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978-1-107-64020-7 – History for the IB Diploma: Interwar Years: Conflict and Cooperation 1919–39
Allan Todd Jean Bottaro and Sally Waller
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1 Introduction

This book is designed to prepare students for the Paper 3 Section 8 topic, *Interwar Years: Conflict and Cooperation 1919–39* (in HL Option 5, Aspects of the History of Europe and the Middle East) in the IB History examination. It discusses the history of the period between the First and Second World Wars, looking at the main attempts to achieve international co-operation and collective security – and the various economic, political and diplomatic challenges these attempts encountered. In particular, the book examines the impact of the problems resulting from the Great Depression, and the rise of fascist and right-wing regimes in Italy, Germany and Spain. It also considers the various responses of the main democratic states to these developments, including support for the League of Nations, attempts to revise the peace treaties of 1919–20, and appeasement. Lastly, this book examines the final steps leading to the outbreak of the Second World War.

A map showing Europe after the 1919–20 peace settlements



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Themes

To help you prepare for your IB History exams, this book will cover the main themes and aspects relating to *Interwar Years: Conflict and Cooperation 1919–39*, as set out in the IB *History Guide*. In particular, it examines the main political, economic and diplomatic developments in the period 1919–39 in terms of:

- the political, constitutional, economic and social problems of Weimar Germany in the period 1919–33
- the rise of fascism in Italy after 1919, and Mussolini's main domestic and foreign policies in the period 1922–39
- the impact of the Great Depression around the world in the period 1929–39 and, in particular, how this affected foreign policy
- the main political and economic factors behind the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, foreign involvement in the war, its outcome, and its impact on diplomacy during 1936–39
- Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and his main domestic and foreign policies
- the attempts to achieve collective security in the period 1919–39, the policy of appeasement, the failure of international diplomacy, and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

A case study will focus in more detail on the impact of the Great Depression on Germany.

Theory of knowledge

In addition to the broad key themes, the chapters contain Theory of knowledge (ToK) links, to get you thinking about aspects that relate to history, which is a Group 3 subject in the IB Diploma. The *Interwar Years* topic has several clear links to ideas about knowledge and history. The subject is one that is much debated by historians – especially where it concerns responsibility for the eventual outbreak of the most destructive war in history.

At times, the controversial nature of this topic has affected the historians writing about these states, the leaders involved, and their policies and actions. Questions relating to the selection of sources, and the way historians interpret these sources, have clear links to the IB Theory of knowledge course.

For example, when trying to explain aspects of particular foreign policies, political leaders' motives, and their success or failure, historians must decide which evidence to select and use to make their case, and which evidence to leave out. But to what extent do the historians' personal political views influence them when selecting

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what they consider to be the most important or relevant sources, and when they make judgements about the value and limitations of specific sources or sets of sources? Is there such a thing as objective 'historical truth'? Or is there just a range of subjective historical opinions and interpretations about the past, which vary according to the political interests of individual historians?

You are therefore strongly advised to read a range of publications giving different interpretations of the operations of the League of Nations, the foreign policies pursued by different leaders, their attempts to form alliances, and the significance of different historical events during the period covered by this book, in order to gain a clear understanding of the relevant historiographies (see Further information, page 236).

IB History and Paper 3 questions

In IB History, Paper 3 is taken only by Higher-level students. For this paper, it specifies that three sections of an Option should be selected for in-depth study. The examination paper will set two questions on each section – and you have to answer three questions in total.

Unlike Paper 2, where there were regional restrictions, in Paper 3 you will be able to answer *both* questions from one section, with a third chosen from one of the other sections. These questions are essentially in-depth analytical essays. This is reflected in the time available, which is 2 hours 30 minutes. It is therefore important to study *all* the bullet points set out in the IB *History Guide*, in order to give yourself the widest possible choice of questions.

Exam skills

Throughout the main chapters of this book, there are activities and questions to help you develop the understanding and the exam skills necessary for success in Paper 3. Your exam answers should demonstrate:

- factual knowledge and understanding
- awareness and understanding of historical interpretations
- structured, analytical and *balanced* argument.

Before attempting the specific exam practice questions that come at the end of each main chapter, you might find it useful to refer *first* to Chapter 11, the final exam practice chapter. This suggestion is based on the idea that if you know where you are supposed to be going (in this instance, gaining a good grade), and how to get there, you stand a better chance of reaching your destination!

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Questions and markschemes

To ensure that you develop the necessary skills and understanding, each chapter contains comprehension questions and examination tips. For success in Paper 3, you need to produce essays that combine a number of features. In many ways, these require the same skills as the essays in Paper 2.

However, for the Higher-level Paper 3, examiners will be looking for greater evidence of *sustained* analysis and argument, linked closely to the demands of the question. They will also be seeking more depth and precision with regard to supporting knowledge. Finally, they will be expecting a clear and well-organised answer, so it is vital to do a rough plan *before* you start to answer a question. Your plan will show straight away whether or not you know enough about the topic to answer the question. It will also provide a good structure for your answer.

It is particularly important to start by focusing *closely* on the wording of the question, so that you can identify its demands. If you simply assume that a question is *generally about this period/leader*, you will probably produce an answer that is essentially a narrative or story, with only vague links to the question. Even if your knowledge is detailed and accurate, it will only be broadly relevant. If you do this, you will get half-marks at most.

Another important point is to make sure you present a *well-structured and analytical argument* that is clearly linked to *all the demands of the question*. Each aspect of your argument/analysis/explanation then needs to be supported by carefully selected, precise and relevant own knowledge.

In addition, showing awareness and understanding of relevant historical debates and interpretations will help you to access the highest marks and bands. This does not mean simply repeating, in your own words, what different historians have said. Instead, try to *critically evaluate* particular interpretations. For example, are there any weaknesses in some arguments put forward by certain historians? What strengths does a particular interpretation have?

Examiner's tips

To help you develop these skills, most chapters contain sample questions, with examiner's tips about what to do (and what *not* to do) in order to achieve high marks. These chapters will focus on a specific skill, as follows:

- Skill 1 (Chapter 2) – understanding the wording of a question
- Skill 2 (Chapter 3) – planning an essay
- Skill 3 (Chapter 5) – writing an introductory paragraph

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- Skill 4 (Chapter 6) – avoiding irrelevance
- Skill 5 (Chapter 7) – avoiding a narrative-based answer
- Skill 6 (Chapter 9) – using your own knowledge analytically and combining it with awareness of historical debate
- Skill 7 (Chapter 10) – writing a conclusion to your essay.

Some of these tips will contain parts of a student's answer to a particular question, with examiner's comments, to give you an understanding of what examiners are looking for.

This guidance is developed further in Chapter 11, the exam practice chapter, where examiner's tips and comments will enable you to focus on the important aspects of questions and their answers. These examples will also help you avoid simple mistakes and oversights which, every year, result in some otherwise good students failing to gain the highest marks. For additional help, a simplified Paper 3 markscheme is provided on page 225. This should make it easier to understand what examiners are looking for in your answers. The actual Paper 3 IB History markscheme can be found on the IB website.

This book will provide you with the historical knowledge and understanding to help you answer all the specific content bullet points set out in the IB *History Guide*. Also, by the time you have worked through the various exercises, you should have the skills necessary to construct relevant, clear, well-argued and well-supported essays.

Background to the period

To understand developments in the period 1919–39 fully, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the First World War and its immediate impact. The war lasted from 1914 to 1918, and at the time it was the most destructive conflict the world had ever seen. Several factors contributed to the outbreak of the First World War, including a rise in nationalism, and economic and colonial rivalries between the most powerful nations of Europe. These rivalries were accompanied by arms races and secret diplomacy, as countries tried to strengthen their position in Europe and around the world.

By 1914, two major alliances had formed. On one side was the Triple Alliance (Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) and on the other was the Triple Entente ('entente' is French for 'understanding' or 'agreement' and is applied to diplomatic agreements between states). The Triple Entente was made up of Britain, France and Tsarist Russia. In June 1914, a clash of imperial interests and the rise of nationalism in the Balkans (south-eastern Europe) resulted in the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Within two months, the countries of the rival alliances were at war.

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Revolution and the end of empires

In addition to widespread physical destruction, the First World War also had significant political effects. In particular, the pre-war nationalist tensions led to the break-up of the old Austro-Hungarian (or Habsburg) Empire, and to the emergence of nationalist groups demanding the right to form independent countries.

The Russian Empire also collapsed as revolution spread across the country. Russian soldiers mutinied against the horrors of modern warfare and overthrew the tsar (emperor). After a second revolution in October/November 1917 – led by the communist Bolsheviks – Russia withdrew from the First World War and a revolutionary Marxist government was established. The Bolsheviks called on soldiers and workers in countries around the world to overthrow their governments and end the war. The new Russian government also demanded self-determination (see page 14) for national groups living within the European empires.



The mutiny at the Petrograd garrison during the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917

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The Bolshevik Revolution inspired other revolutionary groups, including soldiers who were disillusioned by the effects of the First World War. They became determined to overthrow the capitalist system which – according to Marxist theories – was responsible for plunging the world into such a destructive conflict. There was a short-lived rebellion in Hungary, but perhaps most significant was the revolution in Germany, which led to the abdication of the German kaiser (emperor) and the emergence of a democratic government. The new German leaders were prepared to sign an armistice (ceasefire) in November 1918, thus ending the war. Later, a democratic constitution for Germany was drawn up in the town of Weimar; as a result, in the period 1919–33 the country was referred to as Weimar Germany.

Post-war problems

As well as causing the break-up of old empires, the war had serious economic consequences for both the victors and the defeated. Countries in Europe used up both human and material resources, gained massive debts, and lost trade to countries such as the USA and Japan. In addition, huge agricultural areas of Europe – in both the west and the east – were destroyed, along with railways, roads and bridges.

As you study the period 1919–39, it is important to remember that both statesmen and the ordinary people of Europe who lived through the First World War were determined to avoid any future conflict. When they met in Paris in 1919–20, therefore, the victorious nations attempted to create peace treaties that would ensure the First World War would be the 'war to end all wars'. Yet, in attempting to deal with so many issues, the peace treaties themselves actually created new problems. This is particularly true of the Treaty of Versailles, which was imposed on the new democratic government of Germany. Such a view of these treaties is not one simply proposed by historians with the benefit of hindsight. Many observers at the time recognised the problems – and warned of a future war.



A British cartoon from 1919 showing the Allied leaders Clemenceau (France), Wilson (USA), Lloyd George (Britain) and Orlando (Italy) after the peace conferences; the cartoon is predicting a new war in 1940

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Activity

Using the internet and any other resources available to you, carry out some research on the various treaties that were signed in 1919–20. Then make notes about the problems the peacemakers faced at the Paris Peace Conferences, and the main decisions reached during the peace talks.

The League of Nations

In order to uphold the terms of the peace treaties and avoid a future conflict, the victorious powers established the League of Nations, of which Britain and France were the most important members. Although the USA refused to become a member, and major European states such as Germany and Russia were not allowed to join at first, the League had a number of successes before 1929. Particularly important were the Locarno Treaty (1925) and the Kellogg–Briand Pact (1928). These agreements attempted to achieve collective security by guaranteeing the borders created by the peace treaties, and by encouraging countries to renounce aggression as a way of settling disagreements.

However, during this period the League faced several challenges. It was often bypassed by the Conference of Ambassadors, which was created to enforce the treaties and intervened directly in disputes. The League's attempts to achieve disarmament ultimately failed and, after the collapse of the US stock market in 1929 and the start of the Great Depression, many states began to adopt more aggressive foreign policies. As a result, the League increasingly failed to maintain collective security in the years 1929–39. Conflicts such as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 highlighted the weaknesses of the League. By 1939, international diplomacy had collapsed, and the world was plunged into another war.

Terminology and definitions

In order to understand the history of the interwar years, you will need to be familiar with a few basic terms – both technical terms and those relating to political ideologies.

Appeasement

In the context of international diplomacy in the period 1919–39, appeasement refers in particular to the policy adopted by the British prime minister Neville Chamberlain. Using this strategy, Chamberlain hoped to avoid another war through peaceful negotiations with Nazi Germany over changes to parts of the Treaty of Versailles. Linked to appeasement is another term, 'revisionism', which in this context means a willingness to revise parts of the post-war peace treaties.

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During the 1920s, politicians in several countries began to argue that the Treaty of Versailles had been too harsh on Germany. Many Germans also felt that the terms were unfair, referring to the treaty as a *diktat* (a 'dictated peace'), which had been imposed on them by the victorious powers. Chamberlain shared this attitude. A series of French governments were less sympathetic towards Germany and more determined to uphold the treaty terms. However, they supported Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, as they knew they could not fight another war without Britain's backing.

Collective security

Collective security refers to attempts by countries to act together in order to stop the use of military aggression as a way of solving problems. The League of Nations tried to ensure collective security through negotiation. If this failed, sanctions would be imposed on aggressor nations. Sanctions are actions taken to put pressure on a country (or individual) to force it to do – or to stop doing – something. For example, economic sanctions might include a trade ban or boycott, especially of vital products such as armaments or coal. In the last resort, there was the option to apply military force.

One aspect of collective security in the interwar years was the attempt to uphold the peace treaties of 1919–20. In particular, France was determined to enforce the demilitarisation of the Rhineland: the German territory to the west of the River Rhine, between France and Germany. The Treaty of Versailles stated that this region, along with a 50-km (30-mile) area of land to the east of the Rhine, should be demilitarised (that is, contain no German military units). Hitler's decision to break this agreement in 1936 – and the failure of Britain and France to take action against him – was, with hindsight, an important factor in the collapse of collective security.

In practice, the League's attempts to uphold collective security were undermined by the fact that several important countries regarded the organisation as a 'club of victors', whose main role was to enforce the unfair terms of the treaties.

Communism

Communism refers to the far-left political ideology associated with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which aimed to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a classless communist society. The first attempt to apply these theories was made by the Bolsheviks in Russia. Under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the Bolsheviks encouraged workers' uprisings in other parts of Europe and, in 1919, established the organisation Communist International (Comintern) in order to help spread revolution.

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The Bolshevik regime was widely feared and hated and, in order to prevent the spread of revolution, other major European states tried to overthrow the Bolsheviks. When this failed, the European powers applied economic and trade embargoes in an attempt to isolate and weaken Russia (known as the Soviet Union, or USSR, after 1924). For many European politicians – even after the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933 – the communist Soviet Union posed the most serious threat to stability in Europe.

Communism should not be confused with socialism. Although the two ideologies have some common aims, socialism focuses on achieving these aims by peaceful means, such as holding elections.

Fascism

This term is derived from the Italian word *fascio* (plural *fasci*), meaning a group, band, league or union. In 1919, Mussolini applied it to his Fascio di Combattimento ('Fighting' or 'Battle Group'), which was set up to oppose socialists and communists (see page 69). Mussolini later formed the far-right ultra-nationalist Fascist Party. After October 1922, he began to turn Italy into a one-party fascist dictatorship. Other far-right nationalist politicians in interwar Europe tried to follow his lead, including Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany. The term fascist was then used to describe this political ideology, and all groups holding such views.

Fascism is opposed to liberalism, which is tolerant of different viewpoints and seeks non-violent and democratic solutions. Fascism is particularly opposed to left-wing political groups and tends to act in the interests of capitalist firms, especially the larger ones.

Left wing and right wing

The origin of these terms can be traced back to the French Revolution. In 1792, the most radical political groups (those wanting the most fundamental changes to the system) sat on the left side of the National Convention, while the most conservative groups (those opposed to change) sat on the right. In the centre were moderates, who wanted smaller-scale changes at a gradual pace. Since then, the term 'left wing' has been applied to socialist or communist groups, while 'right wing' has been applied to conservative or fascist groups; the moderate centre are referred to as liberals.

Self-determination

This refers to the idea – defended in particular by US president Woodrow Wilson at the 1919–20 peace negotiations – that national groups should be able to live in independent countries. However, although self-determination was applied to some ethnic and national

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