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History

CONFLICT AND TENSION, 1918–1939

REVISION GUIDE AND WORKBOOK

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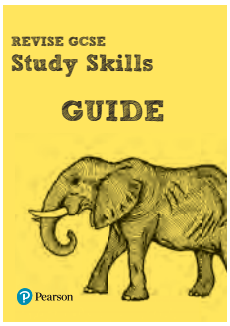
Series Consultant: Harry Smith

Authors: Sally Clifford and Victoria Payne

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A small bit of small print

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The First World War ends

The armistice was an agreement to stop fighting at the end of the First World War. It was signed between France, Britain and Germany on 11 November 1918, ending four years of war.

The First World War ends at last

- The war had dragged on far longer than either side had expected, and had caused huge damage to both sides. Eight million soldiers and eight million civilians had been killed. Many factories, farms and railways had been destroyed.
- Germany had defeated Russia in March 1917, and for a while a German victory seemed possible. However, this changed after the USA joined the war in April 1917 and the Allies made several key advances.
- Germany felt it had to end the war quickly and made one last attempt to win with the Spring Offensive (from March to July 1918), but this failed to defeat the Allies.

Germany hoped it would be able to keep the territory it had gained. However, the Allies insisted that Germany should accept the terms of the armistice or fighting would continue. Germany had no choice but to sign.

Why did Germany agree to the armistice?

After the Spring Offensive, Germany was short of manpower and supplies.

The USA was sending more troops and supplies, and it seemed to be only a matter of time before the German army would be defeated.

On 3 November 1918, sailors in the German port of Kiel had mutinied and refused to engage in a battle against the British.

In the following days, thousands of civilians took to the streets in Germany's major cities, protesting at the burdens caused by the war. Many German soldiers had been killed and civilians had suffered many difficulties.

To try to calm the demonstrations, the German chancellor, Prince Maximilian of Baden, persuaded the Kaiser to step down and flee to Holland.

The terms of the armistice

The armistice contained 34 terms. The main ones were:

- German troops were to leave France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Alsace-Lorraine (which Germany had held since 1870) within 14 days.
- After this, all German troops were to leave the territory on the west side of the Rhine.
- The treaties that Germany had forced on Russia and Romania would be cancelled.
- The German fleet would be seized.
- Germany was to surrender all its submarines, 5000 cannons, 25000 machine guns, 1700 planes, 5000 locomotive engines and 150000 railcars.
- All French, British and Italian prisoners of war were to be released immediately. German prisoners would only be released after a peace treaty.
- Germany would be blamed for the war and pay **reparations** (compensation) for all damage caused.

Reactions to the armistice

Britain, France and the USA celebrated the end of the fighting. Germany was facing the possibility of a civil war as the country was divided and in a desperate state. Many Germans were angry at how the war had ended. Many German soldiers believed the armistice was only temporary and that the fighting would soon start up again.

At the armistice, it was agreed that the peace treaty would be drawn up in Paris in 1919. The conference would be dominated by the main Allies (Britain, France and the USA) and the leaders of these countries had very different ideas about what should happen next.

Now try this

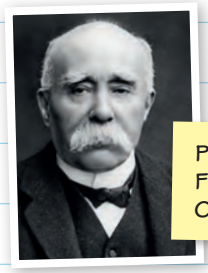
Write a paragraph to explain why Germany signed the armistice.

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The 'Big Three' and their aims 1

In January 1919, representatives from the countries which had won the First World War met at the Palace of Versailles in Paris. The negotiations were led by the leaders of the most powerful Allies: Britain, France and the USA. They were known as the **'Big Three'**, and they had very different ideas about what should happen next.

The positions of the 'Big Three'



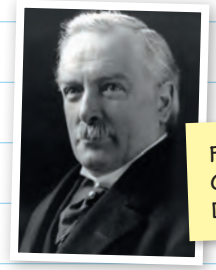
Prime Minister of France, Georges Clemenceau.

Most of the fighting during the First World War was in France. France had experienced the most deaths and many factories, railways and farms had been destroyed.

Clemenceau was under pressure to take revenge on Germany.

He wanted Germany to pay to rebuild France.

He also wanted to make sure that Germany was too weak to attack France again.



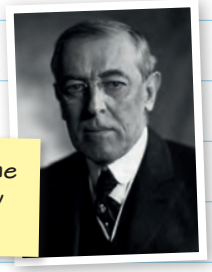
Prime Minister of Great Britain, David Lloyd George.

Britain had also suffered severe losses during the war, and many British people wanted revenge.

However, Lloyd George thought that if the Germans were punished too severely, they might start another war.

He wanted Germany to be strong enough to trade with Britain.

He also wanted to protect the British Empire by taking Germany's colonies and by reducing Germany's navy.



President of the USA, Woodrow Wilson.

America didn't see the need for revenge – it had made money selling weapons to the Allies and the fighting had been a long way from American soil.

Wilson was also worried that being too harsh with Germany would risk starting another war.

Wilson was an idealist and suggested ways to make the world better. These were called the **Fourteen Points**.

The Fourteen Points

Wilson's Fourteen Points aimed to encourage nations to work together. They included:

- freedom of the seas, which would allow any country to sail and trade wherever they wanted
- allowing countries **self-determination** (the ability to rule themselves)
- an end to secret treaties
- returning Alsace-Lorraine to France
- forming an independent Polish state with access to the sea
- the creation of a League of Nations, allowing countries to work together to solve problems.

Key disagreements of the 'Big Three'

Wilson and Clemenceau

Wilson wanted to focus on building a fairer world and preventing war. He did not want to punish Germany severely. Clemenceau wanted Germany to be crushed.

Clemenceau and Lloyd George

- Clemenceau wanted to reduce Germany's military so France could not be attacked again. Lloyd George thought that a strong Germany was needed to stop the spread of communism from Russia.
- Clemenceau wanted huge reparations. Lloyd George wanted Germany's economy to be left strong enough to allow trade with Britain.

Wilson and Lloyd George

- Lloyd George opposed Wilson's 'freedom of the seas' because he wanted to protect Britain's naval **supremacy** (Britain had the biggest navy in the world and controlled a lot of ports).
- Lloyd George also opposed Wilson's idea of self-determination, as this posed a threat to Britain's empire.

Now try this

List **two** ways that the British and French aims were similar, and **two** ways that they were different.

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The Treaty of Versailles

The Versailles Settlement took months to negotiate. The treaty was eventually signed on 28 June 1919. The German people had hoped that Wilson's Fourteen Points would be the basis of the treaty, but in reality the terms were very different.

War guilt and reparations

Article 231 of the treaty was called the 'war guilt clause'. Germany and its allies had to take the blame for starting the war.

Article 232 set out that Germany would have to pay reparations to the Allies. In 1921, the final total was agreed – £6600 million.

Diktat

It was soon clear that the Allies were going to punish Germany. Germany was banned from the peace talks and, when it refused to sign, the Allies threatened to resume the war. Germany had no choice but to sign, and called the treaty a 'diktat' (dictated peace).

Territorial changes



North Schleswig went to Denmark.

Eupen and Malmedy were given to Belgium.

The Saar coalfields were taken over by the League of Nations for 15 years. The coal was to go to France as compensation for the destruction of French coalmines.

Alsace-Lorraine was given to France.

The port of Danzig (modern Gdansk) on the Baltic Sea, and nearly 750 square miles of land around it, was taken by the League of Nations and became a 'Free City'.

Poland was given land to ensure that it had access to the sea. This was called the Polish Corridor and split Germany in two.

Parts of Upper Silesia were granted to Czechoslovakia.

Germany lost more than 10% of its territory.

The **Anschluss** (union) between Germany and Austria was forbidden.

Germany's African colonies were given as **mandates** to the League of Nations. This meant that the League could allow another country to run the colony on the League's behalf. For example, Togo and Cameroon went to France, and German East Africa went to Britain.

The League of Nations was set up, but Germany was not allowed to join. This meant that most of the territory that was controlled by the League of Nations was effectively given to Britain and France.

Germany's military was severely restricted

- Navy: restricted to 15 000 men, 1500 officers and six battleships. There were also restrictions on the other ships Germany was allowed. No submarines were allowed.
- Army: The German army was capped at 100 000. **Conscription** (compulsory military service) was banned. Germany was not allowed tanks or armoured cars, and was not allowed to buy weapons. The Rhineland was **demilitarised** (Germany could not put soldiers there).
- Air force: Germany was not allowed to have an air force.

Now try this

The Versailles Settlement intended to weaken Germany so that it could not start another war. Give **three** examples of how this was done.

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Had a look ☐ Nearly there ☐ Nailed it! ☐

The 'Big Three' and their aims 2

Most German people hated the Treaty of Versailles – but the Allies were not very happy with it either.

For more on the views of the 'Big Three', turn to page 2. For the terms of the treaty, turn to page 3.

Britain (Prime Minister Lloyd George)

Aim	Evidence it was achieved	Evidence it wasn't
Punish Germany	• Many people in Britain liked the 'war guilt' clause.	• Lloyd George worried that the treaty was too harsh and Germany would want revenge, leading to another war within 25 years.
Reparations	• Britain received reparations, but less than France. Reparations covered 'civilian damage', which Britain suffered less of.	
Retain naval supremacy	• The German navy was heavily reduced, cementing British naval dominance.	
Trade with Germany		• Germany was crippled by the war and reparations – it could not afford to trade.
Protect British Empire	• Britain gained territory from the German Empire.	

France (Prime Minister Clemenceau)

Aim	Evidence it was achieved	Evidence it wasn't
Punish Germany	• Germany and its allies were made to take responsibility for the war – a huge blow to German pride.	• Many French people felt the treaty didn't go far enough – Clemenceau was voted out at the next election.
Reduce Germany's power in order to protect France	• The Rhineland was demilitarised. • Anschluss (union) with Austria was forbidden. • The German army and navy were reduced. • Germany was banned from having tanks, submarines or aeroplanes.	• Clemenceau had argued that Germany should not have an army at all. • Clemenceau had wanted the Rhineland to be independent, not just demilitarised.
Reparations to rebuild France	• In 1921, Germany was told to pay £6600 million, with France receiving the biggest share. • France got the coal from the Saar for 15 years.	• The reparations were far less than the cost of the war. • Clemenceau had argued that they should be given the Saar outright.

USA (President Woodrow Wilson)

Aim	Evidence it was achieved	Evidence it wasn't
Self-determination	• Small nations that had been part of Austria-Hungary became independent.	• Germany's empire was given to the League of Nations as mandates.
Prevent future war	• The countries in the League of Nations agreed to work together to avoid war.	• Like Lloyd George, Wilson was worried that the treaty was too harsh and that Germany would seek revenge.
Set up the League of Nations	• The League was created and 42 countries joined.	
Freedom of the seas		• Germany's navy was reduced and Britain retained naval supremacy.

Now try this

Look at the aims they were hoping the treaty would achieve.

Based on the information above, which of the 'Big Three' do you think was most satisfied by the outcome of the treaty? Give **three** reasons for your answer, with supporting evidence.

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Reactions to Versailles: the Allies

Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Wilson had gone to Paris with very different aims, and the Treaty of Versailles involved a lot of compromise. What were the short- and medium-term impacts of the treaty for Britain, France and the USA?

For more about the longer-term impacts of the Treaty of Versailles, see page 9.

Britain

Most people in Britain felt that the treaty was fair, although many thought it should have been tougher. Britain's losses had been enormous – nearly every family had lost a brother, father, son or husband, and civilians had suffered food shortages – and most British people wanted Germany to pay. Political campaigns were based on promises to punish Germany.

The treaty was generally popular – the press declared that Germany would never threaten Britain again and Lloyd George was welcomed back as a hero.



Lloyd George

Although Lloyd George was praised for his part in negotiating the treaty, and had secured Britain's empire and naval supremacy, he was not happy with it.

- He thought it was too harsh and that Germany would want revenge, causing another war.
- He also thought the reparations were too severe and would damage Germany's ability to trade.
- He warned that giving German land and people to Poland would cause problems because the people would want to be German again.

France

France had been the worst affected by the war – most of the fighting had taken place in France, causing massive damage. France had also lost the most men. The people of France were determined that Germany should be punished. Some elements of the treaty were popular – the war guilt clause, the demilitarisation of the Rhineland, the return of Alsace-Lorraine and the control of the Saar coalfields.

However, many people were angry because they felt that their suffering was not being compensated – they wanted the treaty to be much harsher on Germany. Clemenceau was voted out at the next election – people felt he had let the Germans off too lightly.



Clemenceau

Clemenceau was not happy with the agreement.

- He was furious that Germany had been allowed to keep an army – he had wanted Germany's military to be utterly crushed.
- He had wanted the Rhineland to be a small, powerless independent state, not just a demilitarised zone.
- When the reparations were set at £6600 million, he felt this was too little – he wanted Germany to be financially crippled.

USA

The USA had joined the war in 1917, and the fighting took place a long way from American soil. Many Americans felt that the treaty was unfair on Germany and had led to Britain and France becoming too powerful.

Many Americans were **isolationist** (they believed that the USA should not get involved in foreign affairs). The US Senate refused to **ratify** (officially accept) the treaty, arguing that as it wasn't based on the Fourteen Points, it wasn't in America's best interests.



Wilson

Wilson was very upset.

- He was scared that the harsh treaty would lead to the USA being pulled into another war.
- Most of his Fourteen Points had been ignored.
- The Senate's refusal to ratify the treaty meant that the USA could not join the League of Nations. Wilson campaigned tirelessly for America to join until he died from a stroke in 1924. The USA continued to pursue its policy of isolationism for the next ten years.

Now try this

Why do you think the British people were more satisfied with the treaty than the French or Americans? Give **two** reasons for your answer.

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Reactions to Versailles: Germany

The German people were unhappy about the terms of the Versailles treaty – they thought it was very unfair. The impact of the terms on Germany, which was already struggling, was severe.

Instability in Germany, 1918–1923

Timeline

11 November 1918 The Allies insist that Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates. Armistice signed.

28 June 1919 The Treaty of Versailles is signed.

March 1920 A revolt against the government (the Kapp Putsch) is narrowly defeated.

January 1923 Germany misses a reparations payment. The French invade the Ruhr industrial zone, intending to take German goods in place of the money owed.

January 1919 The communists attempt to overthrow the German government.

11 August 1919 The Weimar Constitution is accepted.

April 1921 The German reparations bill is set at £6600 million.

November 1923 Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party attempts to overthrow the government in the Munich Putsch.

Hyperinflation

Following the invasion of the Ruhr, the German government paid workers to strike so there were no goods for the French to take. They then had to print more money to pay the strikers. This led to **hyperinflation** (when money becomes worth less and less). By the end of the year, a loaf of bread cost 200 000 000 000 marks.

Germany made its final reparations payment in 2010, though it did not pay the full amount.

Germany in 1919

During the war, propaganda had told the German people that they were winning – defeat came as a huge shock. The Allies blamed Kaiser Wilhelm II for the start of the war, so when he was forced to abdicate, many Germans believed that the person responsible had been punished. They hoped that Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points would form the basis of the peace treaty. They were suffering food shortages and the economy was in ruins – with the Kaiser gone, Germany hoped for compassion from the Allies.

German objections to the treaty

The harshness of the treaty came as a shock to the German people – they thought that the diktat was deeply unfair. Although the government had no choice but to sign it (the alternative was a return to war), the people hated them for it. They were called the 'November Criminals' and accused of 'stabbing Germany in the back'.

For more on the terms of the treaty, turn to page 3.

The 'war guilt' clause was the most hated part of the treaty, as it was a huge humiliation. The loss of Germany's overseas colonies, large parts of its territory and the wealth of the Saar coalfields, along with the limits placed on the German military, added to feelings of humiliation and vulnerability.

Weimar

When the Kaiser abdicated, there was nobody to run Germany. A new democratic government was set up, called the Weimar Republic. However, Germany was in a terrible state and many people felt that the new government wasn't strong enough. There was also anger that not enough was being done to help people who were suffering.

The political situation was very fragile, with several revolts and attempts to overthrow the government. The Russian Revolution (the Russian Tsar was overthrown by communists) led to fears that communism would spread from the east.

Now try this

Give **three** reasons why Germany objected to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

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The wider settlement

The Treaty of Versailles was only part of the Paris Peace Conference – there were also treaties with Germany's allies. This wider settlement had both strengths and weaknesses.

Austria: Treaty of St Germain (1919)

- Land was given to Italy, Romania and the new states of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.
- Austria was told to pay reparations (but the amount was never fixed).
- Austria's army was limited to 30000. No conscription was allowed, and no navy.
- Anschluss with Germany was forbidden.

Hungary: Treaty of Trianon (1920)

- Land was given to Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Austria.
- Hungary was to pay reparations, but the economy collapsed and so it was unable to.
- Hungary's army was limited to 35000.
- No conscription was allowed.
- The navy was limited to three patrol boats.

Bulgaria: Treaty of Neuilly (1919)

- Land was given to Yugoslavia, Greece and Romania.
- Bulgaria gained some land from Turkey.
- Bulgaria was to pay reparations of £100 million.
- The army was limited to 20000.
- No conscription was allowed.
- No air force was allowed.
- The navy was limited to four torpedo boats.

Turkey: Treaty of Sèvres (1920)

- The Turkish Empire was split up.
- The Allies took control of Turkish finances.
- Turkey lost all its land in Europe to Greece, except a small area around the capital, Constantinople (now Istanbul).
- The army was limited to 50000.
- The Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits were taken from Turkish control.
- The navy was limited to seven sailing boats and six torpedo boats.
- The Allies could keep troops in Turkey.

Treaty of Lausanne (1923)

The Turkish people were so angry about the Treaty of Sèvres that they overthrew their government. The new government threatened to go to war with the Allies over the treaty.

Britain didn't want to go to war, so agreed to a new treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne, under which:

- Turkey regained control of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus
- the limits on the armed forces were lifted
- some of the land Greece had taken was given back to Turkey
- the Allies withdrew their troops from Turkey.

Consequences of the wider settlement

- ✓ Losing industrial areas to Czechoslovakia caused the Austrian economy to collapse in 1921.
- ✓ The revolt over the Treaty of Sèvres, and the fact that the British agreed a new treaty with Turkey, showed that nobody wanted to use force to impose a treaty.
- ✓ Hitler and Mussolini knew they could break international agreements and nobody could do anything.
- ✓ Eastern Europe was made up of lots of small new countries.

Turn to page 8 for a map of Europe after 1923.

Now try this

Which of Germany's allies do you think was dealt with most harshly? Give **two** reasons for your answer.

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The new states

The Paris Peace Conference redrew the map of Europe – with unexpected consequences. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was split into several new countries, which created fresh problems.

Redrawing the map of Europe and the creation of new states



Europe in 1914.



Europe after 1923.

The creation of new states

There were two main problems with this process:

- Many countries were eager to receive the reparations they were owed by Germany and its allies, and this put pressure on the negotiators to reach an agreement quickly. This may have made mistakes more likely.
- **Self-determination**: many new states contained people from different ethnic backgrounds, some of whom were unhappy to find themselves in a different country.

Self-determination is the right of a country to form its own government without interference.

The new countries

Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia declared independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, and its status was accepted at the Paris Peace Conference. It was a democracy and it inherited much of Austria's industry and was able to build a strong economy. It was generally politically stable, although there were some tensions – a fifth of the population was German and many of them, especially those in the German-speaking Sudetenland, resented being part of Czechoslovakia.

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was formed from several different ethnic groups, and there was frequently tension between them. However, Yugoslavia remained relatively stable until its violent collapse in the 1990s.

Poland

Poland faced problems from the beginning. The Allies created Poland as a buffer between Germany and the USSR. Poland was given a strip of land called the Polish Corridor, giving it access to the sea while weakening Germany by splitting it in two. This meant that the population of the Polish Corridor was mainly German and hated being part of Poland. To the east was the USSR, which disputed the border. To the west was Germany, which resented the loss of land. Therefore, Poland was surrounded by hostile countries.

Now try this

Describe **two** of the main problems faced by new states created after the First World War?

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The treaty and fairness

The peacemakers at the end of the First World War all had very different aims, and none of them achieved everything they wanted. But was the final treaty fair?

Evidence that the settlement was unfair

- The causes of the war, such as the arms race (where countries compete to have the biggest armed forces), were complicated and were not just Germany's fault. Yet the Germans were made to take all of the blame.
- The Germans signed the armistice thinking that the treaty would be based on Wilson's Fourteen Points – but it was not, and they were not allowed to negotiate. They might not have signed the armistice if they had known what the treaty would be like, and that it would be a diktat.
- Six million Germans ended up living in new – often hostile – countries. This gave Germany an excuse to reclaim the land it had lost.

Turn to page 20 to see how border changes influenced Hitler's aims.

- The new countries created by the Paris Settlement often grouped together people who did not want to share a country, which caused unrest. Czechoslovakia split in two in 1993 and Yugoslavia eventually collapsed into civil war in 1991.
- The Treaty of Sèvres was so harsh it caused a revolt and was overturned – this showed that the treaties could not be enforced.
- At the time the settlement was signed, many people – including Wilson and Lloyd George – thought it was too harsh and would lead to another war.

Evidence that the settlement was fair

- The Austrian and Turkish empires were broken up by demands for independence, which the Allies accepted to weaken their enemies. This meant that the agreement had to be made quickly to prevent instability – given the pressure they were under, the treaty was not a bad job.
- Germany had already agreed to several of the terms of the treaty at the armistice – including the payment of reparations.
- Germany only paid a fraction of the reparations it owed – and was able to rebuild its military and economy enough to start another war within 20 years. The problem wasn't the treaty, but that it wasn't enforced.
- The Paris peace talks came at the end of a war that had caused a huge amount of death and devastation, especially to France. Expecting Germany to pay for the damage wasn't unfair.
- It was normal for the losing side to be treated harshly. When Russia had pulled out of the war, Germany had made them sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which took away more than a quarter of their people and agricultural land. Many people think this shows that if Germany had won, they would have treated the Allies just as harshly.

Changing views on Versailles over time

In 1919, the treaties signed at the Paris conference were fairly popular outside Germany. Many felt that Germany deserved to be punished and needed to be prevented from attacking its neighbours again.

However, throughout the 1930s opinions began to change, and after the Second World War the peacemakers were heavily criticised and blamed for the conditions that led to war breaking out again. This is an example of how interpretations of events can change over time, especially when the consequences become clear. Being able to recognise why someone might have come to a particular viewpoint is a key historical skill.

Now try this

Look at all the factors and decide which are more important.

Was the Treaty of Versailles fair? Based on the information above, give **three** reasons for your answer.

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League of Nations: origins

The League of Nations was an international organisation that was committed to cooperation between different countries to promote international peace.

Formation

- The basic idea of how the League of Nations would work was included in the Treaty of Versailles. All the countries who signed the treaty agreed to follow these rules.
- After the dreadful losses of the First World War, international leaders wanted a way to work together to solve problems without having to go to war. The League of Nations was intended to encourage compromise and negotiation.
- Geneva was chosen as the League's headquarters because Switzerland had been **neutral** (not involved) in the war.



The covenant of the League of Nations

The covenant of the League of Nations was a list of 26 rules which set out how it would achieve its aims. The main ones are shown below.

Prevent war by:

- ✓ replacing competing empires with a world of independent nation states
- ✓ protecting the rights of individual member countries to decide their own futures
- ✓ protecting each other's territorial rights
- ✓ replacing blocs of military alliance with a new system of **collective security**.

Encourage disarmament by:

- ✓ expecting countries to cut their military capability to the minimum necessary
- ✓ working together on disarmament to prevent a new arms race like the one that had contributed to pre-First World War tensions.

Improve working conditions by:

- ✓ setting up the International Labour Organisation.

Tackle disease by:

- ✓ cooperating with the Red Cross
- ✓ leading international cooperation to prevent and control disease (eventually leading to setting up the World Health Organization).

Resolve disputes by:

- ✓ replacing **secret diplomacy** (managing international matters by secret negotiation) with open discussion
- ✓ agreeing to **arbitration** (mediation to reach agreement) and legal settlement of disputes
- ✓ setting up a Court of International Justice.

Collective security means countries agreeing to protect each other if they are attacked.

Now try this

Write a short paragraph (6–8 lines) explaining the aims of the League of Nations when it was formed.

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League of Nations: membership

The League of Nations had 42 founding members. It was dominated by the surviving imperial powers like Britain and France. However, three very powerful countries were not part of the League of Nations: Germany, the USA and Russia (which became the USSR in 1922).

Who joined the League?

When the League of Nations was founded in 1920, there were 42 member states. The member countries of the League of Nations reached across the world and included most of Southeast Asia, Europe and South America.

Most African countries were not members of the League in their own right, but were either League of Nations' mandates or colonies of European member countries.

Why did countries want to join the League?

- To avoid another war
- As a way to cooperate on issues such as health, trafficking and the drug trade
- To have a say in matters like colonies or disarmament
- To benefit from collective security

See page 10 for a reminder about collective security.

Who didn't join and why?

Some important nations were not members:

- The countries who had lost the war were not allowed to join, so Germany, Austria and Turkey weren't members.
- Britain and France were suspicious of Russia's communist government, so Russia was not invited to join.
- Despite President Wilson's key role in the creation of the League, the US Senate refused to allow the USA to join, fearing that it would lead to America being pulled into another war in Europe. This was the beginning of the USA's policy of **isolationism** (not getting involved in foreign affairs).

Changes in membership

Membership of the League changed over time. Austria and Bulgaria were allowed to join in 1920, and Germany in 1926. The USSR was admitted in 1934.

Between 1934 and 1935, membership of the League was at its highest, with 58 members.

Some nations left the League over disputes, such as Germany (1933), Italy (1937) and Japan (1933), and some were expelled, such as the USSR (1939).

For more about why these countries left the League of Nations, turn to pages 17 (Japan), 18 (Italy) and 22 (Germany).



President Woodrow Wilson visited Los Angeles in September 1919 as part of his League of Nations speaking tour. He travelled thousands of miles around the USA campaigning for membership of the League of Nations, but the country never joined.

Now try this

Why did the US Senate refuse to join the League of Nations? Why might this seem surprising? Explain your answer in **two** sentences.

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League of Nations: organisation

The aims of the League of Nations were ambitious. It needed to be organised efficiently to make sure it could work effectively and meet those aims.

Turn to page 10 for the aims of the League.

The structure of the League of Nations

Court of International Justice

This was a court for international agreements. Any country could take an issue to the court, and a team of 11 judges and four deputies would listen to both sides and make a judgement, which both sides would then have to follow.

Assembly

The **Assembly** worked like an international parliament. It met once a year, and every member nation could send representatives.

The Assembly made decisions about membership of the League, membership of the Council and how the League should spend its money. It also appointed judges to the **Court of International Justice**.

Every country had an equal vote, and decisions had to be **unanimous** (everyone agreeing) otherwise the issue would be passed on to the Council.

Council

The Assembly only met once a year, so it couldn't oversee the day-to-day work of the League, and it couldn't react in an emergency. So there was also a council, which met more often.

The **Council** had eight members:

- four permanent members – Britain, France, Italy and Japan
- four temporary members (increased to nine in 1926) who were elected for three years at a time.

The Council could **veto** (overrule) the decisions of the Assembly.

Special commissions

The League of Nations also set up agencies to deal with major international issues. These included:

- International Labour Organisation (workers' rights)
- Health Organisation
- Disarmament Commission
- Slavery Commission (to tackle human trafficking)
- Commission for Refugees
- Central Opium Board (opium addiction was a big problem)
- Commission for Undeveloped Nations
- Commission for Women
- Mandates Commission
- Commission for Minorities.

Secretariat

The **Secretariat** was the League's civil service. It ran the administration of the League, and organised any non-military action the League decided to take.

How would the League deal with disputes?

Arbitration
Getting countries together to discuss problems

Moral condemnation
If one country was in the wrong, they would be told that they were wrong and warned to behave.

Sanctions
Member nations would stop trading with the offending country, in the hope that the economic impact would force the government to give way.

Military intervention
The League did not have an army, but it could ask its members to lend their armed forces to protect another League member.

Now try this

Choose **two** methods used by the League of Nations to resolve disputes between member states. State why these methods might be effective or not.

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The League's agencies

The League of Nations wanted to improve people's lives because it thought that if people were happy, the risk of conflict would be lower. It set up agencies to work to achieve this aim.

The International Labour Organisation

Successes

- Got 77 countries to adopt a minimum wage
- Reduced the death rate among workers building the Tanganyika railway in Africa from 50% to 4%
- Recommended the end of use of poisonous white lead in paint
- Helped Greece set up sickness benefits

Failures

- Failed to ban child labour
- Failed to limit the working day to 8 hours

See pages 10–12 for more on the League of Nations.

Commission for Refugees

Successes

- Freed 427 000 of the 500 000 prisoners of war still being held after the war, and returned them home
- Introduced an ID document for refugees
- Resettled 1.5 million refugees from Russia
- Set up refugee camps during a war between Greece and Turkey
- Resettled 600 000 Greek refugees from Turkey

Failure

- In 1933, Germany vetoed an attempt to appoint a commissioner for refugees fleeing Germany.

Health Committee

Successes

- Sent doctors to refugee camps
- Started an international campaign to kill mosquitoes, which spread malaria and yellow fever
- Helped the Russian government organise an education programme to stop the spread of typhus

In 1948, the Health Committee became part of the World Health Organization.

Central Opium (later Narcotics) Board

Successes

- Blacklisted several large companies that were selling drugs illegally
- Introduced a system of certification for companies importing opium for medicines

Failure

- The Board didn't stop the sale of opium altogether – and some people said it was because key League members were making money from it.

Slavery Commission

Success

- Helped to abolish slavery in Sierra Leone in 1928, which led to the freeing of 200 000 slaves

Communications and Transport

Successes

- Introduced shipping lanes to reduce collisions at sea
- Introduced an international highway code

Now try this

Based on the information above, which of the League's commissions do you think was most successful? Write a short paragraph (6–8 lines) explaining your answer.

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Peacekeeping in the 1920s

As the map of Europe was redrawn after the First World War, there were a number of arguments about where the borders should be, and some nations threatened to go to war. How did the League of Nations help to keep the peace, and how successful was it?

1920

Vilna

Poland and Lithuania were created after the First World War when Austria-Hungary was broken up. Vilna (now Vilnius) was to be the capital of Lithuania, but most of the people living there were Polish. Poland occupied the city, and Lithuania complained to the League. Poland was told to withdraw its troops, but it refused. France did not want to upset Poland, as it saw Poland as an ally against Germany. Britain would not send troops without support from other countries – so Poland kept Vilna.

1921

Upper Silesia

In November 1921, the League resolved a dispute between Germany and Poland about the ownership of Upper Silesia, an important industrial area. The Treaty of Versailles said that the population should hold a **plebiscite** (referendum) on whether they wanted to remain part of Germany or be part of Poland. Germany won 60% of the vote. Poland claimed that many of the people who had voted for Germany didn't live in Upper Silesia. The League was asked to resolve the problem. After investigating the issue, the League decided to divide Upper Silesia between Poland and Germany. Germany received more land, but Poland was granted the industrial zones. Although both sides accepted the decision, Poland felt it was unfair that a large number of Poles were in German territory. Germany was unhappy that they had lost most of their coal mines and, in 1922, the League gave them the right to import coal at a discount until 1925.

Åland Islands

In June 1921, there was a dispute between Finland and Sweden about the Åland Islands. They had been part of Finland historically but most of the population wanted to belong to Sweden. The governments of Sweden and Finland asked the League to make a judgement. The League said that the islands should remain part of Finland but that no military personnel or arms could be based there. Both countries agreed with the outcome.

1923

Corfu

In 1923, an Italian general was in Greece, deciding on the new border between Greece and Albania. He and his team were murdered. Italy's dictator, Benito Mussolini, sent troops to occupy the Greek island of Corfu. Greece asked the League for help. The League ordered Mussolini to leave Corfu, but he went to the Conference of Ambassadors, a group of powerful nations, and persuaded them to undermine the League. Greece was forced to apologise to Italy and pay compensation. Satisfied, Mussolini left Corfu.

1925

Bulgaria

In 1925, soldiers on the border between Greece and Bulgaria fired at each other and a Greek soldier was killed. Greece invaded Bulgaria in retaliation. The Bulgarians sought assistance from the League, which ordered both armies to stop fighting. The League ruled that the Greeks should withdraw and pay compensation. Greece was upset by this, as Mussolini had got away with similar actions in Corfu, but accepted the decision.

Now try this

Why was the League of Nations more successful in the Åland Islands and Upper Silesia disputes than in others? Give **three** reasons for your answer.

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Diplomacy outside the League

In the 1920s, the relationship between France and Germany was hostile. German resentment about the Treaty of Versailles, the economic impact of reparations and France's invasion of the Ruhr in 1923 had caused tension to rise.

Locarno treaties, 1925

In 1925, Gustav Stresemann, the German foreign minister, realised that the tension between Germany and France couldn't continue, and he invited the French foreign minister, Aristide Briand, to meet and agree a treaty to improve relations.

In October 1925, Stresemann and Briand met at Locarno, Switzerland, and in December, signed seven treaties. Belgium, Poland, Britain, Czechoslovakia and Italy also attended and signed the treaties.

The conference was a breakthrough as Germany was treated as an equal, not as an aggressor. Many felt that it marked an end to German resentment over Versailles, and that it was a sign that Germany wanted to be a peaceful nation. The following year, Germany joined the League of Nations.

Terms of the Locarno treaties

- Germany accepted the borders defined in the Treaty of Versailles, giving up the claim to Alsace-Lorraine.
- All countries agreed to protect any country attacked by one of the others.
- France and Germany agreed to work together for a peaceful settlement of disputes.
- France and Germany agreed to submit all future disputes to an international authority.
- All countries agreed not to go to war with each other.
- The Rhineland was made a neutral region – no country could send troops there.

Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928

Aristide Briand proposed a peace pact between the USA and France, banning war between them. France was still fearful of Germany and was keen to make other agreements to secure its national security. US President Coolidge and Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg were not enthusiastic about the arrangement. They were concerned that the agreement against war could be seen as a **bilateral** (two-way) alliance and pull the USA into war to defend France if France was attacked. The USA proposed extending the invitation to all nations to join them in outlawing war.

In August 1928, 62 countries including Germany, the USA and France signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The pact was an agreement not to use war to resolve 'disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them'.

Locarno treaties: Germany had felt very vulnerable to attack by France since the Treaty of Versailles – the promise of mutual support made them feel more secure. The Locarno treaties were seen as vital in healing the wounds of the First World War, and Stresemann and Briand were awarded the 1926 Nobel Peace Prize.

Other agreements made outside the League included the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo between Germany and the USSR, and the Washington Naval Conference of 1921–1922, which agreed the size of navy each country was allowed.

Did the treaties improve the chance of peace?

Kellogg-Briand Pact: Although the Pact created a feel-good factor, ultimately it had little impact on stopping the rising militarism of the 1930s. It was also not what the French wanted – which was to pull the USA into a bilateral agreement.

Impact on the League of Nations

These agreements all involved countries which were not League members, so the discussions had to take place outside the League, making the League look irrelevant. This showed a key weakness of the League – important nations like Germany, the USA and the USSR were not members, and so instead of being at the forefront of discussions about peace and disarmament, they were not involved at all. The League began to be seen as a 'talking shop', where problems were discussed, but not where solutions were found.

Now try this

Give **two** examples of ways that diplomacy outside the League weakened the League's position.

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Had a look ☐ Nearly there ☐ Nailed it! ☐

The Great Depression

For many people, the 1920s was a good time – the end of the war meant that people were glad to have survived. In the USA, there was a business boom and lots of new jobs. The good times came to an end in 1929.

The Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression

In 1929, the economic boom in the USA ended with a huge financial crisis called the Wall Street Crash. (Wall Street is New York's financial district.) Stocks and shares lost their value, banks collapsed and companies went out of business.

By 1933, 13 million Americans were unemployed, and many had lost their homes. Many people were living in extreme poverty. This period is called the Great Depression.



Thousands of unemployed people queue in New York, USA, during the Depression in the early 1930s.

The worldwide impact

The Great Depression hit America, but its effects were felt all over the world.

- The USA had been an important market for companies globally – but Americans could no longer afford to spend as much, so profits dropped and unemployment rose.
- In addition, the US government increased customs charges on foreign goods, hoping to force Americans to buy American goods – this caused a fall in international trade. For example, the value of Japanese exports dropped by 50% between 1929 and 1931, which led to hardship in Japan.
- American banks had lent money to European countries to help them rebuild after the First World War – after the Crash, the banks recalled the loans (asked for the money back) causing huge economic problems.

The rise of nationalism

With unemployment soaring and people facing starvation, leaders started to look for solutions. Nationalists like Hitler and Mussolini became more popular by:

- promising state-run economies, providing for people's needs and guaranteeing jobs
- promising to take land by force to provide land, food and resources
- using simple solutions such as Hitler's 'Bread and Work' to appeal to people by showing them they understood their problems
- blaming other groups for their problems (for example, claiming that Germany's problems were caused by the Jews and the 'traitors' who had signed the Treaty of Versailles) and promising to deal with these groups
- promising to stand up for the country and restore national pride.

What did this mean for the League of Nations?

The powers that the League of Nations had were ineffective against **dictators** (rulers with total power over a country) like Hitler and Mussolini.

Turn to page 12 for the powers of the League.

These men were not afraid of using violence to get what they wanted. They didn't want to be bound by collective security and didn't care about 'moral condemnation'. The next step was for the League to impose economic sanctions but, in a time of economic crisis, most countries were not willing to reduce trade even more. The only thing left was to ask members to supply an army – but during a Depression this was an expense no country could afford.

Now try this

Give **two** reasons why economic depression in the 1930s led to increased tension between countries.

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The Manchurian Crisis

One of the biggest challenges for the League came in September 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria, a region of China.

Background to the crisis

Manchuria is a region in the north-east of China. In 1931, it was an important industrial area and other nations, including Japan, had factories there.

Why did Japan want Manchuria?

- The Great Depression had badly affected Japan's economy.
- The Japanese government was influenced by generals who wanted to make Japan strong again.
- Japan had few natural resources – Manchuria was rich in coal and iron ore.
- Japan had claimed Manchuria in the past – the Chinese warlord who ruled it in 1931 was weak.
- Manchuria was close to Japan, and Japan already had troops (the Kwantung army) stationed there.

The Mukden Incident

The Japanese army, which dominated the government, wanted to invade Manchuria, but they needed an excuse to do so.

On 18 September 1931, there was an explosion on the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway.

The Japanese blamed the Chinese for the attack, even though they had set off the explosion themselves. The Chinese, understandably, denied any involvement.

The Kwantung army invaded Manchuria in 'retaliation'. The Japanese government wasn't happy, but the invasion was popular with the people.

Manchuria was renamed Manchukuo, and the Japanese put a former Chinese emperor, Pu Yi, in charge as a **puppet ruler** (a ruler controlled by someone else).

For more on the covenant, turn to page 10.

The League's reaction

China appealed to the League of Nations. This was a clear case of aggression – Japan had broken the League's covenant. However, many League members were reluctant to get involved. Why?

- China and Japan were a long way from Europe – most European nations had their own problems.
- Many people felt that Japan was entitled to Manchuria.
- The Japanese argued that China had attacked them first. Many people believed this.
- China was weak and disorganised – there was a feeling that Japan would run Manchuria more effectively.
- Some people in Britain felt that if Japan was going to expand, China was a more acceptable target than Australia.

What did the League do?

The League sent a commission, led by Lord Lytton, to Manchuria to investigate. In September 1932, a year after the incident, Lord Lytton published his report which said that Japan was in the wrong and should withdraw.

The League issued a 'moral condemnation' and told Japan to leave Manchuria.

Japan ignored the judgement and left the League. The League of Nations could do nothing – nobody wanted to go to war, and they couldn't afford to anyway.

The following year, Japan invaded the Chinese region of Jehol, and in 1937 began a full-scale invasion of China.

Consequences

The League of Nations had failed. One of the members of its Council had broken the covenant and the League had done very little, and done it very slowly. This showed that powerful countries could get away with aggressive actions and the League looked weak and indecisive. However, many people still believed that it would be able to deal with conflict in Europe.

Now try this

Give **two** reasons why the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 made the League of Nations look weak.

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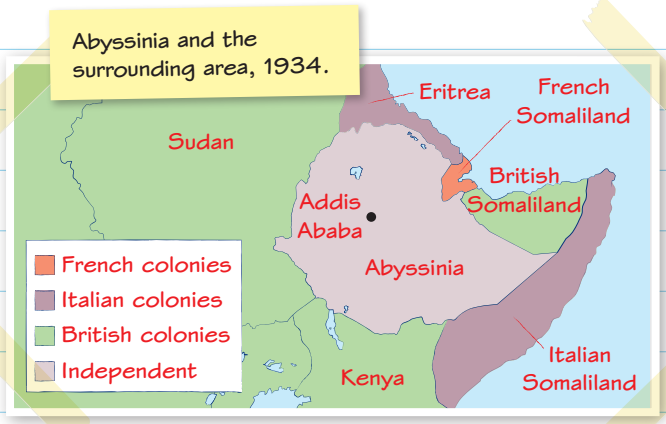
The Abyssinian Crisis

The League's reputation, already dented by the Manchurian Crisis, was damaged beyond repair by its lack of response to Italy's invasion of Abyssinia.

Background to the crisis

In the 1930s, Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) was an independent country, but surrounded by British, Italian and French colonies.

In December 1934, Italian soldiers clashed with Abyssinians at Wal Wal, on the border with Italian Somaliland. The League tried to intervene, but Italy's leader, Mussolini, had seen his chance to invade.



Why did Mussolini want to invade Abyssinia?

- Mussolini wanted to add to Italy's empire – Abyssinia was independent so was an easier target than another country's colony.
- Mussolini knew that Britain and France wanted to keep Italy as an ally.
- Abyssinia had fertile land and good natural resources.
- The League had not stopped Mussolini in Corfu in 1923 – he was confident it wouldn't interfere now.
- Italy already had two colonies bordering Abyssinia.
- Italy had invaded Abyssinia in 1896 and been defeated – Mussolini wanted to restore national pride.

The invasion

- The League issued a 'moral condemnation', but Mussolini wasn't put off. In October 1935, the Italian army invaded Abyssinia.
- The Abyssinians were armed with pre-First World War rifles, while Mussolini's men had high-tech armoured vehicles and poison gas.
- Addis Ababa, the capital, was captured in May 1936 and the Abyssinian emperor, Haile Selassie, was removed.
- In June 1936, Haile Selassie went to Geneva to ask the League to act.
- Italy left the League of Nations in 1937.

The failure of the League of Nations

The League had, again, failed to stop one of its members breaking the covenant. The League banned weapons trading with Italy, but sanctions did not include bans on trading coal, steel, iron or oil, which were vital to Mussolini's war effort. It was thought that the USSR and USA would probably supply Italy anyway.

Britain and France failed to close the Suez Canal, allowing Italy to send weapons and supplies to the fight in Abyssinia. They were worried that Mussolini would ally with Hitler.

In 1935, British foreign minister Samuel Hoare and his French counterpart, Pierre Laval, met in secret to come up with a settlement to offer Italy – the **Hoare-Laval Pact**. It would give half of Abyssinia to Italy. The plan was leaked to the press and Hoare and Laval were forced to resign.

Consequences: With Italy gone, the League was weakened further. Also, the Hoare-Laval Pact showed that Britain and France were prepared to undermine the League if it suited their interests. The League was damaged beyond repair. Small nations knew that the League would not protect them, and powerful nations knew it could not stop them.

Now try this

Give **two** ways that Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia could have been challenged.

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Outbreak of war, 1939

The League was unable to stop the increase in nationalism and militarism throughout the 1930s. The lack of resources and political will of its member states meant it was unable to challenge a strong country which was determined to have its own way – and in 1939, war broke out once more.

The USA refused to join, and other powerful countries (Germany, the USSR) were kept out at the start. Trade sanctions were ineffective because countries could still trade with the USA.

Diplomacy involving non-League members had to be done outside the League – weakening the League's position.

For more on why some countries were not members, turn to page 11.

Weaknesses of the League of Nations

Members of the Council would always act in their own best interests, even if this undermined the League.

The Assembly only met once a year, decisions had to be unanimous and the Council could veto them. This meant that decisions could not be made quickly.

Powerful countries were not deterred (put off) by the League's 'moral condemnation'.

The League did not have enough people to carry out its ambitious aims.

The League had no army – it depended on its members to supply troops.

For other challenges faced by the League, turn back to pages 17 (the Manchurian Crisis) and 18 (the Abyssinian Crisis).

The League's failure to prevent war

The Great Depression had made countries more inward-looking and less likely to cooperate.

→ Poverty and unemployment meant that people found aggressive nationalists, like Hitler and Mussolini, appealing. This led to hostility towards other nations.

→ The British and French were more concerned with keeping Mussolini as an ally against Hitler than in protecting the interests of the League.

→ The League's failure to prevent the invasion of Abyssinia showed Hitler and Mussolini that the League could do nothing to stop them.

For more on the Great Depression, turn to page 16.

For more on the rise of nationalism, turn to page 16.

Commenting on the League

It's useful to consider what people thought about the League at the time.

"If the nations want peace, the League gives them the way by which peace can be kept. League or no League, a country which is determined to have a war can always have it." (British historian Herbert Fisher, 1938)

"The League is very well when sparrows shout, but no good at all when eagles fall out." (Benito Mussolini, 1936)

"It is true that we have the League of Nations, but it is only a mechanical frame and the soul has still to grow into its body. The spirit of ill-will and distrust is widespread. Internationalism is only an idea cherished by a few and not a part of human psychology. Ten years after the peace, the sky is not clearer than it was in August, 1914. Europe has a million more men under arms than there were before the war." (Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Kalki: or The Future of Civilization*, 1929)

Now try this

'The League of Nations failed to prevent war in 1939 because of weaknesses that were present when it was set up in 1920.' Do you agree? Give **two** reasons for your answer.

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Hitler's aims

Adolf Hitler became leader of Germany in 1933, and his foreign policies were very different from the peaceful strategy adopted by Stresemann, who was foreign minister for most of the 1920s.

Adolf Hitler



Early life: Born 1889, into a poor Austrian family. Moved to Munich, Germany, in 1913. Joined the German army in 1914 to fight in the First World War.

Beliefs: Even as a child, he believed the Austrians should be part of a single German-speaking nation. Germany's defeat was a bitter disappointment and he believed that Jews and communists, who he hated, had betrayed Germany by giving in too easily.

Political life: In 1921, he became leader of a small, radical right-wing party – the Nazi Party. In 1923, he was involved in an attempt to overthrow the government – the Munich Putsch. He was sent to prison and while there, he wrote a book, *Mein Kampf*, setting out his ideas. Under Hitler, the Nazi Party grew stronger, and in 1933, Hitler became chancellor (prime minister) of Germany.

Hitler's aims

1. To overturn the Treaty of Versailles. Like most Germans, Hitler felt that the treaty humiliated Germany and that the men who signed it were traitors who had 'stabbed Germany in the back'.
2. To rebuild Germany's armed forces to make the country strong again and reduce unemployment. Hitler wanted to build munitions factories, reintroduce conscription and build an airforce (Luftwaffe).
3. To expand Germany's borders into the east to make up for the land lost in the Treaty of Versailles. This new territory in the east was called Lebensraum.

In addition to his aggressive foreign policy, Hitler also promised to rescue the German economy by nationalising key industries and promising *Brot und Arbeit* (Bread and Work) to all Germans.

4. To unite all German peoples, whether they lived in Germany or not (known as the Volksdeutsche) and who had been split up by the Treaty of Versailles, into a 'Greater Germany'. This included the Anschluss with Austria.
5. To root out communism. Hitler hated communism and believed that it would destroy Germany.

Hitler's German nationalism was deeply racist. The Nazis believed that the Aryan people (northern Europeans) were superior to other races, such as Jews and Slavs, who they referred to as **Untermenschen** (subhuman).

Why Hitler's aims caused tension

The treaty was the basis of peace after the First World War. Overturning it would be admitting that the case for peace was flawed.

Germany's armed forces were limited by the Versailles treaty, so rearmament meant breaking international law – and alarming other countries, especially France.

To expand into the east, Hitler would have to invade countries in Eastern Europe – an act of war.

It was unlikely that other countries would agree to give up their German-speaking areas, so this would involve invasion. The Anschluss had been forbidden in the Treaty of Versailles.

The USSR's powerful communist government was building relations with Britain and France, and was an ally of the Eastern European countries Hitler had his eye on. He risked annoying a powerful enemy.

Other countries' reactions are explored on page 21.

Now try this

Give **three** reasons why Hitler's aims were popular with the German people.