

Cambridge University Press

978-1-316-50646-2 — History for the IB Diploma Paper 3 European States in the Interwar Years

Allan Todd , Sally Waller , Jean Bottaro

Excerpt

[More Information](#)

1

Introduction

Introduction

This book is designed to prepare students taking Paper 3, Topic 14, *European States in the Interwar Years, 1918–39* (in HL Option 4: History of Europe) in the IB History examination. It deals with the history of domestic developments in four key European states in the period between the First and Second World Wars. The four countries covered are:

- Germany
- Italy
- Spain
- France.

After examining the impact of the First World War on each of these four states, the various units will examine the main economic, social and cultural changes in these countries during the 1920s and 1930s. The book will also explore the impact of the problems resulting from the Great Depression in these four countries, and the rise of fascist and right-wing regimes in Italy, Germany and Spain.



Figure 1.1: Eastern Europe after the 1919–20 peace settlements.

1

European States in the Interwar Years (1918–1939)

Themes

To help you prepare for your IB History exams, this book will cover the main themes and aspects relating to *European States in the Interwar Years 1918–39*, as set out in the *IB History Guide*. In particular, it examines the main political, economic and social developments in the period 1918–39 in terms of:

- the political, constitutional, economic and social problems of Weimar Germany in the period 1918–33
- Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and his main domestic policies
- the rise and consolidation of fascism in Italy after 1918, and Mussolini's main domestic policies in the period 1922–39
- the main political and economic factors behind the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, foreign involvement in the Civil War, and the reasons for its outcome
- the economic and political impact of the First World War on France, and social and cultural developments during the 1920s
- the impact of the Great Depression, the problems faced by the Popular Front government, and the collapse of the French Third Republic.

Key Concepts

Each unit will help you focus on the main issues in one of the four countries covered, and to compare and contrast the main developments that took place within them during the period 1918–39.

At various points in the units, there will be questions and activities which will help you focus on the six key concepts – these are:

- change
- continuity
- causation
- consequence
- significance
- perspectives.

Theory of Knowledge

In addition to the broad key themes, the units contain Theory of Knowledge links, to get you thinking about aspects that relate to history, which is a Group 3 subject in the IB Diploma. The topic *European states in the interwar years* has several clear links to ideas about knowledge and history. Many of the subjects covered are much debated by historians – for instance, the significance of the impact of the Great Depression, or the role of elites in the rise of fascism in countries such as Germany or Italy. Much of this is highly political, as it concerns, among other things, aspects of ideology – namely, a logically connected set of ideas which form the foundation of political beliefs and/or political theory. As far as this book is concerned, the main ideologies relevant to your study are **fascism** and **communism**.

At times, the controversial nature of these topics has affected the historians writing about these states, the leaders involved, and their policies and actions. Therefore, questions relating to how historians select and interpret sources have clear links to Theory of Knowledge.

For example, when trying to explain aspects of various political leaders' motives and actions, and the success or failure of their policies, 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 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 and leanings of individual historians?

You are therefore strongly advised to read a range of publications giving different interpretations of the rise of fascism in Europe after 1918, the various political, economic and social policies pursued by different leaders, 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 Reading).

1

European States in the Interwar Years (1918–1939)

IB History and Paper 3 questions

Paper 3

In IB History, Paper 3 is taken only by Higher-level students. For this paper, IB History 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. 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 units 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* arguments.

Before attempting the specific exam practice questions that come at the end of each main unit, you might find it useful to refer *first* to Chapter 6, the final Exam Practice unit. This suggestion is based on the idea that if you know where you are supposed to be going (gaining a good grade), and how to get there, you stand a better chance of reaching your destination!

Questions and mark schemes

To ensure that you develop the necessary skills and understanding, each unit contains comprehension questions and examination tips. For success in Paper 3, you need to produce essays that combine a number

Introduction

of features. In many ways, these require the same skills as the essays in Paper 2.

However, for the HL 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. Not only will this show you early on whether or not you know enough about the topic to answer the question, it will also provide a good structure for your answer.

So, 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 take the view 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.

The next important aspect of your answer is that 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, in order to access the highest bands and marks (see Chapter 6, ‘Simplified mark scheme’), you need to show, where appropriate, awareness and understanding of relevant historical debates and interpretations. This does not mean simply paraphrasing 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 your examination skills, most units contain sample questions, with examiner’s tips about what to do (and what *not* to do) in order to achieve high marks. These questions will focus on a specific skill, as follows:

1

European States in the Interwar Years (1918–1939)

- Skill 1 (Chapter 2, Unit 1) – understanding the wording of a question
- Skill 2 (Chapter 2, Unit 2) – planning an essay
- Skill 3 (Chapter 3, Unit 1) – writing an introductory paragraph
- Skill 4 (Chapter 3, Unit 2) – avoiding irrelevance
- Skill 5 (Chapter 4, Unit 2) – avoiding a narrative-based answer
- Skill 6 (Chapter 5, Unit 1) – using your own knowledge analytically and combining it with awareness of historical debate
- Skill 7 (Chapter 5, Unit 2) – 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 help you understand what examiners are looking for.

This guidance is developed further in Chapter 6, the Exam Practice chapter, where examiner's tips and comments will help you 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 mark scheme is provided in the Exam Practice chapter. This should make it easier to understand what examiners are looking for in examination answers. The actual Paper 3 IB History mark scheme 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 1918–39 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, along with economic and colonial rivalries between the

Introduction

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 (in 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.

Revolution and the end of empires

In addition to widespread physical destruction, the First World War also had significant political effects. In particular, prewar 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 and 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 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

1

European States in the Interwar Years (1918–1939)

was drawn up in the town of Weimar; as a result, historians refer to the period 1919–33 as Weimar Germany.



Figure 1.2: The mutiny at the Petrograd garrison during the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917.

However, the emergence and growth of new communist parties in Europe in the years after 1918 caused varying degrees of panic among the capitalist bankers, industrialists and landowners, and among most political leaders. In several European states, these fears led to the emergence and rise to power of fascist parties which, alongside other actions and strategies, were determined to defeat and destroy all left-wing political movements.

Postwar problems in the 1920s and 1930s

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.

Introduction

As you study the period 1918–39, 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 leaders of 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.



Figure 1.3: 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.

As well as these problems, after the collapse of the US stock market in 1929, what became known as the Great Depression began to seriously affect the economies of most states across the globe – including all