

4.1: Outbreak of WWII in Europe

Reason 1: Weakness of the LON

1. Failure at Disarmament

- World Disarmament Conference: 1932-1934
- Due to the lack of commitment amongst major powers; Countries prioritised their own interests
 - Germany insisted on matching the military of other major powers: Eventually left LON and the conference in 1933
 - France refused to limit own arms
 - Britain and USA refused to adhere to France's demands

Link: The failure of disarmament created a sense of distrust and tension amongst the major powers and increased the likelihood of war on a major scale with more weaponry.

- Link to Hitler's rearmament schemes

2. Abyssinian Crisis

- Date of event: 1936
- Context: Italy took over Abyssinia in 1936 due to Mussolini's expansionist policy
- Reason for Failure: Britain and France were allies with Italy under the Stresa Front Pact, which had its roots in a desire for an ally against Hitler should he become excessively aggressive. Thus they prioritised their own interests.
- Examples of Failure
 - LON delayed the ban of the sale of oil to Italy: In the economic interest of its members
 - Britain and France did not close the Suez Canal: allowed the shipping of war materials to Italian troops
 - Britain and France secretly planned to give Italy $\frac{2}{3}$ of Italy to prevent invasion
 - Explicit failure to their aim of collective security

Link: The failure of the LON in the Abyssinian Crisis to impose meaning sanctions proved it to be a weak and discredited peacekeeping force. Thus Hitler was convinced that the LON would not oppose him fiercely in his expansionist policy, and was emboldened to expand

- Link to the remilitarisation of Rhineland

3. Failure to enforce the Treaty of Versailles

- Due to the general atmosphere of pacifism
- Examples of Failure
 - Announcement of Remilitarisation plans: Opposed clause of demilitarisation
 - Remilitarisation of the Rhineland: Opposed clause of demilitarisation
 - Anschluss with Austria: Opposed clause of territorial losses

- Britain even signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in 1935 allowing for some rearmament

Link: The LON's failure to enforce the Treaty of Versailles emboldened Hitler to embark on an expansionist policy and cultivate his military strength which led to a large-scale war

Reason 2: The Policy of Appeasement

1. Reasons/Aims of the policy of Appeasement
 - Definition: The diplomatic policy of making political or material concessions to an enemy power in order to avoid conflict.
 - Reasons for the policy:

a. Economic Reasons

- Economy weakened by the Great Depression and WWI: 3 million unemployed, weakened workforce with lesser men
- Propaganda by Germany created conception of economic success

Link: Much financial strength necessary for war: spent \$3251 million on WW1, thus appeasement was necessary to strengthen Britain financially for war, as opposed to warring on insufficient materials which for guaranteed failure

b. Public Opinion:

- World War I sentiments: immense loss of lives traumatised population
- Spanish Civil War: Demonstrated possibility of future wars involving civilian population
- Propaganda: Major newspapers the Times and the Mail were pro-appeasement
- East-Fulham by-election: Conservative candidate in favor of rearmament lost 3000 majority to a labour candidate in favour of appeasement

Link: Britain was a democratic state and thus relied heavily on public opinion in governance, therefore she could not adopt an aggressive stance against Germany with the public against them, and therefore adopted a policy of appeasement

c. Government's Attitude to Treaty of Versailles

- Anschluss: "What the people wanted"
- Remilitarisation of Rhineland: "going into his own backyard"

Link: Britain was unwilling to defend treaty as they thought it was flawed (See 1.1: Treaty of Versailles), thus she adopted the policy of appeasement, due to their bias against Hitler in his expansion.

d. Lack of reliable allies

- France: Politically unstable due to division caused by internal politics
- America: Isolationist policy towards European affairs (WWII)
- Russia: Communist

- Italy and Japan: Fascist government

Link: Needed allies to aid in warfare, thus appeasement had to be adopted as Britain was unable to combat Germany on her own.

e. Weakness of the armed forces

- Only had 120 aircraft after WWI
- Germany Had 81 divisions for European warfare, whilst Britain had 2 and France had 63
- Military spending had been reduced due to Great Depression and World War I
- Propaganda campaigns portrayed Germany as military might

Thus appeasement employed to stall for time and gather military resources, as opposed to warring on insufficient materials which for guaranteed failure

f. Fear of Communism:

- Communism was viewed as a greater threat to world peace
- Communism was gaining steam: inciting revolutions around the world (e.g. Kapp Putsch)
- Hitler's presentation as fiercely anti-communist: Spanish Civil war; sent advisors, resources, Luftwaffe
- Sought favourable relations with Germany as an ally against communism, due to her position and proximity- next to, and blocking Britain from, communist Russia

Link: Thus appeasement was justified as Communism was viewed as a greater threat than Nazism under the circumstances then, and an appeased Hitler would be a formidable ally against it.

2. Anglo-German Naval Agreement: Negative Implication of Appeasement

- Defied the demilitarisation clause of the Treaty of Versailles
- June 1935: Germany allowed 35% of Britain's Navy, and equal tonnage of submarines, as opposed to ToV: 6 warships, no submarines

Link: The Anglo-German Naval Agreement angered France and Italy as it was a violation of Stresa Front, without prior consultation with the two countries, thus increasing the overall tension between the major powers, which would eventually escalate to war. Additionally, it validated Hitler's breaking of the Treaty of Versailles, emboldening him as an aggressor, and increased his military strength, hence also increasing the possibility of war on a major scale. Furthermore, it gave Hitler leverage over Britain as he could threaten to cancel the treaty if his actions were questioned, thus allowing him to achieve his expansionist goals without repercussions, which led to the war.

3. Munich Agreement: Negative Implication of Appeasement

- Britain and France and Russia had pledged to offer defense
- September 1938: Britain, France and Italy offered Sudetenland to Germany, without consideration of Russia

Link: The Munich agreement made Hitler bolder and more ambitious in his expansionist policy

4. Reasons Appeasement was a mistake
 - a. Made Hitler bolder and more ambitious
 - Breaking of the TOV was only met with verbal condemnation
 - Munich agreement: willing to sacrifice Czechoslovakia to avoid war
 - Portrayed themselves to Hitler as cowardly

Link: Hence appeasement convinced Hitler that he could do as he pleased unconditionally, which gave him confidence to invade Poland, thus sparking WWII. The failure of appeasement to reach its aim of peace proves it to be a terrible mistake

- b. Increased Hitler's resources to wage war
 - Anglo-German Naval agreement: allowed Hitler to build up army legitimately
 - Lack of Opposition at Spanish Civil War: Allowed him to test and display aerial might
 - Lack of Opposition at Anschluss: access to gold and iron ore
 - Czechoslovakia: Powerful arms factories

Reason 3: Hitler's Aggression

- a. Rearmament and Conscription
 - Defied TOV: 100,000 men, 60,000 Navy no tanks, no submarines, no aircraft and no conscription
 - 1933: 300,000 Army, 2500 plane Luftwaffe
 - Indirectly strengthened economy

Link: Hitler's rearmament and conscription plans increased Germany's military capabilities, thus allowing him to achieve his expansionist aims. This eventually allowed him to invade Poland, causing the outbreak of WWII

- b. Involvement in Spanish Civil war
 - Sided with nationalists, providing supplies, Luftwaffe, and advisors
 - Depicted Hitler as the defender of civilisation
 - Allowed Hitler to test and show off aerial superiority

Link: Hitler's involvement in the Spanish Civil War encouraged him to achieve his expansionist goals by violent means, and the subsequent aggression sparked tension amongst the major powers, thus leading to WWII

- c. Invasion of Poland
 - Sought free city of Danzig and the Polish Corridor
 - 1 September 1939: Hitler invaded Poland, war declared by Britain and subsequently France on the basis of the Anglo-Polish pact

Link: The invasion of Poland was a direct cause of WWII as it activated the pact and thus antagonised the major powers into declaring war

Reason 4: Nazi Soviet Pact

Aims:

Germany

- a. Wanted to avoid a two-front war: France and Britain (note Anglo-Polish pact) were on the Eastern Front, Russia was on the Western Front; all of which may retaliate should he invade Poland
- Caused Germany's defeat in WWI
- Militarily and economically taxing

Russia

- a. Mistrust of Britain and France
 - Did not consult her during the Munich agreement
 - Failure of the Franco-Soviet alliance: did not have sufficient border-protection
 - Britain was slow in negotiation for pact to defend Poland
- b. Breathing space and time for rearmament in fear of a major war
 - Incapable of self-defense upon Stalin's purge of the red army officials
 - Evident through military-oriented third five year plans
 - Bought Russia time to Rearm

Clauses:

- a. Germany and Russia would not attack each other for 10 years
- b. Secret clause that gave half of Poland to Russia

Implication: The Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact assured Hitler that he could attack Poland without the negative implication of a two-front war. This inevitably led to the invasion of the said country, which activated the Anglo-Polish treaty that led to the declaration of war.