attacked by the Soviet Union. The Japanese viewed the pact as a safeguard of
Manchukuo against the Soviet Union seeking to use Japan's puppet state as a means of
access to an ice-free Pacific port. With a secret dream to invade and conquer the Soviet
Union, Hitler saw this pact as a means to tie up sizeable Russian military resources in
East-Asia when he considered the time was ripe to attack the Russians from the west.
Italy joined the Pact in 1937.

- 1938 Anschluss with Austria
  - The Austrian people were mainly German, and Hitler made it clear that he felt the two
    states belonged as one. Many in Austria supported the idea of the union with Germany,
since their country was so economically weak. In fact 4 years ago he had tried to take
over Austria but Mussolini stopped him. However now the situation was different, they
were now allies.
  - There was a strong Nazi Party in Austria, Hitler encouraged them to stir up trouble for
    the government. They demonstrated for union with Germany and caused riots. Hitler
told the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg that only Anschluss (political union) could sort
these problems. Schuschnigg was pressured into agree these terms. He had asked for
help from France and Britain but they had refused. He called a plebiscite, to see what
the Austrian people wanted.
  - Hitler wasn’t prepared to risk losing so he sent troops into Austria in March 1938 to
guarantee a ‘trouble free plebiscite.’ Under the eye of the Nazi troops 99.75% voted for
the union with Germany and Anschluss was completed without any military action.
  - Chamberlain the British Prime minister felt that the Austrians and the German
s had the
  right to be united and the Treaty was wrong to separate them, Britain’s Lord Halifax had
even suggested to Hitler before the Anschluss that Britain would not resist Germany and
Austria uniting.
  - Once again Hitler’s risky action had reaped a reward, Austria’s soldiers, weapons and it
rich deposits of gold were now in Germany’s increasingly strong army and industry.
Better yet Hitler was breaking another condition of the Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty
itself was seen as suspect and Britain and France were not prepared to go to war over
a flawed treaty.

- 1938 The Sudetenland
  - The leader of the Czech Republic Edward Benes was horrified by the Anschluss, he
realised that Czechoslovakia would be the next country on Hitler’s list. It seemed that
Britain and France were not prepared to stand up to Hitler. Benes sought guarantees
from the British and French that they would honour their agreement to defend
Czechoslovakia, the French reluctantly said they would, the British felt they had to
support the French and Chamberlain asked Hitler if he had any plans to invade
Czechoslovakia. Hitler said he didn’t.
  - Despite what Hitler said he did have plans, this new state created by the Treaty
contained many Germans. Henlein who was the leader of the Nazis in the Sudetenland
stirred up trouble among the Germans living there, they demanded to be a part of
Germany, and in May 1938 Hitler made it clear that he intended to fight the Germans if
necessary. This put Europe on full alert.
  - Britain, France and the USSR had all agreed to support the Czech Republic if it came to
war, they themselves had a modern army who were ready to fight, he knew that without
the Sudetenland Czechoslovakia would be defenceless. Throughout the summer
tensions rose.
Aggression of Japan and Italy, and its impact on foreign diplomacy

Aggression of Italy and its impacts:

- From 1922-43 Italy was a dictatorship led by Benito Mussolini. His aims were to increase the prestige of Italy as a major power.
- In the early 1930s Mussolini became very suspicious of his main rival Adolf Hitler.
  - He opposed Hitler’s attempted takeover of Austria in 1934 and seemed to be drawing closer to Britain and France.
  - Mussolini even joined Britain and France on the Stresa Front aimed at supporting the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- But in 1935, Italian foreign policy changed; Mussolini began to look for ways that Italian territory could increase overseas. He had always planned this but he also wanted a distraction from economic problems being caused by the depression. In 1935 he decided to attack Abyssinia to extend the African colonies.
- Mussolini’s invasion upset relations with Britain and France and undermined the Stresa agreement. Italy started growing closer to Germany:
  - In 1937 Mussolini signed the Rome-Berlin axis with Hitler.
  - Mussolini did not prevent Hitler from achieving Anschluss in 1938.
  - In 1939 ties between Germany and Italy were strengthened with the signing of the Pact of Steel.
- The Abyssinian crisis provided Hitler with an opportunity for his first act of aggression, the sending of German troops into the Rhineland area. The disintegration of the Anti-German Stresa Front considerably strengthened Hitler’s position and encouraged him to accelerate his foreign policy.

Aggression of Japan and its impacts:

- Japan was a rising power in Asia and the Pacific. It played an important part in the First World War during the twentieth century. Japan developed into a modern trading nation.
- There were powerful groups in Japan especially the army that wanted Japan to build an empire; the depression had a major impact on the Japanese economy.
- In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria an area rich in natural resources and raw materials which Japan’s industry needed. The area also provided a new market for Japanese goods.
- As many of its critics predicted, the league was powerless if a strong nation decided to pursue an aggressive policy and invade its neighbours. Japan had committed blatant aggression and it got away with it. Back in Europe both Hitler and Mussolini watched with interest. Within three years they would both follow Japan’s example. The Manchurian crisis marked the beginning of the end for the League of Nations and encouraged further aggression, making war more inevitable.