The Road to War 1933-39

Overview:
- Invasion of Abyssinia, Spanish Civil War and Hitler’s many violations of the TOV – League shown to be increasingly powerless and irrelevant
- Major European nations (Britain, France, Soviet Union) pursued different foreign policy objectives, with Britain following policy of appeasement
- Foreign policy of USA varied – some Axis aggressions were condemned, but certain legitimate German grievances were recognized
- Within 7 years of Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor in Jan 1933, Europe and the world was involved in another major war
- Czech crisis failed to satisfy Hitler’s growing demands, it became clear the next crisis would be Poland
- September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, thus beginning of WWII
- Global war when Germany invaded Soviet Union and Japan attacked US naval base in Pearl harbor in second half of 1940

The significance of Hitler
- 1934, Hitler was mostly concerned with establishing internal controls, soon after, he began to adopt more aggressive foreign policy – involved taking Germany out of the World Disarmament Conference and LON
- His policies were essentially cautious at first and his aims were not much wider than the previous German states (Stresemann)
- At world disarmament conference 1933, Hitler stressed Germany’s desire for peace and suggested that either all countries disarm to Germany’s level or Germany be allowed to arm to the level of other countries
- MacDonald – British PM, urged France to agree, however, the French insisted that the Germans guarantee that the Versailles limitation would be respected for the next four years
- Hitler complained that Germany not being treated equally and withdrew form the conference
- 1934, Hitler signed a non-aggression pact with Poland – easing European concerns over Germany’s intentions, prevent closed Polish ties with France and brought Poland under greater German influence
- Britain welcomed, but France remained suspicious and felt it would have to ensure its security independently of Britain
- Soviet Union joined League in 1934 – increasingly disturbed by Hitler’s rise to power
- Hitler’s first aggressive foreign policy was an attempt in 1934 to ring about Anschluss with Austria by supporting an attempted coup by Austrian Nazis
- The coup was blocked by Italy, supported by Britain and France – Hitler backed down, the German arm was not ready for serious military conflict
- After the night of the Long Knives June 1934, made Nazi power secure within Germany, Hitler focused increasingly on foreign policy
- Jan 1935, Saar voted to return to Germany
- March, Hitler announced Germany was no longer bound by military terms of Versailles and began openly rearming – naval expansion and reintroduction of conscription
- German army was already 400,000 strong, beyond 100,000 limit, Hitler intended to increase to 550,000
- Britain, France and Italy formed the Stresa Front in April 1935, with the intention of opposing any further German actions which might endanger Austrian independence or peace
- League took no action against Germany’s clear breaches of the peace settlements
- Hitler took steps to weaken the Stresa Front – made speeches stating how Germany wanted both peace and rearmament – Britain was impressed by these statements, France remained unconvinced