

# Hitler's foreign policy

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



History - Hitler's Foreign Policy The Revival of Germany January 1933 - Hitler becomes Chancellor Hitler's Foreign Policy Aims 1. Destroy Treaty of Versailles (Versailles had limited Germany's armed forces, taken away her colonies, forced Germany to give land to her neighbours which meant there were Germans under foreign rule) and impose German control in Europe. This involved rearmament & the destruction of French alliance system. 2. Union of German-Speaking people > Hitler was an Austrian, he longed for Union 3.

Getting "living Space" from "sub-human" Slavs USSR (according to Mein Kampf Hitler's real enemy not the West) & Poland. He argued Germans were the master race who needed living space as Germany was overcrowded and lacked food and raw materials. APPEASEMENT Appeasement was the policy followed by the British and later by the French. Aim: avoiding war with aggressive powers such as Japan, Italy and Germany giving way to their demands provided these were not too unreasonable.

Reasons: Political divisions in France: hard to take a strong stand & refused to go to war without British support as the French were ultra-cautious Fear of modern war: fear of the bomber (particularly after Guernica) "The Bomber will always get through" & terror of poison gas > heavy losses Treaty of Versailles: unfair > sympathetic > revise clauses > Anglo-German friendship > Germany would have no need to be aggressive.

Fear of communism: threat greater than Hitler > Germany guarantee against communist expansion Need for a strong Germany: Economic co-operation between Britain and Germany would help recover Germany's economy >

decrease of violence in Germany Public Opinion: Government was supported by pacifist opinion. British economic crisis: couldn't afford expenses for rearmament. Britain's military shortcomings > economic crisis, Britain had not rearmed. From 1936-39 Britain rearmed to negotiate from a position of strength U. S. isolationism > no support

Examples Rearmament -1933 Anglo-German naval plan - 1935 Hoare-Laval 1935 Re-occupation of the Rhineland - 1936 Anschluss - 1938 Munich conference - 1938 Czechoslovakia - 1938 Results: Did not work > encouraged Hitler Allowed him to destroy Versailles Made Germany strong Disarmament Conference 1933 The League called for a conference to persuade its members to disarm. Hitler wanted to appear morally justified before starting to rearm. Complaining Germany was the only power to have disarmed, he suggested a general formula to be reached.

When the others refused he withdrew Germany from the Conference & from the League, then started building up Germany's munitions industries. Rearmament To fulfill his aims, which he could only achieve by conquering the land he wanted, he had to re-build Germany's armed forces by defying Versailles. This was a popular policy as it appealed to: nationalist > angry at limitations imposed by the treaty workers > full employment industrialists > big profits Gamble: Germany's armed forces were still weak Reactions: Britain: no intervention

Britain didn't want to get involved in European affairs > internal problems Britain didn't want to spend money on rearmament > Great Depression France: no intervention put up "Mignot Line": a series of heavily armed forts along

the border with Germany. Italy: ready to take action • 1934, Austrian Nazis tried to overthrow the Austrian government by killing the chancellor. To prevent Hitler from taking control of Austria, Mussolini placed army units in the border with Austria. Non-aggression Pact 1934 Germany & Poland agreed to sign a ten year non-aggression pact, which was later broken by Germany in 1939.

Germany: needed to buy time to build up armed forces. She had to appear reasonable, until she could dictate from a position of strength. The pact also weakened the entente. This was simply regarded as a temporary measure.

Poland: lack of confidence in France (French turned down a suggestion of a preventive war) fear of losing the Polish corridor. Austria 1934 Aim: Union of Anschluss Actions: Austrian Chancellor (Mussolini's protege) was shot dead by Austrian Nazis who occupied the radio station > Austrian government stops coup. Reaction: Mussolini moves forces to Austrian frontier.

Result: Hitler was still weak so he denied German interest in conspiracy.

Soviet Union enters the League 1934 The French Foreign Secretary managed to secure the Soviet Union's entry to the League. This was another setback for Hitler. The Saar plebiscite 1935 End of French 15 year administration of Saar (coalfields, factories, railway centre) Plebiscite held > Saarland returned to Germany (inhabitants-German) Hitler regarded this as a victory against Versailles Introduction of Conscription 1935 After 2 years of secretly re-arming Hitler announced there would be compulsory military service for all men.

By 1938 Germany's armed forces were as good as France's. Hitler justified himself arguing he was responding to the French increase in military service and British increase in airforce. Stresa Front 1935 Great powers took no military action. At Stresa Prime ministers of France, Britain & Italy joined to confirm Locarno. The League censured German rearmament. In May France & Russia signed pact for mutual assistance. Russia & Czechoslovakia signed another pact where it was understood that Soviet aid would follow French initiative.

The Stresa Front was undermined by the Anglo-German naval treaty and the Abyssinian affair. Anglo-German naval plan 1935 British aim: limit German navy, the British argued that Hitler would rearm anyway and that a limit was better than no limit at all. Agreement: German limited to 35% of the tonnage of British fleet & 100% submarines. Results: o British approval of Germany's right to rearm (disapproval of Versailles) > France and Italy were angered o Stresa front broken Reoccupation of Rhineland 1936

While the League was busy dealing with the Ethiopian affair, German troops reoccupied Rhineland defying Locarno treaties & treaty of Versailles Hitler tried to reassure France & Belgium with offers to sign peace pacts Gamble: German army was still weak > Enemies could have easily defeated them Generals were nervous & ready to withdraw at first sign of trouble Humiliating for Hitler and generals > coup d'etat Reaction: Britain & France distracted by Ethiopia Britain: sympathetic (believed Germans were only moving back to their own back garden > appeasement, they were impressed by Hitler's 25-year peace offer.

France: Didn't mobilise. France wasn't willing to take action without British support. France was divided, there had been riots. The French as the British were ready to see how Hitler would behave in the future. Results: Hitler was encouraged to take further gambles > he underestimated allies Hitler was popular > almost impossible to move against him Secure strategic position in any future war against France> Germany started building " Siegfried line"  
Possibility to attack weak countries > Poland Austria 1938

According to Mein Kampf the absorption of Austria was the Hitler's first territorial revision of Versailles. Hitler was an Austrian and longed for this union. Hitler expected the Austrian Nazis to undermine the state and then call in the Germans. The Democracy had already ended and a type of clerical dictatorship had been established. Schuschnigg's attempts: To maintain Austrian independence, Schuschnigg relied on Mussolini. He had attempted to placate the Germans with a pact in 1936. Austria announced her German character.

Representatives of the national opposition entered the government and Nazis were released in exchange for no more conspiracies or illegal propaganda. When Schuschnigg discovered plans for an Austrian-Nazi coup d'etat he asked Von Papen to arrange a meeting with Hitler. Hitler's demands - The meeting In February 1938 Hitler met Schuschnigg for a discussion about the relationship between their countries. After threatening Schuschnigg for several hours Hitler handed him a list of ten demands:  
Austrian Nazis should be reinstalled

A leading Nazi Seyss-Inquart was to be made minister of the interior - key position that gave him control over the police Close economic and military relations were to be established Schuschnigg's attempts to maintain peace: To prevent a Nazi take-over he organised a vote on the question of union with Germany Failure on winning international sympathy Britain: refused to give any comforting advice France : did not call up any reserves > lack of British support Italy: Mussolini was aware of where power laid, when he learned that Tyrolese would continue under Italian rule he decided not to intervene.

He was not interested in Austria, Hitler promised to help Mussolini in any circumstances. Hitler's reaction: He demanded the vote to be postponed & Schuschnigg to resign or the German army was to invade Austria.

Schuschnigg resigned along with all government ministers except Seyss Seyss-Inquart became chancellor & invited the German army to occupy Austria Austrian Nazi opponents were arrested and the Jews were deprived of civil rights A plebiscite was held & there was an official " yes" vote in favour of the Anschluss. Results: 1.

Hitler took first step to create a big Germany 2. Germany was strengthened by the incorporation of Austria. Population: 7 million. Resources: iron, steel, magnetite. 3. Strategic benefits: Czechoslovakia > weaker, surrounded by German territory. Open door into the Balkans 4. Hitler's Popularity increased. Opposition became more difficult 5. Relationships with Italy improved > Mussolini sided Germany 6. Jews were deprived of civil rights 7. France &

Britain: delivered protest to German government > no arm Czechoslovakia

1938 Minorities in Czechoslovakia due to:

Populations throughout Europe were mixed Sudetenland > mountainous district which provided a strong frontier against Germany. Czech Crisis The 1930's depression & rise to power of Nazis encouraged a German people's army led by Henlein to demand for the Sudetenland to be transferred to Germany The Czechs mobilised part of their forces and the Russians told the French they would respect their 1935 agreement to protect Czechoslovakia. Hitler and the sudetenland Hitler instructed his generals to prepare for an invasion by 1st October Risks:

Czechoslovakia was well-equipped for a war (large army, large air force and industry. 2 Powerful allies: o France: unwilling to fight Germany, the army wasn't ready o USSR: great political problems + war with Japan Britain & France: asked Hitler to be reasonable, however encouraged president Benes to accept Henlein's 8 points. He accepted. Chamberlain's Aeroplane Diplomacy Chamberlain followed the policy of Appeasement when the Czech crisis began. When the Czech crisis deepened, Chamberlain was encouraged to fly to Germany and speak with Hitler personally.

Berchtesgarden At Berchtesgarden when Hitler demanded the cession of the Sudetenland Chamberlain agreed to hand over areas of the Sudetenland with over 50% of German population. Then Chamberlain persuaded the Czechs and the French to agree. Godesburg Chamberlain flew to Germany and found Hitler wanted all of the Sudetenland and the Czechs to give land to Poland and Hungary. The British cabinet: refused to accept France called up



reserves Czechoslovakia: had already ordered mobilisation Countries prepared for war The Munich Conference 1938

Reasons: Chamberlain didn't like the prospect of war > unlikely to win support of empire + commonwealth He thought it was better to fight for a clearer cause and not a country which was so far away that most British had not heard of Britain's air defences were still weak > Germany was producing a new aircraft Me-109 Britain needed time to prepare: time for factories to produce aircrafts in big numbers, develop radars, spitfires Britain was not likely to win Agreement: Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier met at Munich.

Neither the Czechs nor the Soviets. They all agreed that the Czechs had to give the Sudetenland to Germany or they would have to fight Germany alone. Czechoslovakia accepted Results: Germany strengthened by surrender of mountain fortifications Czechs lost mountain fortifications > easier to attack > balance of power > Germany 0 Millions of Czechs 0 Industry > armaments 0 Raw materials Poland seized the Teschen district > coalmines & Hungary took land: they were encouraged to side Hitler Chamberlain > hero (short term)

Soviet Union worried the west would do nothing to stop Hitler > they feared they would have to face the Germans alone Hitler's ambitions increased > believed Britain and France wouldn't stand up to him. Czechoslovakia Destroyed 1939 Hitler claimed the Czech government had lost control and that a civil war would break if Germany didn't intervene Hitler bullied Hacha into inviting German troops to occupy the country > threat to bomb Prague

After Hacha issued the invitation he used this as an excuse to justify his actions March 1939 - German troops marched into Prague

Bohemia and Moravia > Protectorate of Germany o Slovakia: remained independent > became a puppet state o Ruthenia > Hungary • Britain & France protested but took no action as Germany had "technically" been invited into Czechoslovakia. The Polish Guarantee Agreement : Britain gave Poland a guarantee to protect it from Germany. France later supported it. Reasons: The Polish corridor > Germany wanted it back (German inhabitants). Chamberlain realized Hitler couldn't be stopped by appeasement > stronger measures were taken to stop Hitler.

Problem: Britain and France were geographically unable to defend Poland and succeed. Hitler's reaction: ignore it > issued an order to invade Poland Germany and Italy 1934: enemies > Mussolini stopped Hitler from taking Austria 1935: Italy was angry with Britain and France > Ethiopia 1936: Rome Berlin axis > cooperate against communism o Fascists dictators Anti-comintern pact (Italy, Germany and Japan) > work against international communism 1938: Mussolini allowed Germany to take over Austria 1939: Italy invaded Albania to match the occupation of Prague The Pact of Steel 1939 Agreement: They would support each other in a war Mussolini's request: materials Italy needed to help Germany > Italy was not prepared for a war Germany and the USSR Hitler: hated communism > wanted to take "lebensraum" from USSR. Hitler regarded the Soviets were his main enemies as stated in Mein Kampf Soviet Union: most hated the Nazis The Nazi-Soviet pact 1939 (Ribbentrop-Molotov)

Agreement: -If Germany attacked Poland the USSR was to remain neutral

Agreement: -Germany could occupy the western parts including Danzig and the Polish corridor - USSR entitled to occupy western parts: Baltic provinces

Result: Germany was free to attack Poland > USSR only great power capable of defending Poland. USSR Reasons: 1. failure to reach an agreement with the west: • Soviet Union was still backwards and needed time to develop. • Anglo-French weakness > Stalin feared he would have to fight Germany alone. 2. British reluctance to ally: Churchill urged an alliance > only way to stop Hitler • British Government was frightened if not more of Stalin than Hitler • Conservatives hated communism > Nazis guard against spread of communism in Europe • Soviet strength was underestimated > British believed purges had weakened the armed forces, officers had been killed • Chamberlain's reluctance > probably as the opposition wanted an alliance • British responses were slow and made by low-ranking officials in contrast with Stalin's quick responses to British initiative, he took negotiations seriously. Eden's offer to go on special mission > rejected 3. Fear of Japan: • Clashes between Soviets and Japanese increased > Japan was a threat to Soviets who didn't like the prospect of a war with 2 fronts. Stalin needed security in Europe 4. Attractiveness of German offer: • Territory in eastern Poland (contained ethnic Russians, seized by Poland after the Russo-Polish war) > Buffer zone against Poland 5. Desire of a breathing space: • Buy time to prepare defenses • Get armed forces ready • Industrialize Russia • Prepare for war

Get effects of modernization through German reasons: 1. Prevent a war with 2 fronts 2. Desire to invade Poland Results: Germany was free to attack Poland: USSR only country geographically capable of defending

Poland Events: -September 1: invasion of Poland September 3: outbreak of war -Britain and France realised the necessity to stop Hitler > prevent expansion of Germany -The Czech guarantee was not honoured > couldn't afford the same with Poland > affect international credibility -Corridor concession had been encouraged Support of British and commonwealth - British Factories were ready to build modern fighter planes Reasons for World War II Hitlers ambitions(foreign policy): o Determined to acquire Sudetenland o Germany invaded Poland U. S isolationism: o U. S did not get involve in European affairs Appeasement: o Allowed Hitler to destroy Versailles o Encouraged him to believe countries would not stand up to him o A stronger Policy could have destroyed Hitler (e. g. Rhineland) Nazi-Soviet Pact o Freed Hitler from a two front war o Allowed Hitler to attack Poland