 20,000 survivors of the Long March reached Yenan in Shensi Province, an area that had not yet fallen under the control of the KMT. This enabled Mao – by now the communists' undisputed leader – to establish a safe base, and gave him time to rebuild his depleted army. At great cost in terms of human life and suffering, the Long March allowed communism to survive in China. Moreover, the determination and dedication of the marchers gained the respect of China's rural peasant population. In his 'Eight Points for Attention', a list of rules for the marchers, Mao instructed his soldiers to avoid harming the peasants or their livelihood, even when the marchers were in dire need of food. Mao was fully aware that the future growth of the CCP would depend largely on peasant support.

*The Long March is a **manifesto**. It has proclaimed to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, while the imperialists and their running dogs, Chiang Kai-shek and his like, are impotent. It has proclaimed their utter failure to encircle, pursue, obstruct and intercept us. The Long March is also a propaganda force. It has announced to some 200 million people in eleven provinces that the road of the Red Army is their only road to liberation.*

Mao Tse-tung, in 'On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism', 1935.

manifesto

A policy document designed to win support for a political party or group.

Mao was quickly able to establish control over the provinces of Shensi and Kansu. As the KMT government continued to lose popularity, communism began to attract more support. Mao's land policy, for example, could hardly have been more different from that of Chiang. Seizing the large estates of wealthy landowners, Mao's communists redistributed the land amongst the peasants, guaranteeing him the support of the largest sector of Chinese society. Despite this, the CCP remained relatively isolated and lacking in power. Ironically, it was the actions of China's aggressive neighbour, Japan, that allowed communism to take a firm hold in China.

The impact of Japanese aggression

When Japanese forces invaded the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931, Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government adopted a policy of non-resistance. There were two main reasons for this:

- The KMT's control of China was still far from complete. Large parts of the country remained under the control of warlords, while Mao's CCP had gained a strong foothold in many rural areas.
- Weak, divided and lacking a large navy to defend its long coastline, China could not hope to win a war against Japan.

Chiang concentrated his resources on the internal reconstruction of China, and, in particular, on defeating the challenge of communism. This policy was not universally popular within the KMT and, indeed, in December 1936 Chiang was taken prisoner by some of his own troops. These were mainly Manchurians angered by the Japanese invasion. Eventually, Chiang was forced to agree to a new alliance with the CCP in order to provide a national front against the Japanese.

When full-scale war broke out between China and Japan in 1937, KMT forces were quickly defeated and forced to retreat westwards, leaving much of eastern China under Japanese control. Mao's communists, undefeated in their northern mountain bases, began a guerrilla campaign against the Japanese. The CCP portrayed itself as the true party of Chinese nationalism and support for it grew. In 1937, the CCP had five bases controlling some 12 million people; by 1945, it had 19 bases controlling over 100 million.

Source A

I had to admit that most of the peasants to whom I talked seemed to support the communists and the Red Army. To understand peasant support for the communist movement, it is necessary to keep in mind the burden borne by the peasantry under the KMT regime. Now, wherever the Reds went, there was no doubt that they radically changed the situation for the poor farmer and all the 'have-not' elements. All forms of taxation were abolished in the new districts for the first year, to give the farmers a breathing space. Second, the Reds gave land to the land-hungry peasants. Thirdly, they took land and livestock from the wealthy classes and redistributed them among the poor. Landlords and peasants were each allowed as much land as they could farm with their own labour.

Edgar Snow. *Red Star Over China*. London, UK. Penguin. 1972.

Questions

- 1 To what extent was dissatisfaction with the KMT the main reason for the growth in support for communism in China during the 1930s?
- 2 In effect, the Long March was a communist retreat from the KMT. How, then, was Mao Zedong able to argue that it was a great success?
- 3 What effects did Japanese aggression against China have on the fortunes of the Chinese Communist Party during the 1930s?
- 4 Source A (left) is an extract from a book written in 1937 by an American journalist who lived in China after 1928. To what extent does this source help explain the growth of support for Chinese communism during the 1930s?

Japan and military dictatorship during the 1930s

Japan's position in 1918

China's steady disintegration during the 19th century caused alarm in Japan. There was a real possibility that the Western powers, particularly Russia, might try to take advantage of China's plight by gaining political as well as economic control over East Asia. At the same time, however, China's decline also provided Japan with the opportunity to extend its own influence in the area. As a relatively small country with a rapidly expanding population, Japan could see major advantages in gaining more territory. It was this mixture of fear and ambition that led Japan into wars with China (1894–95) and Russia (1904–05). The same motives had inspired Japan's conquests of Taiwan (1894), South Manchuria (1905) and Korea (1910).

Japanese expansion in East Asia was of grave concern to the Western powers, which were keen to protect and extend their own trading activities in the region. The USA in particular saw Japan as a threat to its '**open door' policy**' of trading activities in China. Any further ambitions Japan might have had in the region were therefore kept in check by the West. This situation was fundamentally changed by the First World War, which provided Japan with a unique opportunity to expand its power and influence in the Far East.

Note:

Japan's population in 1852 was 27 million. This had risen to 49 million by 1910. By 1940, the Japanese population exceeded 72 million.

Democracy in Japan

Japan emerged from the First World War in a very strong position. It was now a wealthy nation with an efficient, modern industrial sector, a powerful navy and increased influence over China. The USA was deeply concerned by the rapid growth in the Japanese navy and, for a time, a naval arms race between the two countries seemed likely. To address this concern, the Washington Naval Conference took place in 1921–22. This led to a series of agreements:

- The Japanese navy would be limited to three-fifths the size of the US and British fleets.
- A Four Power Treaty was signed by Britain, the USA, France and Japan, by which each country agreed to respect the others' rights in the Pacific and Far East. This treaty formally ended the 1902 alliance between Britain and Japan. Britain had become increasingly embarrassed by this friendship, especially since the reason for it (naval rivalry with Germany) no longer existed.

'open-door' policy

The idea that all countries should be able to trade freely within the lucrative Chinese market. This was first suggested by the USA in the late 19th century, as a way of protecting US economic interests in China.

- A Nine Power Treaty guaranteed protection for China against invasion and agreed to uphold the ‘open-door’ policy. This agreement was made between Britain, the USA, France, Japan and some smaller countries that had interests in the Far East, including the Netherlands.

Before the Washington Naval Conference, Japan had followed a policy of expansionism in the Far East. Historians disagree about the reasons why Japan was prepared to abandon this policy and accept the international agreements reached in Washington. Some claim that, confronted by the combined power of Britain and the USA, the Japanese realised that they had little choice but to reach agreement. In particular, there was simply no way Japan could win a naval arms race against the USA. However, the opposing view is that rather than being forced into it, Japan reached agreement because it genuinely wanted to. Many Japanese politicians, such as **Kijuro Shidehara**, realised that such multinational co-operation would not only guarantee Japan’s security but also enable it to continue its economic expansion in China.

Key figure

Kijuro Shidehara (1872–1951)

Shidehara was the Japanese ambassador to the USA at the time of the Washington Naval Conference. He became foreign minister in 1924 and strongly endorsed a pacifist policy for Japan both before and during the Second World War. Shidehara served briefly as prime minister of Japan from October 1945 to May 1946.

Japan seemed to be changing in other ways, too. It began to adopt a more democratic system of government and, in 1925, all adult males were given the right to vote. New political parties, more concerned with domestic reform than pursuing a militaristic foreign policy, were beginning to emerge. However, just as in Italy, Germany and Spain, problems began to emerge during the 1920s and early 1930s – problems that democratically elected governments seemed incapable of overcoming.

As disputes raged both between and within political parties, military leaders grew increasingly powerful. Secret military groups were organised, such as the Sakurakai (Cherry Blossom Society), established in 1930. Their aim was to end party politics and restore the emperor as head of state in a military dictatorship. Concerned that politicians were dividing rather than uniting their country, many people in Japan grew increasingly supportive of the aims of such groups. By the early 1930s, Japan’s flirtation with democracy was coming to an end for a variety of reasons:

- The constitution that created an elected Diet had only been adopted in 1889, prior to which the emperor had supreme power in Japan. The idea of democracy was thus still relatively new to the Japanese people. Moreover, the emperor had the authority to dissolve the Diet at any time.
- The Japanese people’s respect for parliamentary democracy declined very quickly when it became evident that many politicians were corrupt and open to bribery.
- The agreements that Japan signed as a result of the Washington Naval Conference were not popular. Most Japanese citizens were strongly nationalistic and held anti-Western views that did not fit well with their government’s willingness to co-operate with the USA and the major European nations.

Note:

The Diet was the lower house of the Japanese parliament, which first sat in 1890. The emperor retained enormous power – he alone could take decisions about war and peace, he remained commander of the army and he had the right to dissolve the Diet if he so wished.

- Army and navy leaders felt that the Japanese government was being too ‘soft’ on China, and that China’s weakness should be exploited to allow for Japanese expansion.
- The economic boom Japan experienced as a result of the First World War had ended by 1921. By this time, European industry had revived and was beginning to recover lost markets. Unemployment began to rise in the industrial cities of Japan. At the same time, farmers were hit by falling prices. Attempts by industrial workers and farmers to form political organisations were systematically suppressed by the government.
- Japan was particularly badly hit by the world economic crisis that followed the Wall Street Crash (see page 63). Japanese exports dropped alarmingly, leading to further unemployment. As poverty spread across much of the country, most Japanese people blamed the government for their misfortunes.

Manchuria and the descent into military dictatorship

It was events in Manchuria, a large province of China, that finally caused the collapse of Japanese democracy. Japan had developed extensive trade and investment interests in Manchuria, protected by a military force known as the Kwantung Army.

In September 1931, the Kwantung Army mobilised and, over the next six months, took control of the whole of Manchuria and established the state of Manchukuo in its place. This action was taken without the permission of the Japanese government. After criticising the invasion the prime minister, **Inukai Tsuyoshi**, was assassinated by a group of army officers. **Emperor Hirohito** deplored the attack on Manchuria but steadfastly refused to order the Kwantung Army to withdraw, afraid that his prestige among the population would be damaged if his order was ignored by the army – which it was likely to be.

Historians disagree about the reasons why officers of the Kwantung Army made the decision to invade Manchuria in open defiance of their own democratically elected government. Several possible explanations have been put forward:

Key figures

Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855–1932)

Tsuyoshi was a liberal Japanese politician, and served first as education minister and then as minister of post and communication in the last years of the 19th century. He was elected prime minister in December 1931, but was assassinated in May of the following year.



Emperor Hirohito (1901–89)

Hirohito was emperor of Japan from December 1926 until his death in January 1989. In the interwar years, he presided over Japan’s period of militarisation and expansion, and he brought Japan into the Second World War. At the end of the war, Hirohito escaped prosecution for war crimes even though many other Japanese leaders were put on trial.

- The Chinese were trying to reduce Japanese influence over trade and business within Manchuria. This would have been a serious blow to the Japanese economy, already suffering as a result of the worldwide depression.
- Manchuria was rich in iron ore and coal deposits. To a small, resource-poor island nation such as Japan, these were prize assets.
- Many army officers were concerned about Japan's vulnerability in the event of any future war. As a small nation dependent on trade, Japan could easily be blockaded into submission. It was thus vital for Japan to achieve economic self-sufficiency, and this could only be done by acquiring new territory.
- This seemed like the ideal time to invade Manchuria. In 1931, China was distracted by terrible floods and the civil war between KMT and the CCP. Europe and the USA were busy dealing with their own problems brought on by the Great Depression.

Note:

Many Japanese army officers were convinced that Germany's defeat in the First World War was the result of the Allied blockade. Potential enemies, such as the USA and the USSR, would find it relatively easy to impose a blockade around Japan, which would hinder essential trade.

- Japanese army officers were dismayed by the government's determination to press ahead with cuts to the army and navy. The conquest of Manchuria would demonstrate just how important the army was to Japan's future.
- Public opinion in Japan was largely supportive of the Manchurian campaign. As in Italy and Germany, the Depression led to a rise in ultra-nationalist sentiments. To most Japanese, the conquest of Manchuria would provide an economic solution to the Depression – a new market for trade and investment.

The invasion of Manchuria had profound implications for Japan. It was clear that the already unpopular constitutional government of Japan had lost control of its own armed forces.

The emperor's advisors came to the conclusion that a democratically elected government could no longer provide stability. Following this advice, Emperor Hirohito appointed a National Unity government under Admiral Makoto Saito. In effect, the armed forces assumed control of Japan and the country became a military dictatorship.

Although the Japanese invasion of Manchuria was criticised by the League of Nations and the USA, neither took any action. This weak international response to such blatant aggression in defiance of international agreements led some of Japan's military leaders to call for further inroads into China. Others were less convinced, arguing that the first priority was to develop Japanese forces in preparation for a possible attack by the USSR, which was also showing an interest in Manchuria. As this debate continued, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933, and rejected arms control. The agreements made at the Washington Naval Conference were no longer valid. In November 1936, Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany, subsequently joined by Italy in 1937 (see page 76).

The implications of military dictatorship in Japan

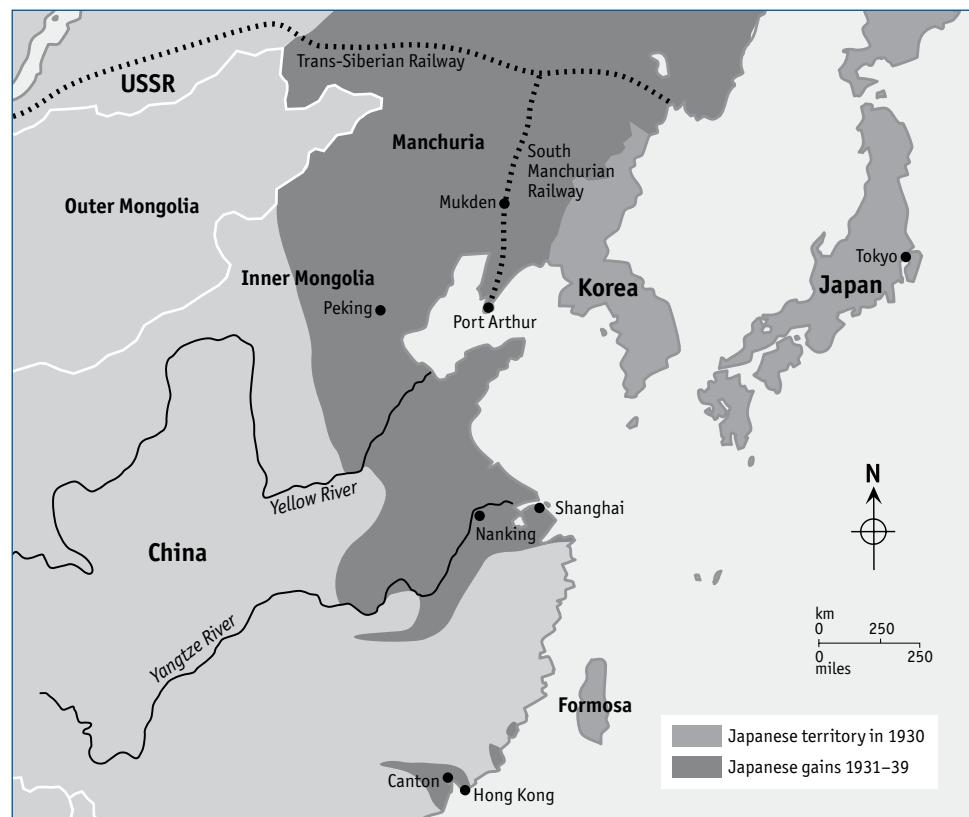
In July 1937, the tension that had been steadily growing between China and Japan reached a climax when an incident at the Marco Polo Bridge near Peking led to a full-scale Japanese invasion of China.

Under the Boxer Protocol of 1901, Japan and other countries had been allowed to station troops near Peking to guard important railway lines and other communications systems. On 7 July 1937, a Japanese training exercise was misinterpreted by Chinese troops as a genuine military action, and the Chinese fired on the Japanese. Immediately realising its mistake, China issued an apology, but Japan used the incident to declare war on China. The Sino-Japanese War lasted until 1945. Japan's hopes for a rapid victory were quickly dispelled. Renewed unity between Chiang's KMT and Mao's CCP, assisted by significant military aid from the USSR, provided much sterner resistance than the Japanese expected.

Note:

Soviet military aid for China followed the Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1937. The Russians were concerned by Japanese aggression, and believed that Siberia was under threat of an attack by Japan. The USSR was therefore willing to support China against Japan, as long as the KMT was prepared to work with rather than against the CCP. This is one of the main reasons why Chiang agreed to end his attempts to destroy the CCP.

Figure 4.6 A map showing Japanese gains in China between 1930 and 1939



Continued expansion

Key figure

Hideki Tojo (1884–1948)

Tojo was prime minister (and effectively military dictator) of Japan during the Second World War. He was a great admirer of Hitler, believing that Japan's future would be best served by adopting the type of government that the Nazis had imposed on Germany. Tojo was subsequently found guilty of war crimes by an international military tribunal, and was sentenced to death. He was hanged on 23 December 1948.

There was also renewed concern in Britain and the USA about Japanese aggression, and both countries considered imposing economic sanctions on Japan. However, with Britain heavily involved in fighting its own war against Nazi Germany, and the USA pursuing its isolationist policy, there was no prospect of China receiving any direct help from the West. Japan's military leaders were divided over what action to take. Most of them believed that the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe offered an opportunity similar to that which Japan had successfully exploited between 1914 and 1918. They argued that Japan should continue its aggressive policy and seize Dutch, British and French possessions in the Far East. Success against Indochina, Thailand, Burma, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies would provide Japan with new sources of tin, oil and rubber. However, others – including the prime minister, Prince Konoye – argued for a more cautious approach. They were concerned about the possibility of attack by the USSR, and felt that it was more important to safeguard against this than to embark on further military engagements.

This dilemma ended in June 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, eliminating the threat to Japan from the USSR. There now seemed to be nothing to prevent Japan taking more territory. A new prime minister, General **Hideki Tojo**, was appointed. Japan's descent into military dictatorship was complete.

Figure 4.7 German and Japanese officials toast the alliance between their countries in 1940; General Hideki Tojo is centre left, in uniform



The USA grew alarmed when Japan took possession of French Indochina. Although Tojo still maintained that he wanted peace, the American Intelligence Service had broken the Japanese diplomatic code. US president Franklin Roosevelt was thus fully aware of Japan's plans for further territorial acquisitions in the Pacific region and the threat this posed to US interests. Demanding that the Japanese end their warlike preparations, he imposed a trade ban on Japan. Roosevelt believed that economic sanctions would be enough to force Japan to back down. This belief was based on two assumptions. The first was that Japan was militarily weak, as demonstrated by its failure to force a quick defeat on China. The second was that the presence of British and US forces in the Pacific region would be sufficient to deter Japanese aggression. Both assumptions were wrong.

The attack on Pearl Harbor

Denied vital American oil imports, Japan faced a stark choice – either reach a diplomatic settlement with the USA or continue seizing raw materials from Southeast Asia, including the oil of the Dutch East Indies. In fact, Japan pursued both options. Just as Hitler had disguised his aggressive intentions behind constant claims that his only desire was for peace, so Tojo pursued negotiations with US diplomats while simultaneously preparing his armed forces for war.

It was not until 26 November 1941, when Roosevelt demanded that Japan cease its military build-up in the Pacific, that Tojo finally broke off diplomatic relations with the USA. By then, a fleet of Japanese ships was already three weeks into its journey towards the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Aboard six aircraft carriers – protected by two battleships, two cruisers and more than 50 other vessels – were 453 Japanese fighter planes armed with bombs and torpedoes. Their aim was to destroy the US Pacific fleet in line with a plan devised by Admiral **Isoroku Yamamoto**. Surprisingly, these Japanese ships went undetected either by US patrol vessels or radar. At 8 a.m. on Sunday 7 December 1941, the first wave of 183 Japanese aircraft attacked. By 1.30 p.m., the USA had lost 2402 men and almost 190 aircraft, and eight ships had been seriously damaged.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had a profound and lasting effect on US foreign policy. It completely ended the country's obsession with isolationism. Americans could no longer claim that events in the wider world did not affect or concern them, and the Second World War was clearly no longer an exclusively European affair. Roosevelt had long argued in favour of US involvement in the Second World War. As early as 1937, speaking of the wars in Spain and China, he had said: 'If these things come to pass in other parts of the world, let no one imagine that America will escape, that America may expect mercy, that the Western Hemisphere will not be attacked.' Such views had been extremely unpopular at the time, but now the American public called for revenge.

Key figure

Isoroku Yamamoto (1884–1943)

Yamamoto was commander-in-chief of the Japanese navy during the Second World War. He was convinced that the USA was more powerful than Japan, and that the only way for Japan to defeat its rival in war was to destroy the existing US Pacific fleet by surprise attack. Yamamoto was killed in battle in 1943.

Note:

It has been argued that, due to a decoding delay, the full implications of the message confirming that Japan was breaking off diplomatic relations with the USA did not become clear in Washington until six hours before the attack on Pearl Harbor took place.

Hitler greeted the news of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor with jubilation. With Japan as an ally, he believed Germany would be invincible. Consequently, Germany declared war on the USA – a decision that guaranteed American involvement on the battlefields of Europe.

For Japan, too, the attack on Pearl Harbor had major implications. Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 (see pages 26–27) had been largely secured by the destruction of the Russian fleet in Port Arthur. They believed that, in much the same way, the attack on Pearl Harbor would seriously undermine the USA's ability to fight a naval war in the Pacific. However, devastating though it was, the attack failed in its key objective. A number of US ships, including three aircraft carriers, were at sea at the time of the attack and therefore escaped undamaged. Moreover, the Japanese failed to destroy large supplies of oil that were to prove vital in supplying the USA's subsequent war effort.

Japan's attempt to increase its power and influence in the Far East eventually brought destruction upon itself. The Japanese became involved in a war against an increasingly united China, from which it derived no benefit. Japan's close links with Hitler's Germany simply brought it into conflict with Western nations such as Britain, and in December 1941 Japan made an enemy of the most powerful nation on Earth.

Figure 4.8 US ships burning in Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack of December 1941



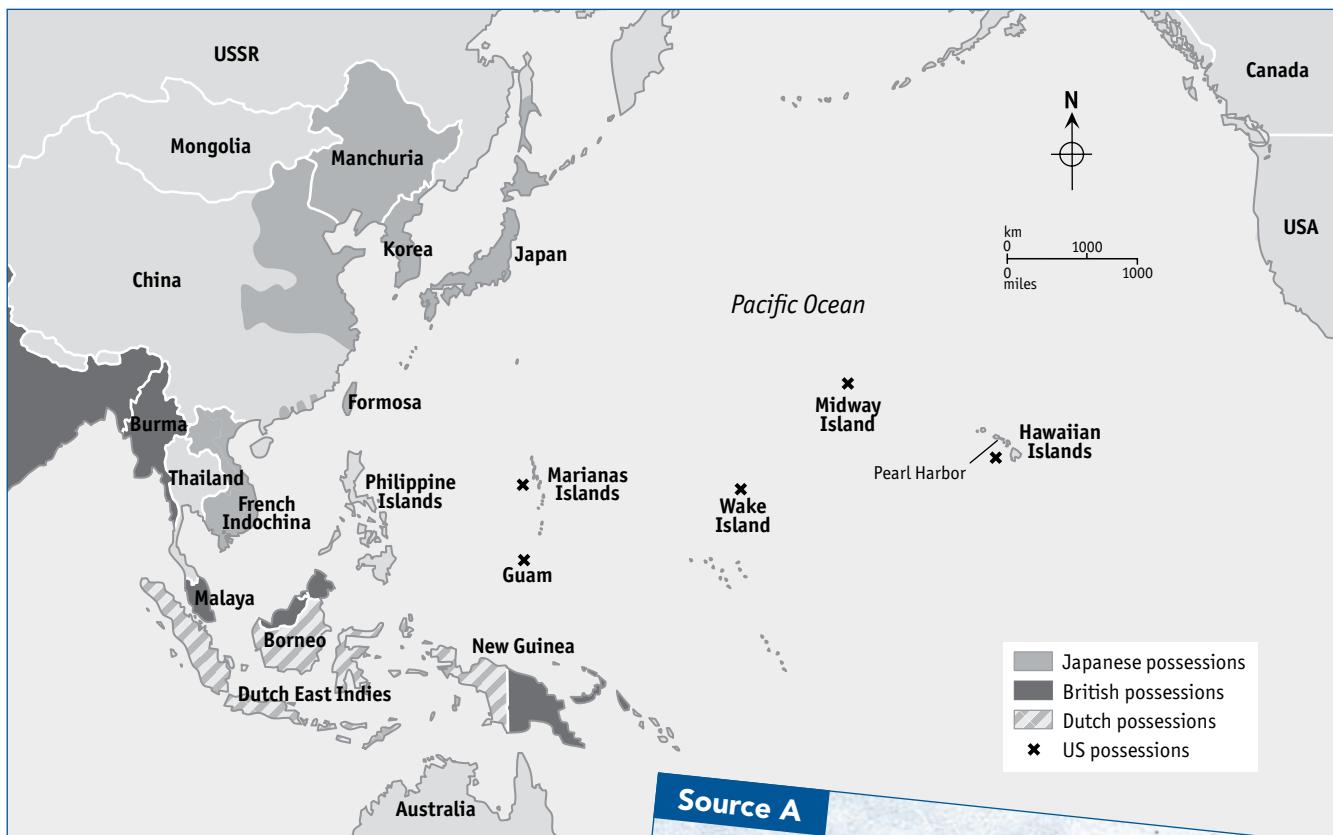


Figure 4.9 A map showing Japanese expansion in the Pacific region up to 1941

Questions

- 1 In what ways did Japan benefit from the First World War?
- 2 Why was Japan prepared to sign the agreements reached at the Washington Naval Conference?
- 3 'Economic factors best explain why democracy had failed in Japan by the early 1930s.' Discuss.
- 4 In the USA, President Roosevelt was heavily criticised in the period immediately following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Look at the cartoon in Source A. What point is the artist trying to make?

Source A

A cartoon published in the St Louis Star Times, a US newspaper, commenting on the attack on Pearl Harbor.



Historical debate

An area of debate amongst historians is why the American naval base at Pearl Harbor was so ill prepared for the Japanese attack in December 1941. It came as such a surprise that, during the first wave of bombing by the Japanese fighter planes, only four US aircraft were able to get airborne to offer any defence. Historians disagree about one key issue. Did Roosevelt know that a Japanese attack was imminent and fail to do anything about it?

Those who argue in support of this claim include James Rusbridger, Eric Nave and Robert Stinnett. They put forward the following points to prove this:

- Roosevelt was widely criticised by politicians and in a number of books during the immediate post-war period.
- Since American Intelligence Services had cracked the Japanese diplomatic code, it should have been obvious that Japan was planning an attack.
- Roosevelt had long argued that it was in the USA's best interests to become involved in the Second World War. When war broke out in 1939 he advocated US entry to the war in support of Britain, in order to defend US economic interests in Europe. These views were extremely unpopular in the USA, where public opinion remained steadfastly isolationist. Even members of Roosevelt's own Democratic Party labelled him a 'warmonger'. Some historians have argued that Roosevelt did nothing to prevent the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor because it would force the American people to accept the USA's entry into the Second World War.

Those who argue against the claim include Roberta Wohlstetter and Gordon Prange. They put forward the following ideas:

- Much of the criticism levelled at Roosevelt during the immediate post-war period was politically motivated and therefore biased.
- American Intelligence Services had intercepted a huge amount of Japanese material. It would have been impossible to identify Japan's plans for an attack on Hawaii from this mass of information.
- In 1945–46, a US congressional investigation was held into the attack on Pearl Harbor. It found nothing to suggest that anyone in senior government positions had been informed of a possible Japanese attack. Records of high-level government meetings suggest that the USA was expecting Japan to launch an assault in Southeast Asia, possibly against the Dutch East Indies. Neither Roosevelt, nor any of his senior colleagues, had any reason to believe that the base at Pearl Harbor was under threat.

Key issues

The key features of this chapter are:

- the reasons for and implications of the disintegration of China
- the growth of communism in China
- China's descent into civil war between the KMT and the CCP
- the development of military rule in Japan, leading to aggressive foreign policies
- the entrance of the USA and Japan into the Second World War.

Revision questions

- 1 To what extent is it fair to hold President Roosevelt responsible for the fact that the USA was unprepared for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?
- 2 'Fear of the USSR was the main reason why Japan invaded Manchuria and went to war with China in 1937.' Discuss.
- 3 Explain how China's weakness was both a cause of concern and an opportunity for Japan.

Further reading

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Chapter

5 The search for international peace and security 1919–45

Key questions

- What were the origins and aims of the League of Nations?
- How was the League of Nations organised?
- What were the successes and failures of the League of Nations?
- What were the origins and aims of the United Nations?

Content summary

- The key protagonists of the League of Nations.
- The ideas of peacekeeping, collective security and international co-operation.
- The reasons why the USA, Germany and the USSR did not become founder members of the League of Nations.
- The role of various League of Nations' bodies.
- Successes and failures of the League of Nations.
- Reasons for the League's failure to preserve world peace.
- The Atlantic Charter and Roosevelt's role in the origins of the United Nations.
- Similarities and differences between the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Timeline

Jan 1918	President Wilson gives Fourteen Points speech
Jun 1919	League of Nations established
Sep 1926	Germany joins League of Nations
Mar 1933	Japan withdraws from League of Nations
Oct 1933	Germany withdraws from League of Nations
Sep 1934	USSR joins League of Nations
Oct 1935	Italy withdraws from League of Nations
Aug 1941	Atlantic Charter issued
Jan 1942	Declaration of the United Nations signed
Aug 1944	Dumbarton Oaks Conference begins
Jun 1945	Signing of United Nations' Charter
Jan 1946	First meeting of United Nations' General Assembly
Apr 1946	Formal end of League of Nations

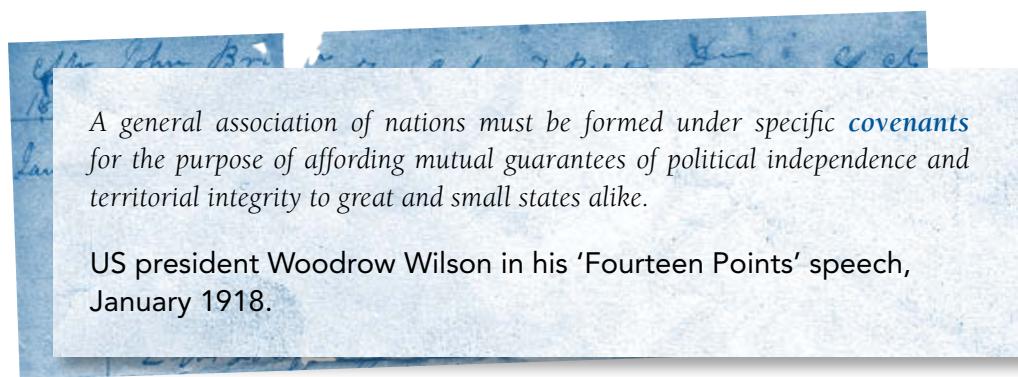
Introduction

When the First World War broke out in 1914, most European statesmen believed that this would be a war like the hundreds that had come before it: bloody and unpleasant, but quick and decisive. These expectations were shattered long before the guns finally fell silent in November 1918. The scale, longevity and sheer horror of the war created a widespread determination that it must never be allowed to happen again. From this determination emerged the concept of an international organisation designed to preserve world peace – an organisation that would settle disputes between nations by negotiation, and that would protect the weak and vulnerable from the aggressive actions of more powerful and ambitious states. In 1919, the League of Nations was formally established to do just that.

Although the League of Nations could claim some solid achievements, when the Second World War began in 1939 it was clear that it had failed in its primary objective. Indeed, its weaknesses and ineffectiveness had become apparent long before then. Despite this, belief in the concept of a worldwide organisation remained strong enough to permit the establishment of the United Nations when this war finally reached its conclusion in 1945.

The origins and aims of the League of Nations

The origins of the League of Nations



covenants
Binding agreements made between nations.

By including this statement in his Fourteen Points speech (see pages 42–43) in January 1918, Woodrow Wilson made it clear that he fully supported the concept of an international organisation designed to prevent future wars. It is often assumed that the idea of creating a League of Nations was Wilson's brainchild, but this was not the case.

The First World War was the first large-scale conflict to take place between industrialised nations. This was warfare on an unprecedented scale and, for the first time, civilian deaths rivalled those of military personnel. This was the 'Great War', 'the war to end all wars'. Anti-war sentiment spread across the globe, together with a determination that such a catastrophe must never be allowed to happen again. Even while the war was still raging, statesmen in many different countries reached the conclusion that major changes were needed in the way that international relations were conducted, in order to avoid a future disaster on the same scale.

As early as 1915 (before the USA entered the First World War), the League to Enforce Peace (LEP) was established in New York by a group of notable US citizens, including former president William Howard Taft. At a conference in Philadelphia in 1915, the LEP proposed an international agreement in which participating nations would agree to 'jointly use their economic and military force against any one of their number that goes to war or commits acts of hostility against another'. In the same year, a British League of Nations Society was founded in London.

In 1916, the senior British politician Lord Robert Cecil submitted a memorandum to the British government, advocating an international organisation to settle future disputes between nations and help preserve world peace. Leon Bourgeois and Paul Hymans, who represented France and Belgium respectively at the Paris Peace Conference, made similar proposals to their governments. In 1918, Jan Smuts of South Africa – who unsuccessfully argued in favour of more lenient terms for Germany in the Treaty of Versailles – published a treatise entitled 'The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion'.

Note:

All four statesmen – Cecil, Bourgeois, Hymans and Smuts – remained committed to the League of Nations throughout their lives. Bourgeois and Cecil were both awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (in 1920 and 1937 respectively). Smuts was the only person to sign the charters of both the League of Nations and the United Nations, and authored the 'Preamble' to the United Nations' Charter.

If Wilson cannot claim to have come up with the idea of a League of Nations, he certainly became one of its strongest advocates. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Wilson acted as chairman of a multinational commission set up to agree on the precise wording of the League of Nations' Covenant, the list of rules by which the League would operate. The commission consisted of two representatives each from the USA, Britain, France, Italy and Japan, together with one representative each from Belgium, China, Portugal and Serbia. Representatives from Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland and Romania were later added. By 11 April 1919, the commission accepted – with only minor amendments – a draft covenant written by Cecil Hurst (Britain) and David Miller (USA). A few additional minor amendments were made in 1924.

It was at Wilson's insistence that the League of Nations' Covenant was included in each of the separate peace treaties that emerged from the Paris peace talks. In addition, and despite his own failing health, Wilson endured a gruelling tour of the USA in an attempt to convince the sceptical US public

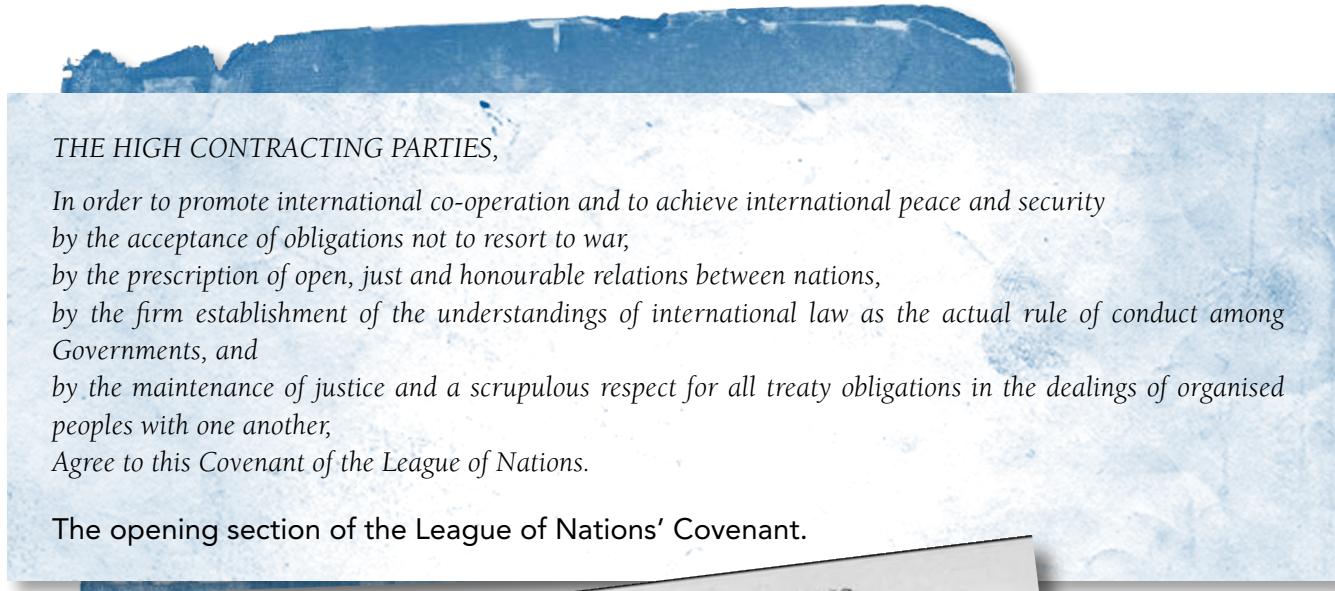
of the League of Nations' importance, both for the world in general and for the USA in particular. Wilson's role in achieving the establishment of the League of Nations was internationally recognised in October 1919, when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The League of Nations was formally established by Part 1 of the Treaty of Versailles. On 28 June 1919, 42 states became the founding members of the League. Wilson's dream had become a reality.

Each state signed the Covenant, a series of articles that outlined the organisational structure and the methods by which the League would achieve its objectives.

Note:

The original members of the League of Nations were: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, El Salvador, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Italy, Japan, Liberia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Persia, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Siam, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, South Africa, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.



The opening section of the League of Nations' Covenant.

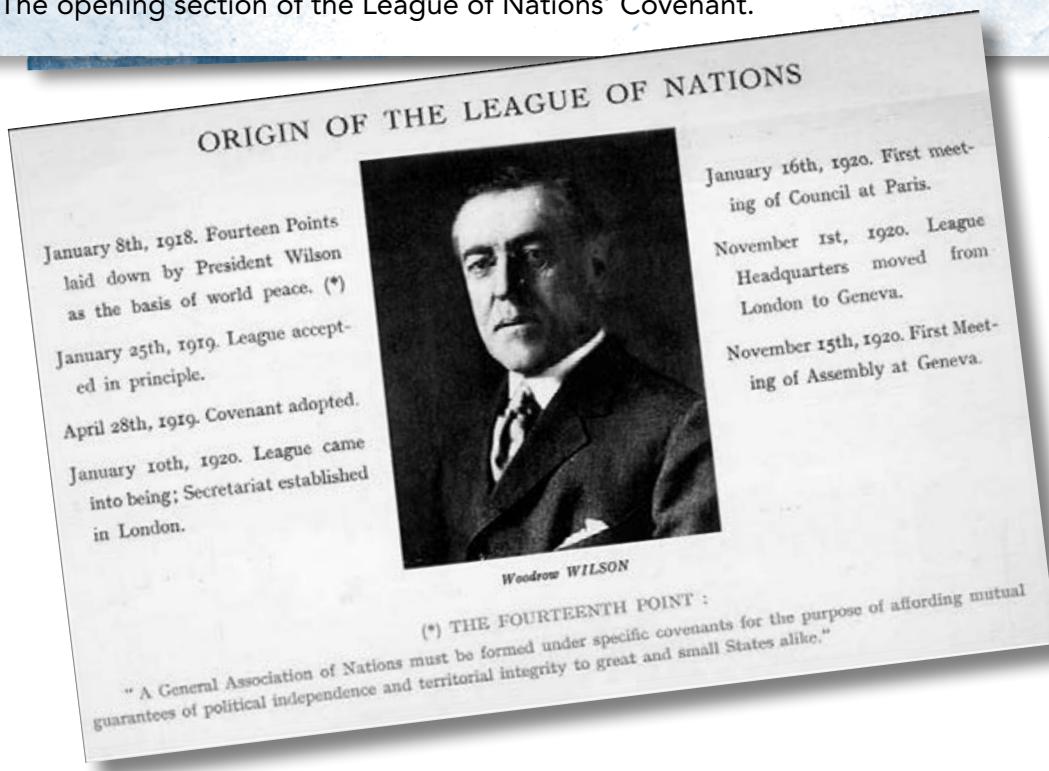


Figure 5.1
A commemorative postcard from 1920, marking the establishment of the League of Nations

The aims of the League of Nations

The League of Nations had three main aims, which are outlined below.

Preventing future war

It was the firm belief of many statesmen, Wilson among them, that the horrors of the First World War could have been avoided if only there had been an international organisation designed to settle disputes between nations before they descended into armed conflict. The League of Nations was intended to play this role in the future, to ensure that the Great War really was ‘the war to end all wars’. It would achieve this in a number of ways:

- By promoting disarmament. Article 8 of the Covenant began, ‘Members of the League recognise that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety’.
- By abolishing secret diplomacy. Wilson strongly believed that the main cause of the First World War was the secret diplomacy that had led to the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente (see pages 29–32). In reality, both these rival alliances had been created by a series of treaties that were essentially defensive rather than aggressive. If the full details of these treaties had been known and understood by everyone, they would have caused less fear and panic. Under Article 18 of the Covenant, any future treaty entered into by a member state would have to be registered with and published by the League of Nations.
- By member states agreeing to League of Nations’ **arbitration** of any dispute between them (Article 13).
- By developing the notion of collective security. Member states of the League of Nations would work together against any country whose actions were seen as a threat to peace by acting aggressively or ignoring decisions made by the League. This could take the form of **economic sanctions** or, if these failed, in joint military action (Article 16).

arbitration

Mediation between opposing sides in a disagreement. The League of Nations would investigate the dispute and consider the rights and wrongs of each party. The League would then pass judgement on how the dispute should be settled. The League’s decision would be binding on both parties.

economic sanctions

Refusing to trade with a nation that was acting in defiance of the League’s judgements. It was hoped that such economic pressure would force the ‘rogue nation’ to back down.

Administering the post-war peace settlements

There were two main ways in which the League of Nations would work to ensure that the terms of the peace settlements were carried out. The first of these was by arranging plebiscites (see page 47). For example, the Treaty of Versailles determined that the Saar Valley should be administered by the League of Nations for a period of 15 years, after which a plebiscite would be held so the local people could decide for themselves whether the area should belong to France or Germany. In 1935, the League of Nations duly arranged this plebiscite and the Saar region voted to return to Germany.

The second was by organising mandates (see page 47). As a result of the peace treaties that ended the First World War, many colonies were taken away from the defeated nations. In cases where it was felt that these territories were not yet ready for full independence, they would be run as mandates. This meant that their administration was entrusted to another country (known as the Mandatory) appointed by the League of Nations. The Mandatory had to submit an annual report to the League, which established a Mandate Commission to review the progress of each mandated territory.

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.

The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstance.

Article 22 of the League of Nations' Covenant.

Mandated regions were divided into three classes:

- **Class A mandates** were countries that were considered almost ready for independence. The role of the Mandatory was simply to provide administrative advice. Examples include Mesopotamia and Syria, whose Mandatory powers were Britain and France respectively.
- **Class B mandates** were countries that required a greater degree of control by the Mandatory power. They were mainly the African colonies that had formerly belonged to Germany.
- **Class C mandates** were areas such as South-West Africa and some of the islands in the South Pacific, considered to be ‘best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory’.

Promoting international co-operation

The third main aim of the League was to actively work towards improving relations between member nations and the lives of their citizens:

- by seeking to improve working conditions and wage levels throughout the world through an International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- by repatriating prisoners of war and resettling refugees
- by providing loans to new countries, such as Austria and Hungary
- by encouraging the development of education
- by promoting improvements in public health, such as the prevention and control of disease.

Questions

- 1** What were the main aims of the League of Nations?
- 2** ‘US President Woodrow Wilson was the founder of the League of Nations.’ How justified is this statement?
- 3** What methods did the League of Nations intend to use in order to prevent wars in the future?
- 4** Look at the cartoon in Source A (left). What is the cartoonist’s view about the establishment of the League of Nations?

Source A

A cartoon published in the British magazine Punch in 1919.



The organisation of the League of Nations

The main organs of the League of Nations were the General Assembly and the Council. These were supported by other institutions, including the Secretariat, the Permanent Court of International Justice, and various commissions and committees established to investigate and deal with specific issues that arose.

The General Assembly

The Assembly met annually in Geneva, a location selected because Switzerland was a neutral country that had taken no part in the First World War. Switzerland was also the base for the International Red Cross. Each member state could send up to three representatives to meetings of the Assembly, and states were each allowed to cast one vote. The Assembly's main role was to decide general policy, to deal with the admission of new members of the League and to handle the organisation's finances. Any decision taken by the General Assembly had to be unanimous.

The Council

The Council was a smaller body, whose main function was to settle political disputes between nations. It held four ordinary sessions each year, with extra meetings (known as extraordinary sessions) being called in times of emergency. The Council met a total of 107 times between 1920 and 1939. As with the General Assembly, decisions taken by the Council had to be unanimous. The Council was made up of permanent and non-permanent members:

- **Permanent members:** there were four original permanent members – Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The USA was to have been a permanent member, but decided not to join the League of Nations.
- **Non-permanent members:** initially, there were to be four of these, elected every three years by the General Assembly. The first non-permanent members were Belgium, Brazil, Greece and Spain.

Note:

Germany became a fifth permanent member of the Council on joining the League in 1926. The number of non-permanent members was increased to six in 1922 and nine in 1926. When Germany and Japan both left the League in 1933, the USSR was added as a permanent member and the number of non-permanent members was increased to 11.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat carried out the day-to-day work of the League – preparing its agenda, publishing reports and dealing with routine but vital matters. It was based in Geneva and directed by a secretary-general, the first of whom was the British diplomat Sir Eric Drummond, who held the post from 1919 until 1933.

The Permanent Court of International Justice

Based at The Hague in the Netherlands, the Permanent Court was designed to deal with legal disputes between states. It consisted of 15 judges of different nationalities who were elected for a period of nine years by the General Assembly. The Court ran from 1922 to 1946.

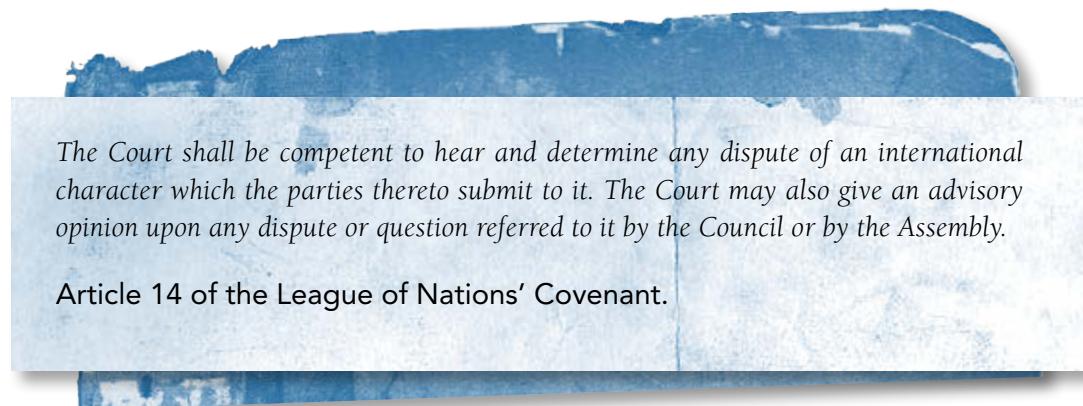


Figure 5.2 Delegates at the first meeting of the League of Nations, 15 November 1920



Commissions and committees

A number of commissions and committees were established by the League of Nations to deal with specific problems. The main commissions dealt with issues such as the mandates, disarmament, refugees and slavery. There were committees for matters relating to international labour, health, child welfare, drug problems and women's rights.

Questions

- 1 In what ways does the organisational structure adopted by the League of Nations reflect its stated aims?
- 2 What was the purpose of the Permanent Court of International Justice?
- 3 Source A below is an extract from the Covenant of the League of Nations. To what extent does this source suggest confusion between the respective functions of the General Assembly and the Council?

Source A

ARTICLE 3: The Assembly shall consist of Representatives of the Members of the League. The Assembly may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world.

ARTICLE 4: The Council shall consist of Representatives of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, together with Representatives of four other Members of the League. The Council may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world.

ARTICLE 10: The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the

Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

ARTICLE 11: Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. In case any such emergency should arise the Secretary General shall on the request of any Member of the League forthwith summon a meeting of the Council. It is also declared to be the friendly right of each Member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.

Extracts from the League of Nations' Covenant.

The successes and failures of the League of Nations

If the main aim of the League of Nations was the prevention of war, it clearly failed. By 1939, Europe was once again engulfed in hostilities. Within two years, the scope of the Second World War had widened as Japan and the USA joined the fray. Despite the goodwill and enthusiasm with which the establishment of the League had been greeted in 1919, Wilson's dream of international peace and co-operation failed to materialise.

Political successes

However, the League was not a total failure, and it played a role in the successful resolution of a number of political disputes that arose in the interwar years.

Teschen 1920

With its rich deposits of coal, the Teschen area had been one of the wealthiest and most industrialised regions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1919, violence erupted between Poland and Czechoslovakia. Poland claimed the region on the grounds that 55% of the population was Polish. Czechoslovakia based its claim on historical arguments. The League of Nations arbitrated the dispute, splitting the region between the two countries in 1920. Although neither country was entirely satisfied with the decision, both accepted it and the fighting ceased.

The Aaland Islands 1921

The League was equally successful in resolving a dispute over the Aaland Islands (a group of some 6500 islands situated midway between Sweden and Finland) in 1921. Although the population of the islands was exclusively Swedish-speaking, the Aaland Islands had belonged to Finland in the early 1900s. Most inhabitants wanted the islands to become part of Sweden, but Finland was reluctant to lose sovereignty over them. The Swedish government raised the issue with the League of Nations, which, after detailed consideration, decided that the islands should remain with Finland. Both Sweden and Finland accepted the League's decision.

Upper Silesia 1921

Also in 1921, the League dealt with problems in Upper Silesia. The people of this important industrial region were divided over whether they wished to be part of Germany or Poland, both of which laid claim to the area.

This led to a series of local riots between 1919 and 1921, at which point the League of Nations became involved. After considering the case, the League decided that the area should be divided between Germany and Poland. The League's decision was accepted by both nations and, importantly, by the vast majority of Upper Silesians.

The Yugoslavia–Albania border dispute 1921

The same year, the League was confronted with open warfare between Yugoslavia and Albania. Following ongoing disputes between the two countries over territory on the border between the two countries, Yugoslav troops entered Albanian territory in November 1921. The League of Nations sent a commission, made up of representatives from Britain, France, Italy and Japan, to investigate the cause of the disagreement. On the basis of the commission's recommendations, the League of Nations found in favour of Albania. Yugoslavia complained bitterly, but had no alternative but to withdraw its troops.

Memel 1923

The port of Memel and the surrounding area were placed under the control of the League of Nations by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. However, Lithuania claimed the region and invaded in 1923. The League decided that the area around the port should belong to Lithuania, but that Memel itself should remain an 'international zone'. Lithuania accepted the decision.

Note:

While the action taken by the League of Nations over Memel was a success in the sense that it prevented bloodshed, it could also be seen as a failure because the Lithuanians gained the land by force.

Mosul 1924

The city and region of Mosul had been part of the Turkish Empire until 1918. As a result of the Paris peace settlement, Mosul – an area in which oil had recently been discovered – became part of the British mandate of Iraq. Turkey demanded that it should be allowed to regain control of the region. In 1924, the League found in favour of Iraq and, after reaching an agreement with Britain, the Turks accepted the decision.

The Greece–Bulgaria border dispute 1925

Following a border dispute, Greece invaded Bulgaria in 1925. Bulgaria referred the matter to the League of Nations. In the meantime, it ordered its troops to offer only token resistance in an effort to avoid open conflict until a resolution could be reached on the matter. This was a clear indication that Bulgaria had faith in the League to find a settlement to the dispute. The League condemned the invasion and called for Greece to withdraw and pay compensation to Bulgaria. Greece complied with the League's decision.

Make only slight resistance. Protect the fugitives and panic-stricken population. Do not expose the troops to unnecessary losses in view of the fact that the incident has been laid before the Council of the League of Nations, which is expected to stop the invasion.

A general order issued by the Bulgarian Ministry of War to its military commanders, October 1925.

Leticia 1933–34

The town of Leticia and its surrounding area lay on the border between Colombia and Peru. Following a series of border disputes between the two countries, in 1922 Peru agreed that the Leticia region should belong to Colombia. Peruvian businessmen, whose rubber and sugar industries had been adversely affected by the loss of land in and around Leticia, were angered by this decision. Under pressure from these powerful businessmen, the government of Peru ordered the occupation of Leticia in 1932, resulting in war with Colombia. Unable to reach a settlement, both countries agreed to mediation by the League of Nations. In May 1933, the League took control of the disputed region while negotiations continued. By May 1934, an agreement had been reached and Leticia was returned to Colombia.

Note:

The key to the League of Nations' success in dealing with these disputes was the fact that its arbitration and decisions were accepted by all the parties involved. However, it should be noted that these were relatively minor incidents that did not directly involve any of the world's major powers.

Other successes

In addition to providing settlements for the political disputes described above, the League of Nations also achieved success in other areas.

The International Labour Organisation

The International Labour Organisation was created by and financed through the League of Nations. Under the leadership of Frenchman Albert Thomas, the ILO enjoyed considerable success in improving working conditions around the world. Governments were persuaded to fix maximum working hours (per day and per week), to establish minimum wage levels, to provide sickness and unemployment benefits, and to introduce old-age pensions. These measures made an enormous difference to the lives of underprivileged people.

The Commission for Refugees

Under its director, the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen, the Commission for Refugees helped to resettle over half a million former prisoners of war who had been stranded in Russia at the end of the First World War. In 1922, the Commission was responsible for introducing the Nansen passport – the first internationally recognised identity card for stateless refugees. When violence erupted in Turkey during 1923, the Commission helped to find homes, food and jobs for 1.5 million refugees, working closely with other agencies to prevent the spread of diseases such as typhoid and cholera. After 1933, considerable assistance was provided to the many thousands of people fleeing from Nazi persecution in Germany.

The Health Organisation

In addition to dealing with specific problems, such as the health risks posed by large numbers of refugees in Turkey, the Health Organisation achieved a great deal in investigating the causes and possible preventions of epidemics. It was successful in combating a typhus epidemic in Russia, and undertook research on diseases such as leprosy.

The Mandates Commission

The Mandates Commission supervised the territories that had been taken from Germany and Turkey at the end of the First World War. The League ensured that these territories were both well-governed and adequately prepared for their own independence. For example, the Commission facilitated the League's efficient administration of the Saar region until 1935, and then arranged a plebiscite in which the local people voted to return to Germany.

Financial assistance

The League of Nations was able to provide vital financial assistance to many countries facing economic difficulties. For example, due to the reparations they were expected to pay under the terms of the post-war treaties, Austria and Hungary were facing bankruptcy. The League of Nations arranged loans for the two nations and sent commissioners to offer advice on how best to spend the money (1922–23). This set Austria and Hungary on the path to economic recovery.

Other achievements

The League of Nations played a significant role in dealing with issues such as the exploitation of women and children, drug trafficking and slavery. It helped to free 200,000 slaves in places such as Sierra Leone and Burma. In 1930, the League investigated rumours of forced labour in the independent African state of Liberia, concluding that the president, Charles D. B. King, and senior government officials were guilty of exploiting the situation. The president was forced to resign and the League of Nations insisted that the new government carry out reforms.

The failures of the League of Nations

Although the League of Nations was successful in resolving a number of political disputes between various member nations, these were relatively minor affairs that posed little threat to world peace. Increasingly, the League's authority was challenged.

Vilna 1920

In 1920, Polish troops occupied Vilna, the capital of Lithuania. Following a request by Lithuania, the League of Nations ordered Poland to remove its forces and tried to arrange a plebiscite to decide the region's future. Although the Polish government initially agreed, it subsequently reinforced its troops in Vilna, and in 1922 Poland formally annexed the city and its surrounding area. This territory remained in Polish hands until 1939. One of the main reasons for the League's failure to resolve this incident is the fact that both Britain and France supported the Polish claim to Vilna.

Note:

The key to understanding the League's failure in the case of Vilna is the role of Britain and France. Without their support, the League was effectively powerless. Once the League was challenged by one or more of the major powers, its weaknesses were fatally exposed.

The Treaty of Riga 1921

In 1920, Poland invaded Russian territory. By 1921, the Russians had no choice but to sign the Treaty of Riga, by which Poland gained some 80,000 square kilometres (31,000 square miles) of land. The League of Nations took no action against Poland's open aggression. Russia was not a member of the League at that time; its communist government was unpopular in Britain and France, neither of which had any interest in defending it.

The invasion of the Ruhr 1923

German failure to pay war reparations led France and Belgium to invade the Ruhr, Germany's most important industrial region, in 1923 (see page 55). By taking this action, two members of the League of Nations were effectively breaking the rules to which they had committed themselves by signing the League's Covenant. Both France and Belgium were represented on the League of Nations' Council – France as a permanent member, Belgium as a non-permanent member. Since decisions of the Council had to be unanimous, the League was effectively prevented from taking action to deal with this incident. It was the Dawes Plan of 1924 (see page 55) that finally led to the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops from the Ruhr region.

The Corfu Incident 1923

In 1923, Italy blamed Greece for the death of three Italian officials monitoring the border between Greece and Albania (see page 73). Mussolini demanded compensation and occupied the Greek island of Corfu. Greece appealed to the League of Nations, which ordered the Italian troops to withdraw. Mussolini refused to accept the League's authority in dealing with the issue.

He threatened to withdraw Italy from the League and referred the matter instead to the Council of Ambassadors. The Council decided that Greece should pay considerable compensation to Italy. This incident exposed two fundamental weaknesses in the League of Nations. Firstly, as a member of the Council, Italy was in a position to prevent the League from taking any action. Secondly, the League's decision was overruled by another body – the Council of Ambassadors.

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria 1931

When Japanese troops invaded Manchuria in 1931 (see pages 121–22), China appealed to the League of Nations, which ordered Japan to withdraw. When Japan refused to comply, the League appointed a commission to investigate the rival claims of China and Japan. The commission, under Lord Lytton, reported in 1932 that there was fault on both sides, and that Manchuria should be governed by the League of Nations. Japan rejected this decision, maintained its forces in Manchuria and withdrew from the League.

Under the terms of its Covenant, the League should have taken action against Japan. However, at the height of the worldwide depression, Britain and France were in no position to impose economic sanctions on Japan – and neither was prepared to go to war over this issue. The League was thus powerless to do anything in response to Japanese aggression.

Figure 5.3 Japanese troops marching into Manchuria in 1931



Note:

The Council of Ambassadors was an intergovernmental agency founded in 1919, with the task of implementing the terms of the Paris peace settlement. Chaired by the French foreign minister, the other nations represented were Britain, Italy and Japan. The USA had observer status only (it could oversee the rulings of the Council but had no power to change them).

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia 1935

In 1935, Mussolini's Italy invaded Abyssinia (see page 75). The League of Nations condemned this act of aggression and imposed economic sanctions on Italy. However, these sanctions were limited and did not apply to vital resources such as oil, coal and steel. In truth, the sanctions had little effect on Italy's ability to maintain its fight for Abyssinia, and they were quickly abandoned. Mussolini was free to continue with his acquisition of a vulnerable African state and – annoyed that the League had imposed any sanctions at all – he withdrew Italy's membership and moved towards a closer alliance with Hitler's Germany.

The Spanish Civil War 1936–39

In September 1936, the Spanish government appealed to the League of Nations for assistance against the nationalist rising that began the Spanish Civil War (see pages 79–85). However, members of the League were not prepared to intervene in what they perceived as an internal Spanish matter. Although the League banned foreign volunteers from taking part in the war in 1937, it did nothing to prevent Germany and Italy from providing assistance to Franco's nationalists, nor to stop Soviet Russia from supplying the republican government of Spain with weapons.

The Japanese invasion of China 1937

In 1937, Japan began a full-scale invasion of China (see page 123). China's appeals to the League of Nations were greeted with sympathy but no practical assistance. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, with their own economies suffering enormously as a result of the Great Depression, neither Britain nor France was in a position to impose economic sanctions against Japan. Secondly, this was the period of appeasement in which key nations were desperate to avoid taking any action that might lead to war. Japan was no longer a member of the League of Nations and had formed an alliance with Germany in 1936. The only way to force Japan to end its invasion of China was to take military action – something Britain and France were not prepared to do.

Why was the League of Nations largely ineffective?

By the mid 1930s, therefore, the League of Nations' frailties had been hopelessly exposed. Aggressive states, such as Italy and Japan, had openly and successfully defied it. In Germany, Hitler was embarking on a foreign policy designed to challenge the Treaty of Versailles, certain in the knowledge that the League of Nations was powerless to prevent him. Small states had lost all faith in the League's ability to maintain peace and security.

The League's ineffectiveness, and its eventual failure to prevent another world war, can be explained in a number of ways. The League of Nations emerged from the treaties agreed at the Paris peace settlement. From the outset, therefore, the organisation was closely associated with treaties that were unpopular in many countries and that inevitably led to numerous territorial disputes. To many observers, the League of Nations was an organisation created by and for the benefit of the victorious nations – a perception reinforced by the fact that none of the defeated nations was initially allowed to join.

Member states

The League of Nations had been conceived as a global organisation. However, of the world's major powers only Britain and France were members of the League throughout the period 1919–39. Of the other major powers:

- Germany was not allowed to join until 1926, and withdrew in 1933
- Japan, a founder member, also withdrew in 1933
- the USSR, in the wake of its communist revolution, had not been invited to take part in the Paris Peace Conference, and did not join the League of Nations until 1934
- Italy, a founder member, withdrew in 1935
- the USA never joined the League.

It is, perhaps, the supreme irony that the USA rejected the post-war peace settlement and the League of Nations, despite the fact that its president had been so instrumental in the creation of both. For all Wilson's attempts to convince the American people of the League's importance, both to the world in general and to the USA in particular, the Senate voted against him on 19 November 1919. To most Americans, the best way of ensuring that the USA did not become involved in another war was a return to the policy of isolationism. The USA's refusal to join the League was a significant blow to its prospects of success, reducing both its credibility and its financial security.

Figure 5.4 A cartoon called 'The Gap in the Bridge', published in the British magazine Punch in 1920



Note:

The cartoon below reflects American isolationism. The USA (represented by 'Uncle Sam') is depicted as wanting no involvement in European affairs. American membership of the League is perceived as vital – the keystone without which the bridge will inevitably collapse.

Other organisations and the need for unanimity

The League's authority was frequently undermined. For example, the Council of Ambassadors had been established to administer the post-war treaties until such time as the League of Nations was fully operational. In reality, it continued to function until 1931 and on several occasions it disagreed with and took precedence over the League's decisions (as in the Corfu Incident). Similarly, countries often chose to ignore the League entirely, preferring to make separate agreements, such as the Locarno Treaties of 1925 (see page 56).

veto

The ability to prevent a decision being reached and acted upon.

The Covenant of the League of Nations required that decisions, both within the General Assembly and the Council, must be unanimous. Countries would clearly not be willing to accept the possibility that their actions might be determined by the decisions of other nations. Thus the requirement for unanimity provided them with the right of **veto**. However, this need for everyone to be in agreement slowed down the League's decision-making process, especially since many decisions required ratification by the General Assembly, which met only once a year. As a result, the League appeared both slow and indecisive.

The effects of the Great Depression

The Great Depression inflicted high unemployment and economic chaos on most countries, many of which were unable to maintain constitutional forms of government in the face of falling living standards and social unrest. In both Germany and Japan, power fell to those with extreme views, who lacked respect for the aims and rules of the League of Nations. With Mussolini increasingly seeking closer relations with the German and Japanese governments, the League also lost Italy's support. It was the aggressive actions of these three nations that exposed the League's inherent weaknesses.

Collective security

The League of Nations' ability to confront aggression and threats to world peace was entirely dependent upon the notion of collective security – League members working together to impose economic sanctions or, in the worst case, taking military action.

Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations.

Article 11 of the League of Nations' Covenant.

In the absence of its own army, the League expected member states to provide troops if military action became necessary (Article 16). However, a resolution passed in 1923 established that each member state could decide for itself whether or not to provide armed forces in a crisis. This clearly undermined the principle on which collective security was based. In both Britain and France, where public opinion was strongly anti-war, there was an understandable reluctance to commit to military action. Governments in both countries believed that they were militarily weak and that war must be avoided at all costs. Instead they chose to pursue a policy of appeasement (see page 92).

At times, countries discovered that their commitments to the League of Nations were at odds with their own national interests. In the mid 1930s, for example, Britain and France saw Italy as a vital ally in their attempt to isolate a resurgent, and potentially dangerous, Germany. Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia presented the British and French governments with a dilemma. Should they honour their League of Nations' obligation to defend Abyssinia, or should they take no action in order to retain their alliance with Italy? Perhaps inevitably, national interests took precedence and the League did little to protect Abyssinia. It is ironic that, in imposing token economic sanctions, Britain and France succeeded in losing their alliance with Italy while simultaneously offering no real assistance to Abyssinia.

[Collective security] failed because of the reluctance of nearly all the nations in Europe to proceed to what I might call military sanctions ... The real reason was that there was no country except the aggressor country which was ready for war ... If collective action is to be a reality and not merely a thing to be talked about, it means not only that every country is to be ready for war; but must be ready to go to war at once. That is a terrible thing, but it is an essential part of collective security.

British prime minister Stanley Baldwin, 1936.

National interests were also a major factor in the failure of the World Disarmament Conference of 1932–33. All of Europe's leading powers had committed themselves to arms reduction in both the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations. With the exception of Germany, none of the countries had kept to its commitment. The conference, organised by the League and chaired by the former British foreign secretary Arthur Henderson, was intended to address this problem in order to prevent the type of arms race that had led to the First World War.

The conference was a significant failure. Germany argued that it should be allowed the same level of armaments as France. Concerned about the possible implications for its own security, France disagreed. Hitler claimed that the French attitude was unreasonable and took the opportunity to withdraw Germany from the conference and, subsequently, the League.

In the final analysis, the League of Nations was only as strong as the willingness of its member states to support it.

Questions

- 1 Why was the League of Nations more successful in the 1920s than in the 1930s?
- 2 Why was the League of Nations largely ineffective in dealing with international disputes?
- 3 Source A below is an extract from a speech by a US senator given in August 1919. Source B is an extract from a speech by President Woodrow Wilson in September 1919. Compare and contrast the views expressed in the two speeches regarding whether the USA should join the League of Nations.

Source A

The independence of the USA is not only precious to ourselves but to the world. I have always loved one flag and I cannot share that devotion with a mongrel banner created for a League. Internationalism is to me repulsive. The USA is the world's best hope, but if you fetter her in the interests and quarrels of other nations and the intrigues of Europe, you will destroy her power and endanger her very existence. We would not have our country's vigor exhausted or her moral force abated by everlasting meddling and muddling in every quarrel which afflicts the world. Our ideal is to make her stronger; in that way alone can she be of the greatest service to the world's peace and to the welfare of mankind.

An extract from a speech by US senator Henry Cabot Lodge, August 1919.

Source B

The great nations of the world promise that they will never use their power against one another for aggression. They consent to submit every difference between them to the judgement of mankind. War will be pushed out of that foreground of terror in which it has kept the world for generation after generation. No policy of the League can be adopted without a unanimous vote. We can use our vote to make impossible drawing the USA into any enterprise that she does not care to be drawn into. What of our pledges to the men that lie dead in France? We said that they went over there not to prove the prowess of America or her readiness for another war, but to see to it that there never was such a war again. Unless you get the united power of the great Governments of the world behind this settlement, it will fall down like a house of cards.

An extract from a speech by US President Woodrow Wilson, September 1919.

- 4** Source C below is an extract from a speech made by the Soviet foreign affairs minister to a meeting of the League of Nations. In what ways does the source imply that the League was failing?
- 5** In Source C, Litvinov argues that ‘the programme envisioned in the Covenant of the League must be carried out’. What was this programme?
- 6** Source D below is an extract from a speech by Maurice Hankey, a member of the British government, in 1918. What reasons does he give for arguing against British membership of the League of Nations?

Source C

The aggressor states are now still weaker than a possible bloc of peace-loving nations, but the policy of non-resistance to evil and bartering with aggressors, which the opponents of sanctions propose to us, can have no other result than further strengthening and increasing the forces of aggression. The moment might arrive when their power has grown to such an extent that the League of Nations, or what remains of it, will be in no condition to cope with them even if it wants to. With the slightest attempt of aggression, collective action as envisaged in Article 16 must be brought into effect. The programme envisioned in the Covenant of the League must be carried out against the aggressor, decisively, resolutely and without any wavering.

Soviet foreign affairs minister Maxim Litvinov, in a speech to a meeting of the League of Nations in Geneva, 1934.

Source D

The League of Nations is dangerous to us because it will create a sense of security which is wholly fictitious. It will only result in failure and the longer that failure is postponed the more certain it is that this country will have been lulled to sleep. It will put a very strong lever into the hands of the well-meaning idealists who are to be found in almost every government, who devalue expenditure on armaments, and, in the course of time, it will almost certainly result in this country being caught at a disadvantage.

British politician Maurice Hankey, 1918.

The origins and aims of the United Nations

The Atlantic Charter

Although, in legal terms, the League of Nations continued to exist throughout the Second World War, its headquarters in Geneva stood empty. Its failure to confront the aggressive actions of Japan, Italy and Germany had lost it the respect of smaller nations from the mid 1930s. While its social, economic and humanitarian work continued to enjoy some success, in the eyes of most governments across the world the League had failed in its primary objective – ensuring peace and security.

Figure 5.5 Roosevelt (left) and Churchill (right) at the Atlantic Conference in 1941



Despite this, belief in the basic idea of an international organisation to ensure future world peace remained intact. Indeed, it could be argued that what Britain, the USA and their allies were fighting for during the Second World War were the very principles on which the League of Nations had been founded. As early as August 1941, following a meeting between the British prime minister Winston Churchill and the US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Atlantic Charter was issued. This outlined the war aims of the Allies, but also established their vision for the post-war world. There are many similarities between this Charter and the aims that Wilson had expressed in 1917 when outlining his objectives for the post-First World War settlement. It is also significant that Roosevelt's involvement in the release of this statement came months *before* the USA's official entry into the war.

Note:

The Atlantic Charter was a joint statement issued by Roosevelt and Churchill on 14 August 1941 and subsequently accepted by all the Allies as an outline of their war aims. The Charter contains many of the same basic aims as those expressed in the Covenant of the League of Nations, including the need for post-war disarmament.

By December 1941 Roosevelt was using the phrase 'United Nations' to define the Second World War allies and, on 1 January 1942, 26 countries signed the Declaration of the United Nations, outlining their war objectives and their commitment to the Atlantic Charter. The initial signatories included four major powers – the USA, Britain, the USSR and the Republic of China. By signing the Declaration they were effectively demonstrating a commitment to fight against the aggressive actions of Germany, Italy and Japan, which was exactly what the League of Nations had been established to accomplish. In the words of the Declaration itself, they were agreeing to the principle that 'complete victory over their enemies is essential to defend life, liberty, independence and religious freedom, and to preserve human rights and justice in their own lands as well as in other lands'.

The aims of the United Nations

By November 1943, when the foreign ministers of the USSR, Britain, the USA and the Republic of China met in Moscow at the height of the Second World War, they all agreed that a new organisation was needed to replace the League of Nations. The following year, between 21 August and 7 October, representatives of the same four countries met at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. The conference issued 'Proposals for the Establishment of a General International Organization'.

- 1 *To maintain international peace and security; and to that end to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means adjustment or settlement of international disputes which may lead to a breach of the peace;*
- 2 *To develop friendly relations among nations and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;*
- 3 *To achieve international co-operation in the solution of international economic, social and other humanitarian problems; and*
- 4 *To afford a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the achievement of these common ends.*

'Proposals for the Establishment of a General International Organization', 7 October 1944.

Note:

The conference at Dumbarton Oaks was more formally called the Washington Conversations On International Peace and Security Organisation. The meeting was held at the Dumbarton Oaks Institute at Harvard University, Washington.

In February 1945 the three main Allied leaders, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, met at Yalta in the Crimea (modern Ukraine). Here they reaffirmed their commitment to the creation of a new international organisation.

Figure 5.6 The three leaders at the Yalta Conference in 1945: (from left) Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin



Just as Woodrow Wilson had been the main advocate for the establishment of an international organisation at the end of the First World War, Roosevelt now played the same role as the Second World War neared its conclusion. His long-held view that the USA should be actively involved in international affairs – not least to protect American economic interests – had been heavily criticised by the isolationist lobby in the USA. Roosevelt felt that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor proved that he had been right all along. He was determined to ensure that the USA would not only be involved in world affairs when the war ended, but that it would also take a leading role. While Churchill and Stalin had some reservations about the proposals for a new United Nations, Roosevelt was utterly committed to it. It was his dream to succeed where Wilson had failed. It is no surprise, therefore, that the United Nations Conference on International Organisation took place on American soil and that the USA funded its entire cost.

Between 25 April and 26 June 1945, delegates of 50 Allied nations met in San Francisco to debate and rewrite the Dumbarton Oaks proposals and, eventually, to reach agreement on the aims and organisational structures to be adopted by the United Nations. Roosevelt's death on 12 April 1945 meant that he never saw his dream come to fruition. However, his successor as president, Harry S. Truman, outwardly affirmed his own commitment to the idea of the United Nations.

San Francisco Conference

At no time in history has there been a more important conference than this one in San Francisco, which you are opening today. You members of this Conference are to be the architects of the better world. You are to write the fundamental charter. We must provide the machinery which will make future peace not only possible but certain. We represent the overwhelming majority of all mankind. We speak for people who have endured the most savage and devastating war ever inflicted upon innocent men, women, and children. We hold a powerful mandate from our people. If we should pay merely lip service to inspiring ideals, and later do violence to simple justice, we would draw down upon us the bitter wrath of generations yet unborn. We can no longer permit any nation, or group of nations, to attempt to settle their arguments with bombs and bayonets. We must build a new world in which the eternal dignity of man is respected.

US president Harry S. Truman, addressing the opening session of the San Francisco Conference, 25 April 1945.

The outcome of the Conference was the Charter of the United Nations (the equivalent of the League of Nations' Covenant).

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED
 to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and
 to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
 to establish conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained, and
 to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom

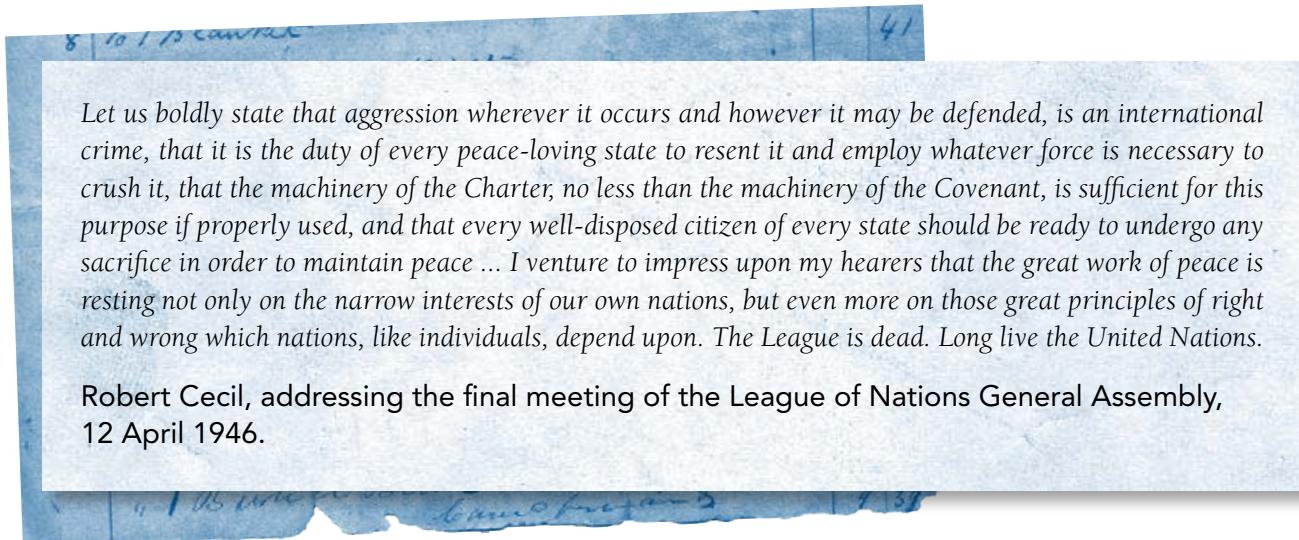
AND FOR THESE ENDS
 to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another, and
 to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and
 to ensure that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
 to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancements of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

Accordingly, our respective Governments have agreed to the present Charter and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, as signed by delegates of 50 nations at the San Francisco Conference, 26 June 1945.

The League of Nations held its final meeting in Geneva on 12 April 1946 and officially ceased to exist on 20 April, three months after the first meeting of the United Nations' General Assembly. Addressing this final gathering, the British diplomat Robert Cecil summed up the feelings of many of the delegates present.



Similarities and differences between the League and the United Nations

Similarities

- Their basic aims and objectives, as reflected in the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Charter of the United Nations, which are almost identical.
- They both emerged at the end of major wars, the First World War and the Second World War respectively.
- In both cases, the US president played a crucial role in the organisation's establishment.
- Both organisations were based on the concept of collective security – member states working together to confront aggressive behaviour by any country or group of countries in order to ensure future world peace and security.
- Like the League, the United Nations was to have no army of its own; they were both reliant on forces being provided by member states.
- The United Nations maintained some of the organisations that had been established under the League, including the International Labour Organisation and the International Court of Justice.
- Just as with the League, all member states of the United Nations were represented in a General Assembly. The real power – at least initially – was held by a Security Council comprising five permanent members (China, France, the USA, the USSR and Britain) and six other nations elected for two years.

Differences

- Decisions in the General Assembly no longer had to be unanimous. For some issues, a simple majority was enough. Even on matters considered particularly important, a two-thirds majority was seen as sufficient.
- In the same way, decisions in the Security Council required only a two-thirds majority. However, for a decision to be accepted, all five permanent members had to agree. This effectively meant that each of the permanent members held the right of veto.
- Because the right of veto often prevented the Security Council from taking effective action, the General Assembly was gradually able to gain more power. In 1950, for example, the Uniting For Peace Resolution granted additional powers to the General Assembly, enabling it to make decisions and take action if the Security Council was unable to do so because of a permanent member's use of the veto.
- The scope of the United Nations was intended to be wider than that of the League, particularly in economic, social and human rights' issues.
- From the outset, the United Nations had a much wider membership than the League and was, therefore, more of a world organisation. In particular, the two most powerful nations to emerge from the Second World War, the USA and the USSR, were members from the beginning.

Questions

- Source A opposite is an extract from a speech made by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1944. What does this source suggest about the USSR's attitude regarding proposals for the establishment of the United Nations?
- According to Source A, in what ways does Stalin believe the United Nations should be different from the League of Nations in order to ensure its success?

Note:

Because all the permanent members of the Security Council had to be in agreement for any decision to be accepted, each had the power to prevent action by the Council. All of them had insisted on this right, as a way of protecting their own national interests, before agreeing to membership of the UN. This was to prove a major stumbling block to the effectiveness of the Security Council.

Source A

In the future peace-loving nations may once more find themselves caught off their guard by aggression unless, of course, they work out special measures right now which can avert it. There is only one means to this end: that is to establish a special organisation made up of representatives of the peace-loving nations for the defence of peace and safeguarding of security. This must not be a repetition of the sad memory of the League of Nations, which had neither the right nor the means to avert aggression. It will be a new, special, fully authorised international organisation having at its command everything necessary to defend peace and avert new aggression. Can we expect the actions of this world organisation to be sufficiently effective? They will be effective if the Great Powers continue to act in a spirit of unanimity and accord. They will not be effective if this essential condition is violated.

Joseph Stalin, in a speech made at a meeting of the Moscow Soviet, November 1944.

Source B

It may be, perhaps, a little bold to remind you that this is not the first experiment of the kind that has been undertaken in this world, and that, alas, the first experiment was not a success. It is very much more difficult than one may think to be a real and a good representative to an Assembly like this. Each of us must first of all make an effort to sink our preferences, to put aside our particular sympathies and our particular antipathies. Naturally, we must all watch over the interests of our respective countries, but we shall not succeed unless we are convinced that those interests must take their place in the wider setting of the general interest. We must be conscious, over and above the interests of our own country, of the interests of the world and of mankind. We must not be, here, 51 different delegations from 51 different countries whose only purpose is to add up 51 national interests. We must, on the contrary, have the feeling that we are 51 delegations to the same Assembly which collectively represents the interests of the world.

Address by the president of the UN General Assembly to its Second Plenary Meeting, January 1946.

- 3 Source B above is an extract from a speech made to an early meeting of the United Nations' General Assembly. What does the speaker consider to have been the main reason for the failure of the League of Nations?

Historical debate

Some historians, such as Ruth Henig, have argued that the League of Nations might have been more successful if the USA had become a member. They suggest that the USA would have provided the League with significant financial aid, and could have used its influence to encourage Britain and France to resist the aggressive actions of countries such as Italy, Japan and Germany.

However, most historians disagree with this view. They argue that the USA, determined to maintain its own economic growth, would have been reluctant to impose economic sanctions against aggressive states. Moreover, the USA's heavily isolationist policy would have prevented it from becoming involved in what it considered European problems.

Key issues

The key features of this chapter are:

- the reasons for the establishment of the League of Nations, and its objectives at the outset
- the organisational structure of the League of Nations
- the League of Nations' successes and failures
- the continuing desire for an international organisation to help preserve world peace and security
- the implications of countries' desire to support an international organisation while at the same time protecting their own national interests.

Revision questions

- 1 To what extent did the USA's refusal to join the League of Nations make its eventual failure inevitable?
- 2 Why did the USA join the United Nations when it had not joined the League of Nations?
- 3 Source A opposite is a cartoon from a British newspaper from 1950, depicting US President Truman. What point is the cartoonist trying to make?

Further reading

- Bailey, S. *The United Nations*. Basingstoke, UK. Macmillan. 1989.
- Gibbons, S. R. and Morican, P. *The League of Nations and UNO*. London, UK. Longman. 1970.
- Henig, R. *The League of Nations*. Edinburgh, UK. Oliver and Boyd. 1973.
- Housden, M. *The League of Nations and the Organisation of Peace*. London, UK. Longman. 2011.
- Overy, R. *The Inter-War Crisis, 1919–1939*. London, UK. Longman. 1994.
- Scott, G. *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations*. London, UK. Hutchinson. 1973.

Source A

A British cartoon from 1950.



Chapter

6

Examination skills

Key questions

- What skills will be tested in examination, and how?
- What types of question will you be asked?
- How should these questions be addressed?
- How should you prepare for the examination?

Content summary

- Assessment Objectives – the skills being tested in examination.
- The different types of question you will face.
- General tips for preparing examination answers.
- Knowledge and understanding questions and how to address them.
- Analysis and evaluation questions and how to address them.
- Primary and secondary sources.
- Different types of historical source and how to use them effectively.
- Source-based questions and how to address them.
- Revision and preparation for the examination.
- General tips about examination techniques.

Introduction

In order to achieve success at AS Level History, you will need to develop skills that were, perhaps, less important in earlier examinations you may have taken. Generally, pre-AS Level examinations require you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of certain historical events. Now you will be required to *analyse* and *interpret* your knowledge in much greater depth.

This has implications for the way in which you study the subject. Your teacher will be able to help you by providing background knowledge, developing your historical skills and providing resources for you to work with. However, your teacher cannot tell you what to think or what opinions to have! At AS Level, you will have far more responsibility for developing your own ideas, views and judgements. To do this effectively, you need to acquire independent learning skills. In particular, this means reading as widely as possible around a topic, so that you gain access to different interpretations of the same issues and events. This will also give you an insight into the methods historians use to put across their ideas; you will be able to adapt these methods for your own use when answering examination questions.

History is not a series of universally accepted facts that, once learned, will provide you with a detailed and accurate understanding of the past. Just as historical events were perceived in many different (and often contradictory) ways by the people who experienced them at the time, so they have been interpreted in many different (and often contradictory) ways by people who have studied them subsequently. The historical debates discussed throughout the main chapters of this book have shown that historians are not all in agreement about the reasons for, or the significance of, certain key events.

Although history deals with facts, it is equally about opinions, perceptions, judgements, interpretations and prejudices. Many of the questions you will face in the examination do not have *right* answers; they are asking for your *opinion/judgement* about a certain issue. Provided you can justify it – support it with appropriate and accurate use of evidence – your opinion is just as valid as any other. Sometimes, your friends and colleagues might disagree with your opinion and be able to provide convincing evidence to demonstrate why. Sometimes, they might convince you to change or refine your opinion. Sometimes, you will be able to convince them to change or refine theirs. Sometimes, you might just agree to differ. It is this ability to see things in different ways – and to have the confidence to use your knowledge and understanding to make judgements, form opinions and develop arguments – that makes history so interesting, challenging and exciting.

What skills will be tested in examination, and how?

During a lecture delivered in the late 1960s, the historian A. J. P. Taylor said: 'History is not about answering questions; it is about knowing what questions to ask.' This may seem like a rather strange statement – not least because your own success in your history examinations will depend on your ability to answer questions effectively. However, as you will discover in this chapter, there is much truth in what Taylor said. The most impressive answers to exam questions come from students who have done more than simply acquire knowledge – they have developed the skills required to analyse information, interrogate evidence and form their own reasoned opinions. In short, they know what questions to ask!

Examination questions are not designed to 'trick' you or catch you out. On the contrary, questions are carefully designed to give you the opportunity to demonstrate how well you have mastered the required historical skills (as outlined in the Assessment Objectives).

You will be confronted with three main types of question, which are outlined below.

Note:

Assessment Objectives are lists of the historical skills on which you will be tested in the examination. They can be found in the examination board's documentation for the particular course/syllabus you are following (available on the board's website).

Knowledge and understanding questions

Knowledge and understanding questions are testing your ability to:

- understand the question and its requirements
- recall and select relevant and appropriate material
- communicate your knowledge and understanding in a clear and effective manner.

Key point

These questions are testing *understanding* as well as *knowledge*. Remembering a relevant point is one thing; showing that you understand its significance is more important.

Analysis and evaluation questions

Analysis and evaluation questions are testing your ability to:

- understand the question and its requirements
- recall and select relevant and appropriate material
- analyse and evaluate this material in order to reach a focused, balanced and substantiated judgement
- communicate your argument in a clear and effective manner.

Key point

Your answer should contain a clear judgement/argument that is:

- focused – addresses the actual question set
- balanced – shows understanding of alternative viewpoints
- substantiated – supported by evidence.

Source-based questions

Source-based questions are testing your ability to:

- understand the question and its requirements
- comprehend source content in its historical setting
- analyse and evaluate source content
- reach a focused, balanced and substantiated judgement
- communicate your argument in a clear and effective manner.

Key point

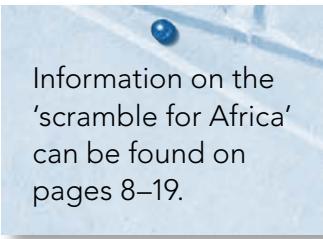
Your answer should contain a clear judgement/argument that is:

- focused – addresses the actual question set
- balanced – shows understanding of alternative viewpoints
- substantiated – supported by evidence
- analytical – not dependent on a basic comprehension of source contents, but on a detailed evaluation of their reliability, and so on.

In this chapter, we will look at some examples of each type of question, analysing the skills you will need to apply in order to answer them effectively.

Knowledge and understanding questions

These questions usually require you to explain why a particular event took place or why a particular course of action was taken. For example, you might be asked the question:



Information on the 'scramble for Africa' can be found on pages 8–19.

Why did European nations engage in a 'scramble for Africa' during the late 19th century?

(Cambridge International AS Level History 9389 Specimen Paper 2 Q9 a)

Here are two typical responses to this question.

Response 1

There are many reasons why European nations became involved in a 'scramble for Africa' in the late 19th century. There was a rapid increase in the amount of exploration, aided by medical advancements. Africa provided the opportunity for European nations to expand and gain access to riches such as diamonds and gold. Africa had become strategically important, and improvements in the type of weapons owned by European nations made it easy for them to take over African land. European countries also needed land in Africa because of their industrial revolutions. In addition, some Europeans believed that their countries had a duty to bring civilisation and religion to Africa.

Response 2

The initial reason for Europe's interest in Africa was trade. Britain's early African possessions at Cape Colony in the south and Egypt in the north, for example, were established to serve and protect vital trade routes to India. Industrial revolutions in Europe created an ever-increasing demand for new supplies of raw materials and the development of new markets for finished products. Africa offered both, as revealed by the rapid expansion in exploration made possible by medical advancements that provided protection against fatal diseases such as malaria. Wealthy businessmen, seeking valuable investment opportunities and encouraged by the discovery of gold and diamond deposits, were prepared to finance further expeditions led by explorers such as Henry Stanley.

What began as the desire to increase trading opportunities, aided by the quicker and more efficient transport systems provided by railways and steamships, developed into an issue of national pride and power. Unable to expand in Europe without going to war, Africa offered European nations the perfect opportunity to increase their territorial possessions, gain greater wealth and enhance their international prestige. European countries could compete in the 'scramble for Africa' certain in the knowledge that it would not lead to involvement in a full-scale war. As the Fashoda Incident clearly confirmed, European nations were not prepared to risk war against each other over the possession of African land. Africa was a 'safety valve' – a place where they could play out their game of power politics without the risk of war.

The Africans themselves, of course, were unable to resist European soldiers armed with modern weapons. Moreover, the Europeans could deny that they were exploiting the Africans; on the contrary, Europe was bringing them civilisation and Christianity.

Both responses contain much the same basic information. Both are based on the recall and selection of accurate, appropriate and relevant factual material (*knowledge*). However, Response 2 demonstrates a greater *understanding* of how and why these factors led to the 'scramble for Africa'. The points it makes are fully explained and supported by evidence. It shows how various factors link together – for example, **medical advancements** allowed **greater exploration**, which revealed Africa's potential to provide both **raw materials and a market**, which were needed to support the **industrial revolutions in European countries**. On the other hand, Response 1 makes a number of rather vague and unexplained statements, which might imply that the writer does not fully understand the significance of the points made. For example:

- 'Africa had become strategically important': there is no explanation of how and why Africa had become 'strategically important'.
- 'European countries also needed land in Africa because of their industrial revolutions': there is no explanation of how and why industrial revolutions meant that European countries 'needed land in Africa'.
- No explicit (fully and clearly expressed) connection is made between the 'rapid increase in the amount of exploration' and the involvement of European nations in the 'scramble for Africa'.

So, the key points to remember when addressing this type of question are:

- You need to read the question carefully in order to ensure that you fully understand what it requires. [Skill: comprehension]
- You need to be able to recall and select appropriate factual material. [Skills: knowledge and effective revision]
- You need to show the relevance of this factual material to the question, something that Response 1 does not always achieve (for example, by not explaining how industrial revolutions helped to cause the ‘scramble for Africa’). [Skill: understanding]
- You should always prepare a brief plan before starting to write. A quick and easy way of doing this is to draw a table with two columns. Record the key points in the left column. In the right column, show how each key point helps to address the question. This serves three purposes:
 - 1 It ensures that you don’t miss anything out, which is easy to do under examination pressure.
 - 2 It ensures that you keep fully focused on the requirements of the question.
 - 3 It ensures that you demonstrate the relevance of each point – you provide evidence that you understand how the point helps to answer the question.

Information on the policy of appeasement can be found on page 92.

Take the question:

Why did Britain pursue a policy of appeasement towards Nazi Germany during the 1930s?

(Cambridge International AS Level History 9389 Specimen Paper 2 Q11 a)

A plan might look something like this:

Public opinion	→ Against war – fear of WWI and Spanish Civil War
World economic crisis	→ Couldn't afford to rearm for another war
Industrialists/businessmen	→ Wanted a strong Germany for trade
Concerns about Treaty of Versailles	→ Many British felt treaty was too harsh on Germany, whose grievances were genuine
Fear of communism	→ Needed Germany as an ally against threat of communism
Belief in Hitler	→ Thought that he only wanted to redress Treaty of Versailles and then would stop aggression – e.g. Munich Agreement
Treaties	→ Believed that Hitler would keep promises – e.g. Anglo-German Naval Agreement 1935
France	→ Also followed appeasement – difficult for Britain to act alone

Your plan may not need to contain quite this much detail and can, of course, make use of abbreviations. The plan is entirely for your benefit – an examiner may look at it, but it will not be marked. One final point: do remember to use the plan when writing your response. It is amazing how often a perfectly good plan is followed by a poor answer that bears almost no relation to it!

Analysis and evaluation questions

These questions require you to do more than just demonstrate your knowledge and understanding. They require you to *use* your knowledge and understanding in order to develop a logical argument and make a reasoned judgement.

There are a number of tasks you need to perform *before* you start to answer this type of question. These are:

- Identify the **factual material** you will need.
- Establish what **task** the question is asking you to carry out with that factual material.
- Develop a **plan** that lists the factual material so that it is fully focused on the requirements of the question.
- Reach a **judgement**.
- Decide how you are going to explain this judgement as an **argument** in your answer.

Let's look at these specifically, relating to the following question:

To what extent did the USA pursue an isolationist foreign policy between 1919 and 1939?

(Adapted from Cambridge International AS Level History 9389 Specimen Paper 2 Q10 b)

Factual material: US foreign policy 1919–39; understanding of the term ‘isolationist’.

Task: determine, justify and explain how far US foreign policy 1919–39 can be seen as isolationist.

Plan: this enables you to create a mind map of points on both sides of the argument. Remember that the plan is entirely for your benefit – it's up to you how much detail it includes and, indeed, what format it takes. An example is shown on page 168.

Information on the USA and isolationism can be found on pages 62–64.



Note:

Remember that the question is asking you to make a judgement. Many students provide evidence that could be used to support both sides of the argument. This confirms that they have a balanced understanding of the issue, but in itself it does not answer the question. You must make sure that you actually reach a judgement – show which side of the argument you find most convincing and why. The only exception to this rule is if you can make a valid (and substantiated) case to show why it is impossible or not advisable to make a judgement.

Judgement: this type of question is asking you for an *opinion* – there is no ‘right’ answer and examiners do not have a preconceived idea of what a suitable judgement might be. They will not be assessing what your judgement is, but how well you explain it and support it with valid evidence. A possible judgement might be: ‘The USA did follow an isolationist policy 1919–39, but could not avoid involvement in world affairs when its own interests, especially economic ones, were at stake.’

Argument: there are a number of things to remember when constructing your answer:

- **Focus:** you must make sure that you address the question set. Simply demonstrating that you know a great deal about interwar American foreign policy is not enough.
- **Balance:** it is important that you demonstrate an understanding of both sides of the argument. You need to show how you have compared and weighed the evidence in order to reach your judgement. Therefore, your answer should not be based solely on the evidence that supports your conclusion.
- **Clarity:** in effect, you are aiming to convince the reader to agree with your judgement. It is crucial that your argument is communicated in a clear and obvious way.
- **Evidence:** for your argument to be convincing, it must be supported by evidence. Many examination essays contain *unsupported assertions* – these are statements/opinions for which no factual evidence is provided, and so should be avoided.
- **Consistency:** make sure that your argument remains consistent throughout. Students frequently write essays that are contradictory, the first part seemingly arguing one thing and the second part apparently arguing the exact opposite. The reason for this is that the student is trying to show a balanced understanding, but has not actually weighed the evidence and come to a judgement. Such essays often conclude with a statement such as: ‘So it is clear that the USA did follow an isolationist policy between 1919 and 1939.’ Since no explanation has been given to justify such a statement, it is invariably an unsupported assertion.
- **Planning:** all these points show just how important the planning stage is. Put simply, you need to know exactly what you are going to say *before* you start writing.

Note:

One of the most difficult skills to master is the ability to demonstrate an understanding of both sides of an argument without appearing to contradict yourself. Most students begin by outlining the evidence that supports their judgement and then refer to evidence that might disagree. This approach can easily undermine the strength of your argument and confuse the reader. It is usually more effective to deal with the evidence that could be seen as disagreeing with your judgement first, and then explain why you find this less convincing than the evidence that supports your argument.

Below is a response to the question on page 167.

It is clear that the USA did indeed follow an isolationist policy between 1919 and 1939. Americans felt that the First World War, which had been unpopular in the USA, had broken out because of disagreements between European nations, and wanted to avoid involvement in European affairs in the future. As a result, the USA rejected both the Paris peace settlement and membership of the League of Nations. In addition, the USA avoided entering commitments with other countries and kept out of international issues such as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. That isolationism was still the preferred policy in the late 1930s is confirmed by the fact that President Roosevelt was ignored when he argued that Japan was becoming dangerous to US interests and should be confronted.

What are the strengths of this answer?

- It is clearly focused on the requirements of the question.
- It contains a clear, explicit and consistent argument.
- It provides evidence to support its argument.

What are the weaknesses of this answer?

- The major weakness is the fact that it lacks balance. It completely ignores evidence that might challenge its argument. In order to demonstrate that the essay is based on a balanced and objective judgement, it is necessary to show understanding of both sides of the argument with an explanation as to why one side is preferred.
- The statement that ‘the USA avoided entering commitments with other countries’ is an unsupported assertion. It needs evidence to back it up. For example, it could mention the fact that the USA did not send a representative to the Locarno Conference.

Here is a similar type of question, although it is written in a rather different way:

‘Hitler never intended to cause a major war.’ How far does an analysis of Hitler’s foreign policy between 1933 and 1939 support this view?

(Cambridge International AS Level History 9389 Specimen Paper 2 Q11 b)

In this case, you are given an *opinion* ('Hitler never intended to cause a major war') and your task is to decide the extent to which you agree with it.

Information on
Hitler's foreign policy
can be found on
pages 86–93.

Below is a high-quality response to the question. As you read through this response, bear in mind its strengths:

- It is focused on the question throughout.
- It contains a clear and explicit argument – it agrees with the opinion that ‘Hitler never intended to cause a major war’.
- It is balanced – it shows a clear understanding of both sides of the argument.
- It is analytical – it doesn’t simply *describe* Hitler’s foreign policy 1933–39; it weighs the evidence to reach a *judgement*.
- It is consistent – the argument remains the same throughout.

The panels next to each paragraph look at the response in more detail to explain how these things have been achieved.

Note:

Where a question contains an opinion on which you are asked to comment, this opinion is referred to as the ‘hypothesis’.

Therefore, the hypothesis in this question is ‘Hitler never intended to cause a major war’.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, prime minister Neville Chamberlain informed the British parliament that ‘responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man’ – Adolf Hitler. Many historians still accept the view that Hitler’s desire to expand Germany was responsible for the war. They argue that the only way in which Germany could avenge its defeat in the First World War was to gain victory in another global conflict, and that Hitler’s foreign policy between 1933 and 1939 was a carefully worked-out plan to achieve this. However, analysis of Hitler’s actions during the 1930s would suggest that this view is wrong, and that the last thing he wanted was a major war – particularly a war against Britain.

There is certainly no shortage of evidence to suggest that Hitler did indeed intend to cause a major war. Long before gaining power in Germany, Hitler had outlined his aims in ‘Mein Kampf’, the book he wrote in prison following the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch. The desire for ‘Lebensraum’ – more territory for German people to occupy – could only be achieved by war against Poland and Soviet Russia, which would inevitably lead to a global conflict. The Hossbach Memorandum suggests that Hitler still held these same views in 1937. In hindsight, Hitler’s foreign policy during 1933–39 can easily be seen as a step-by-step approach towards the achievement of this ultimate goal. The gradual erosion of the Treaty of Versailles, the occupation of the Rhineland, the achievement of ‘Anschluss’, the rebuilding of Germany’s armed forces, the development of potentially aggressive alliances with Italy and Japan, the destruction of Czechoslovakia, the invasion of Poland ... all these actions can be

Paragraph 1

This states that some historians believe that Hitler did intend to cause a major war and was, therefore, responsible for its outbreak. However, the last sentence claims that this view is wrong – a judgement has been made and the student’s argument has been clearly established. It is very important that the opening paragraph (the introduction) is clearly relevant to the requirements of the question. Many students write generalised introductions that merely repeat the question or give some background information about the topic. Such introductions are unnecessary, do not help the reader to understand the line of argument to be pursued in the essay, and take up valuable time for no real purpose.

Paragraph 2

This creates balance by providing evidence to suggest that Hitler did intend to cause a major war (i.e. evidence that disagrees with the argument the response is making). This evidence seems strong, but subtle techniques have been used to cast doubt in the reader's mind. For example, it states that this evidence might imply – or could be interpreted as suggesting, in hindsight – that Hitler intended to cause a major war.

interpreted as part of a gradual and pre-planned development of German power in preparation for a major war. Many historians, such as Hugh Trevor-Roper, have certainly interpreted them in this way.

However, the view that Hitler intended to fight a world war, and actively planned and prepared for it, can be challenged in several ways. Firstly, it assumes that he could have predicted how other countries, particularly Britain and France, would respond to his actions. It is clear from the German occupation of the Rhineland in 1936 that he had no way of knowing what their reaction would be. By Hitler's own admission, this was a gamble; his troops were under strict orders to retreat if they met resistance. Therefore, while Hitler probably had a vision of German supremacy in Europe, he could not have had a long-term plan of action for its achievement. A more likely interpretation is that Hitler was an opportunist, exploiting situations as they arose, a view first expressed by A. J. P. Taylor.

Paragraph 3

This begins the process of discrediting the evidence given in Paragraph 2. It argues that Hitler did not have (and could not have had) a step-by-step plan of action that would lead to a major war. It also provides evidence to support the point.

Secondly, Hitler was always careful to avoid the possibility that his actions might escalate into a major war. The ten-year non-aggression treaty in 1934, for example, guaranteed Polish neutrality if and when Hitler decided to take action against Austria or Czechoslovakia. The Anglo-German naval agreement in 1935 ensured British acceptance of his rearmament programme and effectively destroyed the Stresa Front. In signing the Munich Agreement, Hitler was making certain that Britain and France would not take action against his invasion of Czechoslovakia. Before invading Poland, Hitler ensured that he would not meet opposition from Soviet Russia by signing the Nazi-Soviet Pact. It is true that Hitler was being deceitful in signing agreements that he had no intention of keeping. However, the fact that he made them at all suggests that he was keen to avoid, rather than cause, a major war.

Paragraph 4

This provides evidence to show that Hitler had consistently taken great care to avoid a major war.

It could be argued that Hitler knew Germany's invasion of Poland would lead to a world war. Many of his own generals had warned him of the potential consequences. Both Britain and France had made it clear that they would declare war on Germany if the invasion went ahead. Hitler, however, had good reason to believe that these were idle threats. He almost certainly remained convinced that Britain would take no action to defend Poland. The meetings at Munich had given Hitler the impression that Chamberlain was weak, and desperate enough to sacrifice Czechoslovakia if it meant avoiding war. Hitler thought it highly unlikely that Britain would take up arms to defend Poland when it had done nothing to protect Czechoslovakia, especially since Germany's

Paragraph 5

This argues that Hitler's decision to go ahead with the invasion of Poland, despite the warnings of Britain and France, was the result of an error of judgement rather than an intention to become involved in a major war.

territorial claims over Poland were more justified than its ambitions in Czechoslovakia. Hitler was well aware that France was not prepared to act alone – if Britain took no action, neither would France. That Hitler's assumptions proved to be inaccurate is more a reflection of inconsistencies in British and French policies than of his intention to cause a major war.

Some historians, Taylor among them, have argued that the idea of 'Lebensraum' was merely a propaganda tool to win support for a struggling Nazi Party. The Hossbach Memorandum has similarly been dismissed as Hitler trying to motivate his senior generals rather than evidence of his expansionist plans. Such arguments seem unconvincing. There is little doubt that by 1939 Hitler had designs on Soviet Russia. Stalin unquestionably believed this, justifying his decision to sign the Nazi–Soviet Pact as a means of buying time to prepare for the German invasion that would eventually come. However, this does not mean that Hitler wanted and expected a major war. On the contrary, a successful German attack on Soviet Russia would have been dependent on Britain and France remaining neutral. Their involvement would have presented Germany with war on two fronts – the very problem that had led to its defeat in the First World War. Hitler knew that he needed to avoid this at all costs.

The Nazi Party's belief in extreme German nationalism suggests that Hitler did indeed have a vision of German supremacy in Europe. He consistently exploited opportunities to make this a reality. However, he was also consistently careful to ensure that his targets were isolated and vulnerable. The USSR was both. Western Europe, where communism was feared and despised, had resisted all of Stalin's attempts to form alliances. Hitler firmly believed that Britain and France would do nothing to defend Soviet Russia against a German attack; indeed, they might even welcome it.

Hitler's desire for German supremacy in Europe did not depend on going to war with Britain, and would in fact have been threatened by such a war. As an island with a strong tradition of naval power, Britain would have been difficult to defeat, especially if German forces were simultaneously fighting on the Russian front. Hitler neither needed nor wanted a war against Britain. Germany found itself fighting a major war against Britain and its allies not because Hitler intended it, but because of his mistaken assumption that Britain would not go to war in defence of Poland. Chamberlain's keenness to blame the war on Hitler was primarily to deflect blame from the embarrassing failure of the appeasement policy that he had followed throughout the 1930s.

Paragraph 6

In outlining the arguments put forward by historians such as A. J. P. Taylor, the response is dismissing evidence that might have been used to support its argument. This suggests that the evidence is being weighed in an objective manner – the writer is prepared to consider both sides of the argument, rather than blindly accepting everything that supports his/her view. This then leads to a key point in the response: Hitler almost certainly intended to invade Soviet Russia, but, precisely because of this, did not want a major war.

Paragraph 7

This argues that Hitler believed a German invasion of Russia would not lead to war with Britain and France.

Paragraph 8

This argues that it was in Hitler's best interests to avoid a major war. The last sentence links back to the Chamberlain quote in the opening paragraph.

Overview of the response

Note:

Mentioning the names of historians who hold particular views about an issue can be useful – it can add weight to your argument and suggests that you are widely read. However, this technique should be used with caution. It must be done accurately. You should also not do this too often, as it could imply that you are relying on the opinions of others rather than being able to form your own views on the subject.

The response on the previous pages is based on detailed knowledge and understanding of Hitler's foreign policy 1933–39. Rather than simply describing Hitler's policy, the response analyses it in a way that is relevant to the requirements of the question. There is a clear and consistent argument based on a balanced review of the evidence. The writer is in complete control of the argument throughout, guiding the reader towards acceptance of a particular conclusion. There are clear linking points between each paragraph – this enables the essay to flow, making it easy for the reader to follow the argument.

Summary

So, what are the key points to remember when answering analysis and evaluation questions?

- Don't simply provide the reader with a series of facts relating to the topic – use your knowledge to make a judgement, form an opinion and develop an argument.
- Communicate your argument in a clear and consistent manner.
- Ensure balance – demonstrate your understanding of both sides of the argument, but do so in a way that does not make your answer seem contradictory. Show, with supporting evidence, why one side of the argument is stronger than the other.
- Remain focused – ensure that each paragraph is making a point directly related to your judgement/argument. Do not drift off into irrelevance.
- Do not make unsupported assertions – ensure that any analytical point you make is backed up by factual evidence.
- Plan carefully *before* you start to write.
- Try to make your answer *flow*, for example by finding ways to link paragraphs together so that one leads logically into the next. This helps to keep the reader's interest and allows them to follow the argument you are making.

Note:

An answer 'flows' when the argument is clear and each paragraph follows logically from the previous one. This makes it easier for the reader to understand and follow your line of reasoning. The reader is not suddenly confronted with an idea that seems to have no logical connection to what has gone before. The planning stage is crucial for this – you need to decide what order to put your paragraphs in and how you are going to link them together.

Source-based questions

In order to make judgements and form opinions about past events, historians need to gather as much information/evidence as possible. They use a variety of sources for this – written sources, speeches, photographs, cartoons, posters. Much of the evidence historians use is contradictory, reflecting the different opinions and perspectives of the people who produced them. Therefore, historians have to analyse these sources very carefully in order to form their own opinions/judgements about the past.

In much the same way, you will be faced with a variety of different historical sources in examination. You will need to be able to analyse these sources in the light of your own subject knowledge. The key word here is *analyse*. This means going beyond basic comprehension of what a source is saying or showing, and asking yourself questions about how reliable the source is and why it appears to contradict what some other sources suggest.

Historical sources can be categorised under two broad headings: primary and secondary.

Primary sources

A primary source is one that was written/spoken/drawn and so on, at or very near the time of the historical event it is describing. It is usually the product of someone who was directly involved in the event or who was, in some sense, an eyewitness to the event.

Advantages of a primary source include:

- It provides a first-hand, contemporary account of the event.
- It provides an insight into the author's perceptions and emotions at the time of the event.
- If the source was created by someone who was directly involved in the event, it might give detailed 'inside' information that other people could not possibly know.

Disadvantages of a primary source include:

- The source gives us only the opinions of the person who created it; these may not be typical of the opinions prevalent at the time.
- If the source was created by someone who was directly involved in the event, it might contain bias, trying to convince the audience to agree with a particular line of argument.
- Eyewitnesses may not always be completely reliable – they might not have access to the full details of an event or they might be trying to impose their own opinions on the audience.

Note:

Primary sources reflect the customs and beliefs of the time and place from which they come. We should not be critical of the contents of a primary source just because they do not share our own values. For example, modern opinions about equal rights are very different from those that were widely accepted even as little as 50 years ago.

Secondary sources

A secondary source is one that was written/spoken/drawn etc. significantly after the historical event it describes. It is usually the product of someone who was not directly involved in the event or someone who was not an eyewitness to the event.

Advantages of secondary sources include:

- Because they were created some time after the event they are describing, they can reflect the ‘full picture’ – they know how the event finally concluded and the impact it had. They have the advantage of hindsight.
- Many secondary sources have been produced by historians and academics. They are often the product of extensive research, including the use of primary sources.
- If the author was not directly involved in the event, there is less potential for bias.

Disadvantages of secondary sources include:

- The source gives us only the opinions of the person who created it; other people may have totally different interpretations.
- Secondary sources include biographies written years later by people who were directly involved in a particular event. This raises questions of reliability – the author’s memory may not always be accurate; the author might want to exaggerate or downplay their role in an event.
- Secondary sources include accounts by eyewitnesses written years after the event. This also raises issues of reliability – was the author really an eyewitness? How accurate is the author’s memory?

Note:

Hindsight is the ability to look back at an event some time after it has occurred. With hindsight, it is easier to understand the reasons why an event took place, its significance and the impact it had. It is important to remember that people living at the time of the event did not have the advantage of hindsight.

Note:

Do not assume that secondary sources are less useful than primary sources because they were not created by people who were directly involved in the event they are describing. Do not assume that secondary sources are more reliable than primary sources because they were created by people who were not directly involved in the event they are describing!

Assessing a source's reliability

It should be clear from the point above that historians have to be extremely careful when using sources, whether primary or secondary. They cannot afford to accept everything a source tells them as completely reliable and true. People exaggerate. People tell lies. People have opinions that others may not share. People make mistakes.

Imagine you are out walking – lost in your own thoughts – when you suddenly hear a screeching of brakes and a thud behind you. As you turn in the direction the sound came from, you see a car drive quickly away and a pedestrian lying in the road. Your first priority, surely, would be to tend to the pedestrian, checking for injuries and calling for an ambulance or other assistance. When the police arrive, you would be classed as an ‘eyewitness’ to the accident, and they would want a statement from you.

But were you *really* an eyewitness? Did you really see the accident or did you just *hear* it? You saw the car drive away quickly, but does that mean it was going too fast when the accident occurred? How far might your sense of pity for the pedestrian affect your idea of what actually happened? Could you be certain that the pedestrian was not to blame for the accident? Would you be able to describe the car in detail and give the police its registration number? How far would your recollection of the event be blurred by your own shock? How and why might the statements of the car driver and the pedestrian differ from your own?

So, what can we, as historians, do to minimise the risk of drawing inaccurate conclusions from sources? There are a number of questions we need to ask in order to determine just how *reliable* a source is and to evaluate its provenance. For example:

- **Who** wrote it?
- **When** was it written?
- What is the **context**?
- Who was the intended **audience**?
- **Why** was it written? What was the author's **motive**?
- **What** does it actually say?
- **How** does what it says compare with our own **subject knowledge** and with **what other sources say**?

Note:

These example questions assume that the source is a written one, but the same principle applies for all sources, whether written, spoken, drawn, photographed, and so on.

Suppose, for example, that this is the statement given to police later in the day by the driver of the car involved in the accident you ‘witnessed’:

I was driving along the High Street, carefully and well within the speed limit. Suddenly, and without warning, a pedestrian walked out into the road from behind a parked lorry. There was absolutely no way I could have stopped in time to avoid hitting the pedestrian. In a state of panic, I did not stop. I drove away, but later reported to the local police station.

- **WHO wrote it?** The driver of the car involved in the accident. The driver would clearly not wish to be blamed for causing the accident and therefore might have a reason for being less than honest.
- **WHEN was it written?** Later on the same day as the accident. By this time, the driver would have recovered from the initial shock, realising that there was no option but to report to the police. There would have been time for the driver to reflect on the incident and, possibly, develop an argument to lay blame for the accident on the pedestrian. Would the driver’s memory be accurate?
- **What is the CONTEXT?** The driver reporting to the police to admit involvement in the accident.
- **Who was the intended AUDIENCE?** The police, who will make the final decision regarding who was to blame for the accident.
- **WHY was it written? What was the author’s MOTIVE?** It is possible that, on reflection, the driver accepted the need to report involvement in the accident. It is also possible that the driver, realising that the police would eventually catch up with them, wanted to report the incident in order to clear their own name by laying blame on the pedestrian.
- **WHAT does it actually say?** The driver argues that they were not driving carelessly and that the accident was the pedestrian’s fault (for walking out into the road from behind a lorry, without checking for traffic). They admit to leaving the scene of the accident out of panic.
- **HOW does it compare with what other sources say?** To find out whether the driver was telling the truth or simply lying in order to remove blame from themselves, the police would need to compare the statement with those of other witnesses and with other evidence. Other witnesses might, for example, be able to comment on how fast the car was going at the time of the accident and whether the pedestrian really did walk out into the road without due care and attention. Your own statement does not directly contradict what the driver says, although you did hear a screeching of brakes, which might suggest the car was going too fast. The police would be able to measure the length of any skid marks in order to work out the car’s speed. The police might also be able to find out if there really was a lorry parked in the road as the driver suggests.

Now let's take a more specific example – the agreement that Hitler signed following a meeting with Chamberlain in Munich on 30 September 1938. Hitler renounced warlike intentions and agreed to deal with any future issues by negotiation. Chamberlain triumphantly displayed the piece of paper outlining this agreement, signed by Hitler, on his return to Britain. Does this mean that Hitler was sincere in his commitment to such an agreement?



Information on the Munich meeting can be found on pages 94–95.

- **WHO wrote it?** The document was signed by both Hitler and Chamberlain.
- **WHEN was it written?** 30 September 1938.
- **What is the CONTEXT?** A meeting was held in Munich in September 1938, attended by Britain, Germany, France and Italy. Britain and France were concerned that Hitler was going to invade Czechoslovakia and that this might lead to a major war. This was the period of appeasement, and Britain and France were desperately trying to avoid war with Germany.
- **Who was the intended AUDIENCE?** The people of Europe in general and Britain, France and Czechoslovakia in particular. Hitler was aware that Chamberlain was keen to avoid war and would have accepted any commitment Hitler made.
- **WHY was it written? What was the author's MOTIVE?** Hitler signed the agreement in order to convince the people of Europe, particularly the British and French, that he had no warlike intentions. He wanted to show that his claims to part of Czechoslovakia are reasonable and simply an attempt to right the wrongs of the Treaty of Versailles by bringing German-speaking people back under German control.
- **WHAT does it actually say?** Hitler had no warlike intentions and would settle all future disputes by negotiation.
- **HOW does it compare with what other sources say?** We know from other sources that Hitler had already informed his generals that 'it is my unalterable decision to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future'. We know from our own subject knowledge that, despite the commitment he made at Munich, Hitler went ahead with his planned invasion of Czechoslovakia. So why did Hitler make such an agreement if he had no intention of keeping it? He was preparing to invade Czechoslovakia and wanted to ensure that no one would interfere with his plans. It was especially important to convince the British prime minister of his peaceful intentions.

In this case, it is relatively easy for us, with hindsight and access to a considerable amount of evidence, to see what was not so obvious to Chamberlain at the time – Hitler was lying.

Information about the USA and the League of Nations can be found on pages 132–33.

'Compare and contrast' questions

At times, you may find it necessary to compare and contrast two or more different sources. Again, this will require more than just basic comprehension of the sources. Below are extracts from speeches made by two American politicians in 1919, as examples of two sources to compare and contrast. (These extracts are taken from Cambridge International AS Level History 9389 Specimen Paper 1 Section C.)

Source A

The great nations of the world promise that they will never use their power against one another for aggression. They consent to submit every difference between them to the judgment of mankind. War will be pushed out of that foreground of terror in which it has kept the world for generation after generation. No policy of the League can be adopted without a unanimous vote. We can use our vote to make impossible drawing the USA into any enterprise that she does not care to be drawn into. What of our pledges to the men that lie dead in France? We said that they went over there not to prove the prowess of America or her readiness for another war, but to see to it that there never was such a war again. Unless you get the united power of the great Governments of the world behind this settlement, it will fall down like a house of cards.

An extract from a speech by US president Woodrow Wilson, September 1919.

Source B

We have entangled ourselves with European concerns. We are dabbling and meddling in their affairs. We have surrendered the great policy of 'no entangling alliances' upon which the strength of this Republic has been founded. How shall we keep from meddling in the affairs of Europe or keep Europe from meddling in the affairs of America? It is in conflict with the right of our people to govern themselves, free from all restraint, legal or moral, of foreign powers. America must, both for the happiness of her own people and for the moral guidance and greater contentment of the world, be permitted to live her own life. We are told that the treaty means peace. Even so, I would not pay the price. Would you purchase peace at the cost of our independence? But the treaty does not mean peace. If we are to judge the future by the past, it means war.

An extract from a speech by US senator William E. Borah, November 1919.

In order to look at the similarities and differences between these two speeches, we first need to go through the same process of source analysis.

- **Who?** Wilson and Borah. We know something about President Wilson from our subject knowledge, but we know nothing about Senator Borah.
- **When?** September and November 1919.
- **Context?** These speeches are part of the American debate over whether the USA should accept the Paris peace settlement and join the League of Nations.

- **Audience?** The audience is the same for both speeches: the American people in general and Congress in particular.
- **Motive?** Each speaker is trying to convince the audience that his opinion is correct, so that the USA will eventually make what he considers to be the correct decision.
- **Content?** Wilson is in favour of the USA joining the League of Nations. Borah is against US membership. There is a clear difference of opinion. Both use emotive language in an attempt to persuade the audience.
- **Subject knowledge?** We know that Wilson was a strong supporter of the League of Nations. He had played a leading role at the Paris Peace Conference and it was at his insistence that the League of Nations was included in each of the different peace treaties. However, his attempts to convince the American people to accept membership of the League of Nations failed, and the Senate rejected both the peace settlement and the League. Most Americans favoured a return to an isolationist foreign policy, and Borah's speech clearly reflects this view.

A straightforward way of comparing the views expressed in these two speeches is to devise a plan, such as the table below.

Note:

One of the most important skills for a historian is the ability to differentiate between fact and opinion.

Note:

Emotive language is language deliberately designed to play on the emotions of the audience. Emotive techniques can also be used in non-written sources, such as posters and cartoons.

Wilson	Borah
Strongly supports the USA's involvement in the League of Nations. This is not surprising since Wilson had made the League of Nations one of the Fourteen Points that he submitted as the basis for the post-war settlements.	Strongly opposed to the USA's involvement in the League of Nations, which would mean the end of the USA's policy of isolationism by 'surrendering the great policy of "no entangling alliances" upon which the strength of this Republic has been founded'.
Sees the League of Nations as a means to prevent future wars ('war will be pushed out of that foreground of terror in which it has kept the world for generation after generation').	Highly sceptical of the promises made by the great nations never to use their power against one another, arguing that 'the treaty does not mean peace. If we are to judge the future by the past, it means war.'
Argues that US independence is protected, stressing that the League cannot act without a unanimous vote, so that it would be impossible for the USA to become involved in 'any enterprise that she does not care to be drawn into'.	Argues that membership of the League would force the USA to interfere in the affairs of Europe and allow Europe to interfere in the affairs of the USA; he uses the word 'meddling' to give the point maximum impact.
Argues that, as a great nation, the USA has an obligation to join the League of Nations in order to help ensure world peace and security in the future.	Argues that US independence is vital and that the USA should maintain its isolationist policy ('would you purchase peace at the cost of our independence?').
Uses emotive language. Claims that the USA owes a debt to those Americans who fought and died in the First World War, and that this can only be met by ensuring 'that there never was such a war again'. Argues that it is vital for all of the great nations to be united behind the League of Nations; without such support, the League would fail, leading to further wars.	Uses emotive language. Argues that joining the League would be 'in conflict with the right of our people to govern themselves, free from all restraint, legal or moral, of foreign powers'. Says that 'for the happiness of her own people and for the moral guidance and greater contentment of the world' the USA must be 'permitted to live her own life'.

From this plan, it is relatively easy to identify the areas over which the two politicians disagree:

- Wilson wants the USA to join the League of Nations. Borah opposes US involvement in the League, preferring isolationism.
- Wilson argues that the League will guarantee future peace. Borah claims that the League will lead to wars.
- Borah argues that US independence will be threatened by membership of the League. Wilson argues that the USA's independence is guaranteed because of the League's voting system.
- Wilson argues that, as a major world power, the USA has an obligation to support the League and work towards international peace. Borah argues that the USA could serve the world better by keeping its independence and remaining outside the League.
- Wilson suggests that the USA owes it to those Americans who died in the First World War to join the League. Borah argues that membership of the League would take away the fundamental rights of the American people.

There is one issue on which the two men agree: both view the USA as a major power with an important role to play in world affairs. However, they differ over what that role should be and how it should be carried out. Borah argues that the 'moral guidance and greater contentment of the world' would be better served if the USA remained free of the constraints that the League of Nations would impose on it. Wilson argues that the USA should play a major role in international affairs as the best way of securing future world peace.



Visual sources: posters

Visual sources should be approached in much the same way as textual sources. Look again at this British poster from 1915.

What was its purpose? Why would someone go to the trouble and expense of having such posters printed and displayed in public places? Think of a modern advertising poster – its aim is to encourage the viewer to buy a particular product and it will use a variety of clever, often highly emotive, techniques to do this. A toothpaste advert, for example, might suggest that you will suffer from tooth decay, gum disease and bad breath if you don't use a particular brand. By implication, the advertisement is saying that this brand is more able to prevent these problems than any other.

This poster is not trying to sell a product; rather it is trying to convince male viewers to join the British army fighting in the First World War, an army which, until 1916, relied on volunteers for new recruits. It does this in a number of highly emotive ways. With only a limited number of words, the message is clear and immediate. It plays on the man's sense of guilt and embarrassment. When the war is over, how will he explain to his children – too young to understand – that he stayed safe and secure in his own home while other men were patriotically and heroically fighting for their country? How would he answer the question posed by his daughter as she reads her history book? What would he say to his son, proudly playing with his toy soldiers on the floor? Highlighting the word 'YOU' adds to the impression that the man would lose the respect of his children if he failed to volunteer for the army.

Visual sources: photographs

Just as the Spanish poster was a propaganda tool, so too is this photograph.



It purports to show Mussolini bravely leading his men into the 'great battle' that marked the glorious March on Rome in 1922, saving Italy from the threat of communist uprisings. In truth, there was no 'battle' – great or otherwise. We know from other sources and our own subject knowledge that the king, fearful of violence, refused to allow the army to confront Mussolini's marchers. We also know that Mussolini, afraid of being the figurehead for an embarrassing failure, remained in Milan rather than leading the march. The photograph is a fabrication – a device to convince people that Mussolini was the saviour of Italy. This does not make it any less useful as a historical source, as it tells us a great deal about Mussolini's style of leadership.

Information about
Mussolini and the
March on Rome
can be found on
page 71.

Visual sources: cartoons

Cartoons can be the most difficult sources to analyse. In most cases, they are created to achieve two things:

- to amuse and entertain the audience
- to make a point and send the audience a message.

To achieve this, they use symbolism and a subtle form of humour that may have been perfectly understandable to people at the time, but that might be less obvious to us.

Example 1

Look at this American cartoon from late August 1939.



In order to analyse the cartoon and understand its message, we need to go through much the same process as when dealing with other types of source.

Date? Published just after the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact (23 August 1939) and just before the German invasion of Poland (1 September 1939).

Context? The agreement between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia came as a shock to the rest of the world. Hitler and Stalin had completely different political ideologies and, indeed, hated each other. Stalin was aware that Hitler's long-term intention was to attack the USSR. It was a treaty of convenience – it enabled Germany to invade Poland, knowing that the USSR would not intervene. It allowed the USSR time to prepare for any future attack by Germany and the opportunity to regain former Russian territory that was now part of Poland. The immediate implication of the pact was that Poland was under threat.

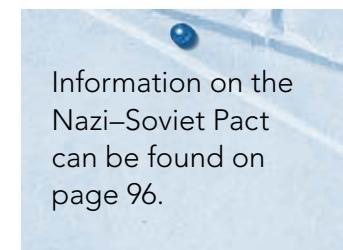
Provenance? Published in an American newspaper and, therefore, intended for an American audience. At this time, the USA was still following an isolationist policy. Although aware of what was happening in the rest of the world, America remained determined to avoid direct involvement. Therefore, the cartoon has been drawn from the perspective of an *observer* rather than that of someone who is directly involved in the events portrayed.

Symbolism? The artist has combined characters from two children's stories:

- Poland is depicted as Little Red Riding Hood/Goldilocks – sweet, innocent and vulnerable.
- Nazi Germany is represented as a wolf (with Hitler's hairstyle) – sly, cunning and licking its lips in anticipation of eating Little Red Riding Hood.
- Soviet Russia is shown as a bear (Stalin) – big and dangerous, if just a little sleepy and stupid, waiting for its share of the feast that Goldilocks will provide.

Message? Cartoons are designed to amuse the audience, but can also make profound political points. For example:

- Little Red Riding Hood/Goldilocks (Poland) is clearly surprised to find a wolf (Germany) and a bear (Soviet Russia) in her bed – hence the startled pose and the word 'Wow!' This reflects the widespread astonishment at the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact. Hitler and Stalin were considered strange bedfellows.
- The drawing implies that Little Red Riding Hood/Goldilocks is also afraid – confronted by two such predatory beasts, who wouldn't be? It is obvious, therefore, that the artist was aware of the implications of the Nazi–Soviet Pact: an invasion of Poland was imminent. This prediction proved accurate when German troops entered Poland on 1 September 1939.



Example 2

Let's look at another cartoon with a similar theme, this time published in a British newspaper on 29 September 1939.



Date? Published after the German invasion of Poland and Britain's declaration of war against Germany (3 September 1939).

Context? Germany's invasion of Poland (commencing on 1 September 1939) finally led to the end of appeasement. Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. However, it took time for these countries to mobilise their troops and they were able to offer little support to Poland, which fell by 29 September 1939. As agreed in the Nazi–Soviet Pact, Germany and the USSR divided the spoils between them.

Provenance? Published in a British newspaper and, therefore, intended for a British audience. Following a policy of appeasement, Britain had done little to prevent Hitler breaking the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and taking increasingly aggressive action throughout the 1930s. It was only when Germany invaded Poland that Britain finally decided to take action. By the time that this cartoon was published, Britain was at war with Germany. However, Britain's declaration of war came too late to save Poland. The cartoon is therefore directed at an audience that is heavily involved in the war against Hitler's Germany.

Symbolism? The artist uses a variety of different techniques:

- Hitler and Stalin are drawn as clearly recognisable figures.
- They look smug and pleased with themselves – their plan to conquer Poland and divide the spoils between them has been successful.
- They are greeting each other with exaggerated politeness (doffing caps and bowing, hands on hearts), yet their verbal greetings imply mutual dislike. Hitler greets Stalin with the words ‘The scum of the earth, I believe’, while Stalin is shown saying ‘the bloody assassin of the workers, I presume’. This heavily sarcastic approach reflects the artist’s view that the Nazi–Soviet Pact was a treaty of convenience rather than of friendship.
- Both Hitler and Stalin are depicted carrying guns, symbols of their warlike and aggressive tendencies.
- They are shown as meeting over the prostrate body of a soldier, representing Poland. With Poland defeated, Hitler and Stalin are now dividing the spoils of war in line with the terms of the Nazi–Soviet Pact.
- Debris and rubble convey the destruction of war and the aggressive nature of Germany’s invasion of Poland. The background could be interpreted as smoke rising from bombs, or as storm clouds gathering to represent future conflicts. Either way, a bird – possibly the dove of peace – flies low to avoid it.

Message? Although the sarcasm is intended to amuse the audience, the cartoon makes a number of profound political points:

- Hitler and Stalin are portrayed as deceitful, evil, selfish and aggressive. They are proud of what they have achieved and show no remorse.
- The Nazi–Soviet Pact is shown as a treaty between enemies, prepared to ignore their mutual hatred in order to further their desire for conquest.
- The policy of appeasement had clearly failed; it had not stopped Hitler from continuing with an aggressive foreign policy, leading to the destruction of Poland.
- It is likely that Hitler will continue to seek further conquests. Britain’s decision to declare war on Germany is, therefore, justified. The people of Britain are involved in a just war against evil and unprovoked aggression.

In examination, you might be asked to *compare* and *contrast* two cartoons like this. Essentially, this is asking you to show and explain the similarities and differences between them. Here are some examples of the type of points you could make.

Similarities:

- Both refer to the Nazi–Soviet Pact and its impact on Poland.
- Both suggest that the Nazi–Soviet Pact was an unlikely alliance between two leaders who hated each other and whose countries followed completely different political ideologies.

- Both suggest that the Nazi–Soviet Pact was an alliance of convenience – to allow Germany and the USSR to destroy Poland and share the spoils.
- Both depict Hitler and Stalin as warlike and aggressive.

Differences:

- **Dates of publication:** the US cartoon was published before the invasion of Poland (it makes a prediction). The British cartoon was published after the invasion (it comments on the outcome of the Nazi–Soviet Pact).
- **Audiences:** the US cartoon was for an American audience (not directly involved and determined to keep out of European affairs). The British cartoon was for a British audience (already heavily involved in the war against Hitler).
- **Symbolism:** the US cartoon uses characters from two children's stories, with Poland represented by Little Red Riding Hood/Goldilocks. The British cartoon uses recognisable images of Hitler and Stalin, and the dead body of a soldier to represent Poland.
- **Humour:** the US cartoon depicts Hitler as a sly wolf and Stalin as a rather slow, sleepy bear (which suggests that Stalin is being led by Hitler, who is closer to Goldilocks, more alert and more prepared for the feast). Goldilocks/Poland is reacting in an astonished and terrified way. The humour is largely visual and straightforward. The British cartoon mixes more serious images (e.g. a dead soldier and the rubble of war) with the humorous words and poses with which Hitler and Stalin greet each other (Stalin and Hitler are seen as equally culpable for the destruction of Poland). The humour is more subtle and sarcastic.
- **Messages:** the US cartoon is simply commenting on events taking place in Europe. The British cartoon is suggesting that Hitler's aggression must be stopped and that it is right for Britain to be at war against him.

Cross-referencing between sources

One of the most important things to remember is that a source should never be used in isolation. It needs to be interpreted in the light of information obtained from other sources. There are three main reasons why cross-referencing between sources is so important:

- We can only judge how useful and reliable a source is by comparing it with what we already know and what other sources say.
- It can help us to solve mysteries or apparent contradictions.
- By using a combination of sources, we can often deduce things that *none* of the sources say when looked at individually.

For example, look at the three sources opposite, and then read the explanation given on page 190.

Source A

Chamberlain said that Hitler wanted only what justifiably belonged to Germany and had no desire for war. He continued:

'The settlement of the Czechoslovakian problem, which has now been achieved, is in my view only the prelude to a larger settlement in which all of Europe may find peace.'

British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, on his return to Britain following the Munich Agreement, September 1938.

Source B

Responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man, the German Chancellor, who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions.

Neville Chamberlain, in a speech given after Britain's declaration of war on Germany, 3 September 1939.

Source C

I did not think it possible that Czechoslovakia would be virtually served up to me on a plate by her friends.

German chancellor Adolf Hitler, in a speech given following the Munich Agreement, September 1938.

There seems to be a contradiction between Sources A and B. In Source A, Chamberlain claims that Hitler had no desire for war and that the Munich Agreement would lead to peace in Europe. In Source B, Chamberlain blames Hitler ('who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions') for the outbreak of the Second World War. How can we explain this apparent contradiction?

The first thing to note is that Source A is dated September 1938, while Source B comes from a year later – in September 1939. The conclusion we draw from this is that, at some point in the intervening year, Chamberlain had changed his assessment both of Hitler and of the significance of the Munich Agreement.

This raises a new question: *why* did Chamberlain change his mind about the agreement? Source C can help us to answer this. It is clear from this source that Hitler's interpretation of the Munich Agreement was very different from Chamberlain's. Hitler believed that by signing the agreement, Britain was effectively giving its approval for the German takeover of Czechoslovakia – a clear sign of weakness that Hitler had every intention of exploiting. Desperate to avoid involving Britain in a costly and unpopular war, Chamberlain had chosen to believe Hitler's claims that he wanted only what rightfully belonged to Germany, righting the wrongs that had previously been done to his country. By September 1939, it was obvious that Hitler had been lying to Chamberlain during their meeting in Munich. It would have been impossible for Chamberlain to deny this fact – after all, Hitler had now invaded Poland and Britain had declared war on Germany.

By linking these three sources with our own subject knowledge, we can also reach another conclusion. When he returned to Britain from Munich in September 1939, Chamberlain proudly waved the piece of paper outlining the agreement that he had made with Hitler. He boasted that the agreement meant 'peace for our time', and was keen to take the credit for getting Hitler to make such peaceful commitments. By September 1939, however, it was clear that these were hollow boasts – the truth was that Hitler had deceived Chamberlain in Munich. Rather than admitting that he had made an error of judgement, Chamberlain chose to lay all of the blame for the outbreak of the Second World War on Hitler (Source B). This was a way of deflecting attention and criticism from his own errors, particularly his long-term support for the policy of appeasement, which had been such a blatant failure.

Addressing source-based questions: a summary

The key things you need to remember when addressing a source-based question are as follows:

Comprehension: you need to establish what the source is saying.

Reliability: don't simply accept what the source is saying. You need to test how reliable it is by:

- comparing what it says with what other sources say and with your own subject knowledge
- looking carefully at who wrote it (or drew it, or said it), when, why and for what purpose/audience
- establishing if there are any reasons to doubt the reliability of the source.

Interpretation: what can you learn from the source, taking into account your judgement about how reliable it is?

Objectivity: always look at a source objectively and with an open mind. Do not make assumptions. For example:

- Don't assume that a source must be biased simply because it was written by a certain person at a certain time. These points might establish a *motive* for bias, but they do not necessarily prove that it is biased.
- Never make unsupported assertions. A statement such as 'Source A is biased' must be accompanied by evidence/examples to demonstrate how it is biased, together with reasons to explain *why* it is biased.

Comparing sources: if you are asked to compare and/or contrast two sources, make sure that you analyse *both* sources before you start to write your answer. Record your findings in a simple plan, which you can use as a basic structure for your answer.

Draw conclusions: what can you learn from your analysis of the source? How does it enhance your knowledge and understanding of a particular topic or event?

Examination technique

This section offers a few general points about how you should approach examination. Some of them might seem obvious, but it is as well to remember that, under the pressures of examination, we are all capable of being careless. If you are aware of the pitfalls, you are less likely to make costly mistakes.

Preparation

It is essential that you are fully prepared for any examination. In particular, make sure you know:

- what topics the questions will be about
- what form the questions will take
- how many questions you will have to answer
- how long you will have to complete all your answers
- what the examiners will be looking for when assessing your answers.

Note:

All this information will be freely available on the examination board's website. You will be able to access sample and past exam papers, examiners' mark schemes etc. These things are also available in hard copy.

A valuable thing to do is to look carefully at past or sample examination papers and their mark schemes. This will give you an insight into the type of questions you may face and – equally importantly – how the examiners mark them. Your teacher may be able to provide you with more examples and will be able to help you interpret the mark schemes.

Equipment

Make sure that you arrive at the examination with all the equipment you are likely to need. Always ensure that you have more than one pen. Find out exactly what you are allowed and not allowed to take into the examination room. Different centres have their own rules about this, but examination boards also issue very clear guidelines.

Rubric

All examination papers contain *rubric* – this provides you with information (such as how long you have to complete the exam) and instructions (such as how many questions you need to answer). Always:

- check the title of the examination paper to ensure you have been given the right one
- check how long the exam lasts
- read *all* the instructions carefully and make sure you follow them.

Question selection

Obviously question selection is not an issue if you are required to answer *all* the questions on the examination paper. However, here is some advice if you have the opportunity to select which questions to answer:

- Read *all parts of all questions* carefully *before* making your selection.
- Don't select a question simply because it happens to be about a topic on which you feel confident; just because you know a lot about the topic is no guarantee that you understand the question and can answer it effectively. Select by *task* (what the question is asking you to do) rather than by *topic* (basic subject matter).
- If questions consist of more than one part, make sure that you can answer *all parts* of it. For example, do not select a two-part question if you are confident about part (a) but know nothing about (or are confused by) part (b). By doing this you would immediately be reducing the number of marks you could achieve.
- Decide the order in which you are going to address the questions. Do not leave the question you feel most confident about until last – you don't want to run out of time on your best question.
- Make sure that you number your answers correctly (you don't need to waste time writing out the whole question). Make it as easy as possible for the examiner to understand what you are doing.

Timing

It is a good idea to work out how long you have to complete each question/part of a question. Make a note of it and make every effort to keep to this timing.

What should you do if the examination is nearing its end and you realise that you are not going to complete your final answer?

- Write a comment such as 'running out of time – hence notes'.
- Describe, in note form, what you would have written if you had not run out of time.
- Ensure that these notes will make sense to the examiner and are not just a list of facts – make them relevant to the question that has been asked.

This approach will not get you as many marks as if you had completed your answer fully. However, the examiner *will* read them and *will* give you credit for them provided that they are accurate and relevant.

The best way to avoid the problem of running out of time is to ensure that you have had a great deal of practice in writing answers to examination questions under timed conditions.

Planning

Always ensure that you have planned each answer thoroughly *before* you start to write. When confronted with the time constraints of an examination, too many students assume that it is essential to start writing as soon as possible. As a result, they are making their judgements and forming their arguments as they write – this invariably leads to confused, unbalanced or unfocused answers. Careful planning is not time wasted, it is time well spent.

Revision

It is widely assumed that the purpose of revision is to get information into your brain in preparation for the examination. In fact, if you have followed the course appropriately, all the information you will need for the exam is already there. The human brain, rather like a computer, never ‘forgets’ anything it has experienced. *The key purpose of revision, therefore, is not to put information into your brain, but to ensure that you can retrieve it when it is required.* Revision should not be something you undertake in the last few days and hours before an examination; effective revision needs to be an ongoing process throughout the course.

How frustrating is it when you need an important document that you know is somewhere on your computer, but you can’t access it because you can’t remember what filename you gave it? It can take hours of tedious and unproductive searching before you locate it – but, once you do, everything you need is there. All you needed was a simple filename in order to access all the information you required. Revision needs to operate in much the same way – identifying the key points (‘filenames’) that will bring related information flooding back into your memory. The notes you make during the course therefore need to be very carefully planned and structured.

When taking notes from a book, most students simply copy out long passages. They convince themselves that this is essential to ensure that they don’t miss anything important. In fact, this is a largely pointless exercise that is invariably undertaken without concentration, comprehension, analysis or discrimination. The outcome is a mass of continuous prose that the student has not really read or understood. This causes problems when it comes to revision.

A more productive way of note-taking and revising is:

- Read a whole section of the book first without making any notes at all, ensuring that you fully understand what the author is trying to say.
- Identify and record the key points being made (just like computer *folders*).
- Under each of the key points, list the arguments/evidence the author uses to support it (like computer *files*).

Here is an example of the type of notes this method produces, using the Treaty of Berlin as a theme.

Information on the Treaty of Berlin can be found on page 13.

The Treaty of Berlin (1885)

Aims

- To prevent conflict between European nations competing in the 'scramble for Africa'.
- To regulate European colonisation and trade in Africa.

Terms

European nations could establish a claim to land by:

- informing other governments
- proving that it 'effectively occupied' the land
- free passage to all ships on Rivers Niger and Congo
- abolition of slavery throughout Africa.

Impact

- Encouraged European countries to get more new land in Africa.
- Led to potential disputes (e.g. Fashoda Incident – Britain v. France).

This process takes longer and requires more thought than simply copying out long passages of a book, but it is time well spent. It will ensure that your pre-examination revision becomes far more straightforward, focused and effective.

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Produced for Cambridge University Press by
White-Thomson Publishing
+44 (0)843 208 7460
www.wtpub.co.uk

Project editor: Sonya Newland

Designer: Clare Nicholas

Illustrator: Stefan Chabluk

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