

The development of Germany, 1919–1991

Part 3: Germany and the world



1. The effect of the First World War on Germany's position in the world

The treatment of Germany at the Paris Peace Conference and the impact of the Treaty of Versailles

Following the armistice of November 1918 which ended the fighting of the First World War, the peace treaty was mainly decided by the victorious Allies (Britain, France and the USA). Germany was in no position to resist the Allies as its army had been defeated and its economy was weak. The terms of the treaty were drawn up in a former royal palace at Versailles, near Paris.

The German government was not allowed to take part in the negotiations at Versailles and it was presented with a dictated peace (a *Diktat*) which meant that the German government had either to take the terms on offer or leave them and face the war starting again. Many Germans were outraged as they had agreed to the armistice in the hope that any peace would be based on President Wilson's Fourteen Points. These had been put forward by Woodrow Wilson, president of the USA, as a plan to end the war early in 1918. For example, Germans had hoped that they would be given the right of self-determination (every nation being able to determine its own future). This had been an important part of the Fourteen Points and Germans now felt betrayed as they were not given this right.

Certainly President Wilson wanted a moderate peace settlement but he had to take note of the views of his allies. George Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, was out for revenge and wanted to ensure that France would never again be threatened by Germany. David Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, although personally sympathetic to Wilson's hopes for a lenient peace treaty, had just won a general election in 1918 with promises to make Germany pay for the war. He also was under pressure after the war as a million British people had died and the country had incurred huge debts in fighting the war.

The terms of the treaty came as not only a shock but also as a huge blow to German expectations. Many had expected that, by removing the Kaiser and setting up a modern democratic government, Germany would be treated fairly and leniently by the Allies. A wave of protest followed the publication of the terms of the treaty. The army commanders made it clear to the government that further military operations would be a disaster and there was no choice but to accept the terms of the treaty. The majority of Germans felt bitter resentment at these terms: the new government was widely criticised for agreeing to the terms of the treaty and so the republic had got off to the worst possible start. Many Germans believed that they had been ‘stabbed in the back’ by politicians who signed the unpopular treaty.

The main terms of the treaty were:

War guilt

Under Article 231 of the treaty Germany was forced to accept complete responsibility for causing the First World War. The main reason for this clause was so that the Allies could justify making Germany pay for the war (reparations).

Reparations

Germany had to pay for the damage caused by the war. The payments to the allies totalled £6,600 million.

Loss of land

Germany was to lose 10 per cent of its population and 13 per cent of its territory, including valuable areas of coal, iron and steel production. For example the Saar region, rich in coal, was given to France for 15 years, after which the inhabitants would vote on which country to belong to. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, Belgium gained Eupen and Malmedy, Denmark gained northern Schleswig, Upper Silesia was given to Poland which was also given a portion of German land called the Polish corridor so that the new country of Poland had access to the Baltic Sea. Germany also lost all its overseas colonies.

One of the most damaging terms which Germans saw as a great betrayal of the idea of self-determination was a ban on the idea of *Anschluss* (the union of Germany and Austria).

Military terms

These terms were severe and a blow to the prestige of a country which had once had a powerful army and navy. The army was reduced in size to 100,000 volunteers. The navy was reduced to six old battleships, six light cruisers and a few smaller craft. There were to be no submarines. Germany was not allowed to have an air force.

The Rhineland, an important area of western Germany, was demilitarised which meant that no German soldiers were allowed within 50 kilometres of the right bank of the River Rhine. The Allies were to occupy the zone for 15 years.

Although the Treaty of Versailles was tough, it is sometimes forgotten that it could have been much worse for Germany. If Clemenceau had had his way, more German territory would have been *permanently* lost, like the Rhineland and Saarland, and if Alsace-Lorraine had been given the right to self-determination, it is unlikely that the people would have voted to stay in Germany. There was a vote in Allenstein in which the population voted to be part of Germany and this was then agreed at Versailles.

It was not only the right-wing parties that were humiliated by this treaty; opposition to it was widespread. The Weimar Republic was always going to be linked to defeat and humiliation. The army could, however, claim now that it was all the politicians' fault: those who had signed the armistice in November 1918 were frequently referred to as the 'November Criminals'.

The creation of Poland was regarded as a deliberate attempt to divide Germany, to separate East Prussia and weaken it. The loss of the colonies, the stigma of the *Diktat* and the war guilt clause, and the enforced payment of reparations drove home not only the unfairness of the

treaty as Germans saw it but also its humiliation. The coalition parties who had to sign the treaty never really effectively countered the 'stab in the back' propaganda of the nationalist right-wing parties. The new republic was fatally weakened in many German eyes just as it began by its association with a very unpopular peace treaty.

Key learning points: The effect of the First World War on Germany's position in the world

- Germany's hopes for the armistice.
- The terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- Reasons why Germany had to accept the terms.
- The impact of the treaty on German society and politics.

2. IMPROVING RELATIONS

Post-war foreign policy

The foreign policy of the Weimar Republic was mainly concerned with attempting a revision of the Treaty of Versailles and restoring Germany's status as a world power. A tentative first step was taken with the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 which restored relations with the Soviet Union (USSR). Both countries agreed to cooperate and cancelled each other's claims for compensation from the recent war. At a time when both countries were regarded as outcasts, this treaty did not help Germany's relations with France or Britain. These tensions would not have reduced if the French and British had been fully aware that Germany and the Soviet Union were secretly testing weapons and training troops as part of their 'cooperation'. The treaty is remarkable in the light of communist opposition to the Weimar Republic and the hostility between Nazi Germany and the USSR.

The contribution of Gustav Stresemann

The outstanding figure in German foreign policy at this time was Gustav Stresemann who was Foreign Minister from 1924 to 1929. Stresemann's aims were:

- to make Germany a great power;
- to reduce the burdens of the Treaty of Versailles, especially the occupation of German land by foreign troops, the recovery of lost territory and the removal of the war guilt clause;
- to find a solution to the issue of reparations payments;
- to make Germany a member of the League of Nations.

Some of Stresemann's policies have already been described (**Part 2, Page 2**). As we have seen, the Dawes Plan of 1924 had provided a temporary solution to the problem of reparations. However, the following year Stresemann achieved an important step forward in restoring Germany's standing as a partner in European decision-making. The Locarno Agreement of 1925 declared that France, Germany and Belgium (guaranteed by Britain and Italy) would never go to war over Germany's western borders. This secured the status of the Rhineland, an important factor after the recent occupation of the Ruhr. Significantly, Stresemann made no guarantees about Germany's eastern front. It also meant that Germany was fully accepted as a partner in solving problems left over from Versailles and ended the suspicion caused by the Treaty of Rapallo. This was reinforced the following year, in 1926, when Germany was accepted as a member of the League of Nations: Stresemann was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this achievement. In 1928 the Kellogg-Briand Pact renounced war as a means to settle disputes. Germany under Stresemann's leadership signed up to this agreement, although there was nothing put in place to enforce the aim of the agreement which was probably more symbolic than real.

In 1929 Stresemann achieved his final success. The Dawes Plan had always been regarded as a temporary measure. It was now replaced by the Young Plan which

reduced reparations by two-thirds and also allowed Germany to make repayments over a longer period of time, 59 years (until 1988). In return, the French and British agreed to move their troops out of the Rhineland. Stresemann died suddenly before these negotiations were finished. Although his policies had helped Germany to recover its international standing and solved the problem of hyperinflation, Stresemann was still bitterly criticised by right-wing Germans who objected to the payment of reparations and believed that Stresemann should not have made agreements with the Allies.

Key learning points: Improving relations

- The Treaty of Rapallo 1922.
- The aims of Stresemann's foreign policy.
- The Locarno Agreement, 1925.
- Germany's entry into the League of Nations, 1926.
- The Young Plan, 1929.
- Stresemann's achievements.

3. Hitler's challenge to the peace of Europe

Hitler's aims in foreign policy

It was well known that Hitler intended to reverse the Treaty of Versailles and particularly dear to his heart was *Anschluss* or union with his native Austria. Important though this was to him, nevertheless his objectives were even more ambitious. Hitler wanted *Lebensraum* in the east for Germans to colonise. This territory would be carved out of Poland, other east European countries and, especially, the USSR. Hitler's intentions were not merely colonial; he also saw the creation of *Lebensraum* as a racial war as well. Hitler's foreign policy is only understandable as an extension of his rabid anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism was, of course, nothing new: Hitler's unique

Lebensraum

A German word meaning living space, i.e. more territory to expand and colonise.

contribution to it was to transform anti-Semitism into a highly organised extermination of Jews and communists. He often used these terms interchangeably. This extermination is often known as the 'Final Solution' (**Part 2, Page 18**) and *Lebensraum* was part and parcel of the same policy.

As was seen with his anti-Semitic policies in Germany, Hitler moved cautiously at first, partly because Germany had to rearm and build its strength and partly because he did not want to alarm other powers before Germany was strong enough to deal with them. His foreign policy was also highly intuitive and opportunistic; he was very clear (and always had been in his writings and speeches to the party faithful) about his final objective but progress towards that objective had to be staged and take advantage of new opportunities. In this Hitler was aided by his uncanny political skill: he understood Britain's and France's **appeasement** policies, he understood the importance of wrong-footing and dividing his opponents and he understood the importance of appearing statesmanlike and peaceful when he very clearly was not. He may have been so successful in this that many Germans were genuinely shocked by the outbreak of war in 1939. But, however hard he tried, the mask often dropped, as was shown in his speeches to Nazi Party supporters or to the Reichstag or in events like *Kristallnacht* in November 1938.

appeasement

Policy of giving way to demands in order to avoid war

The Second World War was Hitler's war – it may not have been the war he wanted at the start but the eventual attack on the USSR and *Lebensraum* had always been his objectives.

Rearmament

In 1933 Hitler made two decisions that clearly separated his policy from that of Gustav Stresemann. He ordered Germany to leave the Disarmament Conference attended by most European countries and he also ordered Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. In 1935 this was followed up by an announcement that Germany

now had an air force (*Luftwaffe*) and was introducing conscription to create a peacetime army of 550,000 men – both measures specifically banned by the Treaty of Versailles. Britain, France and Italy condemned Hitler's actions at a meeting at Stresa (called the Stresa Front) but significantly took no action to stop rearmament. Hitler had shrewdly calculated that the Allies had no stomach for armed action and quickly demonstrated his extraordinary ability to out-manoeuvre his opponents by negotiating a separate naval treaty with Britain, which allowed Germany to possess a navy of 35 per cent of the strength of Britain's Royal Navy. This was an important concession. To reassure France, he stated that Germany had no territorial claims on France after the return of the Saarland to Germany in 1935.

The weakness of the Stresa Front was clearly shown the following winter when Britain and France half-heartedly tried to prevent Italy's attack on Abyssinia. The Abyssinian crisis also showed the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations. Once it became clear that the Italian dictator, Mussolini, had won his war and conquered Abyssinia, Hitler decided the time was ripe for another calculated blow to the Treaty of Versailles.

The reoccupation of the Rhineland

On 7 March 1936 Hitler ordered German troops to march into the demilitarised Rhineland. This was a breach not only of the Treaty of Versailles but also the Locarno Agreement that Stresemann had negotiated. Hitler once again calculated it was worth the risk as he thought Britain and France would be reluctant to intervene. The French army could quite easily, at this stage, have prevented the reoccupation of the Rhineland. The French generals grossly overestimated German strength and Britain's policy was increasingly one of appeasement towards German demands to revise the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler overruled his own army generals who had advised against the move on the grounds that the French army was too powerful!

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Source 1: German troops entering the Rhineland in 1936

Hitler's confidence in his own ability and the wisdom of his strategy knew no bounds and his foreign policy actions now became even more radical and ambitious. The League of Nations had been shown to be powerless. Hitler also reinforced his position by signing the Rome–Berlin Axis with Mussolini in 1936, followed by the Anti-Comintern Pact with Italy and Japan to oppose the Soviet Union and all that it stood for.

Plans for war and Anschluss

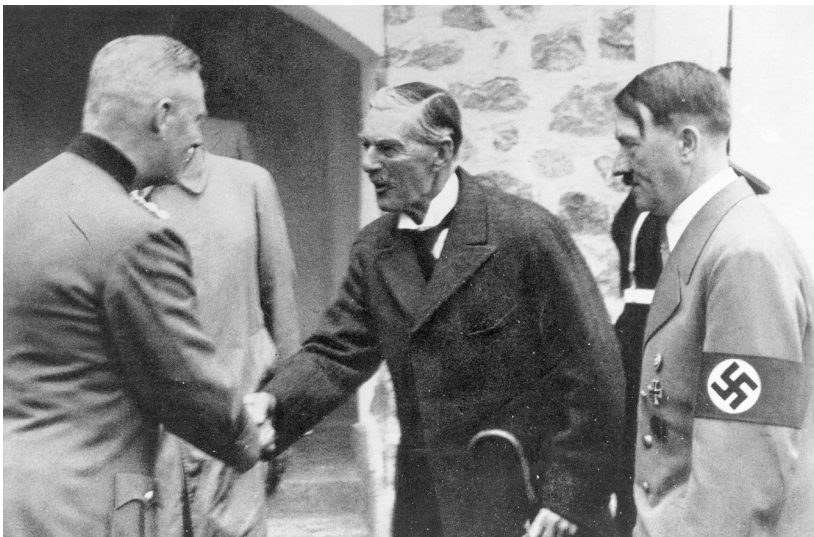
In 1936–7 key decisions were made by Hitler and other Nazi leaders to prepare for a war of aggression. Rearmament was given top priority in Germany's economic plans (**Part 1, Page 28**) and in a high-level conference with his military commanders in November 1937 Hitler emphasised his determination to acquire *Lebensraum* in the east and to solve Germany's economic problems, primarily shortages of food and resources, by force by 1943–4 at the latest. He was prepared to take risks in further challenges to the Versailles settlement as Britain and France had not put up serious opposition so far. Lord Halifax, a senior British minister, on a visit to Germany a few days later, agreed that Germany had reasonable grievances over Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

In 1938 Hitler ordered the Nazi Party in Austria to wreck the government of Dr Schuschnigg with demonstrations, processions and protests. When Schuschnigg announced that he would hold a referendum on Austria's future, Hitler ordered the German army to invade Austria in March 1938, as he could not risk a 'no' vote. Once again, Hitler's army generals advised against the invasion but Hitler's assessment of the reaction of Britain and France was correct. Neither intervened to stop this major breach of the Treaty of Versailles. Austria was occupied and annexed to Germany. This was a major victory for Hitler, again boosting his confidence and personal prestige. Strategically it also meant that Czechoslovakia's defences in the west were now completely out-flanked. All Britain and France did was to protest.

Czechoslovakia

Hitler had never respected the new country of Czechoslovakia and there was a long-standing German grievance over the position of 3.5 million Germans living in the Sudetenland region of western Czechoslovakia since the country had been created at the Paris Peace Settlement in 1919. The Sudeten Germans felt victimised and a strong local Nazi Party exploited these grievances.

Hitler intended to destroy the state of Czechoslovakia and, at the very least, annex the Sudetenland. The German army was ordered to draw up plans to attack Czechoslovakia and Hitler stepped up the pressure with threatening speeches demanding self-determination for the Sudeten Germans. Neither Britain nor France were keen to support Czechoslovakia in resisting German threats. The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, played a key role in negotiating a peaceful solution to the crisis. Hitler had demanded that the Czechs give up the Sudetenland by 1 October or face attack. On 29 September at Munich, Britain, France, Italy and Germany made an agreement to solve the problem. The Sudetenland was handed to Germany in return for guarantees about the new frontiers of Czechoslovakia. Hitler's army generals had come close to removing him from power, so worried were they by the possibility of a military reaction from Britain and France. In the event Hitler chose to negotiate with Britain and France, perhaps influenced by last-minute doubts, such as the reluctance of his ally Mussolini to go to war. Chamberlain was impressed by the agreement with Hitler in which Hitler also promised never to go to war again with Britain. Hitler, by contrast, was annoyed and felt he had been cheated of his war despite his success in gaining the Sudetenland, winning more prestige within Germany and once again proving his generals wrong.



Source 2: Chamberlain meeting Hitler and General Keitel, 1938

Poland

Within weeks of the Munich settlement, Hitler had already made plans to attack what was left of Czechoslovakia. In this he was aided by the demands of Slovak people for independence, further weakening the position of the Czech government. On 15 March 1939, German troops entered the Czech capital, Prague, and Hitler annexed Bohemia and Moravia to Germany on the grounds that they had once been ruled by a German emperor, a thousand years before! Czechoslovakia had been pulled to pieces and was now effectively under German control. Once more, Hitler had reckoned that Britain and France would not oppose his actions but this time he partly miscalculated. Neville Chamberlain immediately gave a guarantee (which was not expected by Hitler) to Poland, as the presumed next target for Hitler's aggression, that its territories would be protected. Chamberlain also significantly increased rearmament in Britain and introduced conscription in the summer of 1939. Hitler was enraged by the British guarantee and gave instructions to his generals to prepare an attack on Poland. He realised that there was now a huge risk of a general war over Poland and he showed his political skill in wrong-footing his opponents. Secret negotiations were begun with the USSR which Hitler knew also had territorial ambitions in Poland and no great regard for a country which had defeated the Soviets in 1920–1. Hitler made a non-aggressive pact with the USSR in late August 1939 and agreed a cynical division of Poland. *Lebensraum* and anti-communism were temporarily forgotten in his haste to destroy Poland. He thought that once Britain and France knew about his pact with the USSR, it would deter them from helping Poland. He ordered his armies to attack Poland on 1 September 1939, confident that neither Britain nor France would intervene because of his agreement with the Soviet Union. He was genuinely surprised when Britain and France did not back down and was even more annoyed when his ally Mussolini refused to join in. Nevertheless, the German attack went ahead and on 3 September 1939 Britain and France declared war on Germany.

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Source 3: Soviet pact, 1939

Key learning points: Hitler's challenge to the peace of Europe

- Hitler's aims in foreign policy.
- His tactics in implementing his aims.
- Rearmament and the departure from Stresemann's policies.
- The Anschluss 1938.
- The Munich settlement of the Czechoslovakian Crisis and Hitler's reaction, 1938.
- The destruction of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.
- Hitler's plan to attack Poland.
- The British and French guarantee to Poland.
- Hitler's motives in negotiating with the USSR.
- The attack on Poland on 1 September 1939 and the start of the Second World War in Europe.

4. Germany at war

The German armed forces had perfected the art of **Blitzkrieg** in which highly mechanised forces consisting of tanks and other armoured vehicles, supported by air power, broke through enemy defences, moving rapidly to surround and disrupt every unit and leaving them to be mopped up by slower moving infantry. The intention was to win quickly: it was not a form of warfare designed for lengthy campaigns. Although Germany had rearmed in the 1930s, in 1939 it was not ready for a long-drawn-out war. If Germany was to win, it had to do so quickly, relying on its superiority in tactics, tanks and air power.

blitzkrieg

Literally meaning 'lightning war': a swift, intense military campaign, a method of warfare developed by Germany

To begin with this worked very well. The attack on Poland was devastatingly successful, aided not only by Poland's outclassed army but also by the inactivity of the French and British armies which could quite easily have overwhelmed the skeleton German forces left in the west while Poland was being destroyed. Although the German navy suffered heavy losses, a similarly rapid campaign successfully invaded and occupied both Denmark and Norway in April 1940. This was designed to secure supplies of iron ore to Germany and threaten Britain's convoy routes.

The fall of France 1940

The French had built an apparently impregnable line of fortifications along its common frontier with Germany – the Maginot Line. The French and British counted on the Germans repeating their plan of 1914, that is to invade France through the Low Countries of Belgium and the Netherlands. They thought that the Maginot Line made an advance elsewhere impossible; the only other option was an advance through the Ardennes Forest in the centre and this was thought to be impenetrable to tanks. However, a German general, von Manstein, devised a daring plan which did precisely the opposite of what the Allies had expected. The Germans attacked through the Ardennes and their tanks and air force pulverised the French defences. So rapid and unexpected was the

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subsequent German advance that the British army only narrowly escaped being surrounded and destroyed; the retreating British were saved by the fortunate evacuation of troops by the Royal Navy and civilian ships through the port of Dunkirk. France, meanwhile, was overwhelmed and surrendered in June 1940. Hitler's plans had succeeded beyond his wildest dreams and he became over-confident.



Source 4: Hitler in Paris, June 1940

The Battle of Britain

It had never been part of Hitler's plans to confront Britain so early. Now that France had fallen he hoped that Britain would give up. He was never very enthusiastic about invading Britain and was much more interested in attacking the USSR. Nevertheless, he launched an air offensive against Britain to knock out the RAF, as control of the skies would have been essential if an invasion was to succeed. The air battles are known collectively as the Battle of Britain (August–September 1940) and the British, aided by the new invention of radar and its Spitfire and Hurricane fighter planes, inflicted heavy losses on the German air force. As a result Hitler postponed plans for the invasion of Britain in September 1940: the USSR was now his target. He ordered the German air force to bomb British cities that winter of 1940–1 (known as the **Blitz**) in an attempt to destroy Britain's morale. Despite widespread destruction and loss of life, the Blitz failed to undermine Britain's morale.

The Blitz

German air raids on London and other cities, 1940–1

The invasion of the USSR, 1941

Britain's failure to surrender and Germany's need for oil and other economic resources brought forward Hitler's eventual objective: *Lebensraum* and the destruction of the USSR. He calculated that a Blitzkrieg against the USSR would succeed rapidly and would not only enable him to gain territory for an enlarged Germany but also persuade Britain that there was no point in continuing an unwinnable war, once the USSR was destroyed.

His plans were slightly delayed by the entry of Italy into the war in 1940. Mussolini was anxious to gain territory for Italy whilst Britain looked as if it was going to be defeated. Instead, Italy suffered humiliating defeats in Greece, in the war at sea with Britain and also in north Africa where an Italian attack on Egypt, which not largely controlled by Britain, went badly wrong. Hitler had to divert valuable forces to the Balkans in the spring of 1941 to defeat Greece and Yugoslavia and to send a German expeditionary force (the Afrika Korps), strong in tanks and mobile forces, to help the Italians in north Africa.

On 22 June 1941, one of the largest invasions in history was launched. Operation Barbarossa was the code name for the surprise German attack on the USSR, using over 3 million troops, 3,600 tanks and 3,000 aircraft. Hitler hoped to destroy the Soviet armies in a few weeks. Initially he was very successful: the blitzkrieg tactic seemed to be working again. The leader of the USSR, Stalin, had been completely hoodwinked by the Nazi–Soviet pact and, despite warnings from the British (which he dismissed as propaganda), was completely surprised by the German attack. Millions of Soviet soldiers were captured, the Soviet air force destroyed and the German advance towards Leningrad and Moscow seemed unstoppable.

However, this was not a repetition of 1940; the USSR had huge reserves of manpower and it sensibly relocated its armaments industries to the Ural Mountains out of range of German aircraft. No sooner had the Germans destroyed one set of Soviet armies, fresh ones seemed to appear from nowhere. Importantly, the Soviets fought back with a ferocity and determination the *Wehrmacht* had not yet encountered. Blitzkrieg slowed: Hitler's plan had depended on a swift victory. The autumn rains turned Russia's primitive roads into a mudbath. The swift victory did not take place; although the Germans almost reached Moscow in December 1941, by the time they did so, they were exhausted, short of supplies and crucially short of replacement tanks and aircraft. A short war had been planned, but now it looked as if this war would not be over by Christmas as expected. Suddenly, in December 1941, fresh Soviet armies counter-attacked in front of Moscow, an attack planned and organised by Zhukov, Stalin's leading general. As the winter weather set in, the Germans only just managed to hold on in the face of the Soviet onslaught. At the same time the USA entered the war because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. The failure to destroy the USSR in 1941 was to prove an enormous strategic mistake. Germany was doomed: it now faced a coalition of three powerful countries, Britain, the USA and the USSR.

1942: the turning point

Although the German army was stalled before Moscow in the winter of 1941–2, Hitler was still hopeful of a successful outcome of his war before the USA could become fully involved in Europe. The German army remained a formidable fighting force and in the spring and early summer of 1942 two of Hitler's most gifted commanders, von Manstein and Rommel, won spectacular victories in southern Russia and north Africa. Von Manstein conquered the Crimea and captured a quarter of a million Soviet soldiers, while Rommel's Afrika Korps defeated the British in north Africa and advanced into Egypt, threatening Britain's oil supplies from the Middle East. Hitler now launched Operation Blue in southern Russia to destroy the USSR once and for all by capturing Stalingrad and the Caucasus with its rich oilfields.

To begin with the operation started well but this time the Russians were not surrendering in large numbers. Instead, they were retreating and using scorched-earth policies, destroying everything that might be of use to the Germans. Hitler was lulled into a false sense of security, thinking that the Russians were finished. He interfered frequently in operations, switching objectives and forces, overruling his generals and becoming fixated with the attack on Stalingrad. The truth was that the German army was hopelessly over-extended and short of key weapons (tanks and aircraft) as Hitler had not planned for a long war. As the Germans became tied down in street-by-street fighting in Stalingrad in the autumn of 1942, Zhukov planned a devastating counter-attack on the extended German lines. It came in November 1942 and showed that the Soviets had learned lessons from Blitzkrieg. In a matter of days, the key German Sixth Army had been completely surrounded by Soviet tank forces in Stalingrad and was forced to surrender in February 1943. A total of 96,000 Germans were captured with over 200,000 killed and wounded in one of Germany's worst defeats.

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Source 5: Victorious Soviet soldier waves red flag over Stalingrad

At the same time, disaster struck in north Africa. A revitalised British Eighth Army under a new commander, Montgomery, attacked Rommel's Afrika Korps at El Alamein in October/November 1942. Rommel's forces were defeated and began a long retreat to Tunisia. Another British and American army was landed by sea in Morocco and Algeria (Operation Torch) in November 1942 and moved towards Tunisia. Rommel's forces were now trapped between two armies. Although Hitler was advised by Rommel to evacuate north Africa, he refused, thus reinforcing failure. In May 1943 the British and Americans captured Tunisia and 250,000 German and Italian soldiers surrendered.

Only the successful defensive tactics of von Manstein prevented a complete German meltdown in Russia after Stalingrad, but the war had now entered a hopeless stage for Germany with these defeats in north Africa and Russia, as well as the start of a sustained Allied bombing campaign (**Part 2, Page 17**) which destroyed German industrial areas and cities. In 1943 the German **U-boat** campaign failed to stop convoys across the Atlantic. This was as a result of Allied intelligence successes in breaking the **Enigma** Code, their use of aircraft carriers to protect convoys and sink U-boats and their improved convoy defences.

U-boat
German submarine

Enigma
Secret German code
for communicating
with their armed
forces.

Defeat, 1943–5

The Germans launched a new attack in Russia in 1943, at last reinforced by significant numbers of new tanks and aircraft now being produced as Albert Speer's armaments drive (**Part 2, Page 17**) began to take effect. The new offensive was launched at Kursk in July 1943 and resulted in one of the largest tank battles of the Second World War. The Russians, warned in advance by excellent intelligence work, were fully prepared. Despite suffering heavy losses, the Russians held the German attack, although the Germans came closer to success than they realised. Hitler called off the attack on 13 July, particularly as the British and Americans had launched the largest **amphibious** operation of the war to date, landing in Sicily on 9 July 1943. The Germans never recovered from the defeats at Stalingrad and Kursk: an even stronger and more confident Red Army wore down the *Wehrmacht* in grim battles in 1943 and 1944, advancing into eastern Europe and to the frontiers of Germany by the end of 1944. Meanwhile, the British and Americans had moved on from Sicily and landed in Italy in September 1943, forcing Italy's surrender.

amphibious operation

A military operation involving sea and land forces organised for invasion.



Source 6: D-Day landing, 1944

Hitler expected the British and Americans to land in France in 1944 but was uncertain where. After a massive build-up of forces in the UK and an elaborate deception plan, in June 1944 the Allies landed large armies in Normandy, taking the Germans by surprise – the D-Day operation. This was another massive amphibious operation backed by the overwhelming firepower of Allied naval and air forces. By August 1944 the German army in the west had been defeated and was in full retreat: on 25 August 1944 Paris was liberated. The British and Americans quickly advanced to the western frontiers of Germany by the winter of 1944.

Hitler made one last desperate gamble to reverse the series of defeats by launching a surprise attack on the Americans in the Ardennes in December 1944. Although initially successful, the attack soon ran out of steam as the Americans counter-attacked. In March 1945 the British and Americans crossed the River Rhine, surrounded the Ruhr and advanced deep into Germany. At the same time the Russians launched their offensive from the east, advancing into Berlin in April 1945. German resistance collapsed. Hitler and Goebbels committed suicide. Himmler was captured by the British and also committed suicide. On 7 May Germany surrendered unconditionally and the four Allied powers took control of the country. The war in Europe was over.



Source 7: Hitler standing in bombed ruins of the Chancellery, Berlin 1945

Why was Germany defeated?

- The basic reason was that Germany's opponents proved too strong. Britain's survival in 1940, the Russian resistance in 1941 and the USA's entry into the war the same year meant that Germany ended up fighting a war on several fronts against a powerful combination of enemies.
- Germany was prepared for a short war and had not made sufficient preparations for a long-drawn-out war. By the time German war production was on a proper footing, it was too late. The Allied powers, Britain, the USA and the USSR could produce far more tanks, ships, planes and guns than the Germans.
- Hitler had made critical mistakes in not knocking Britain out of the war in 1940, underestimating the Russians and declaring war on the USA before finishing his war in the east. His mismanagement of the Stalingrad offensive in 1942 and the north African campaign in 1942–3 resulted in massive German defeats at a crucial stage in the war.
- Germany's opponents developed powerful armies and air forces which, in the end, overwhelmed Germany. The Allies learned from their earlier mistakes and

successfully invaded Europe. Allied planning, naval support and air power enabled them to launch highly successful amphibious operations like the D-Day operation.

- The Allies proved adept at breaking German codes and utilising technology in developing amphibious and aerial warfare.
- The Soviet army recovered from its early defeats and proved a formidable opponent, taking on most of the German army and defeating it in a relentless advance into eastern Europe.

Key learning points: Germany at war

- The idea of Blitzkrieg.
- The fall of France in 1940.
- The failure to defeat Britain in 1940.
- The invasion of Russia: causes, early success and reasons for the failure to defeat the Russians.
- The turning point of the war: Stalingrad, north Africa and the Battle of the Atlantic.
- Germany's defeat: Kursk, the Eastern Front, D-Day and the invasion of Europe.
- Reasons for Germany's defeat.

5. The treatment of Germany at the end of the war

The Yalta and Potsdam Conferences 1945

By the spring of 1945 it was clear that Germany would be defeated and the Allied powers had to decide what would happen to Germany after the war. In February 1945 the leaders of the USA (Roosevelt), USSR (Stalin) and Britain (Churchill) met at Yalta to decide. The first decisions that were taken were:

- Germany and Austria would be divided into four zones of occupation: Russia would control the east, Britain the north, USA and France the south and west. Special

arrangements were made for Berlin: all the Allies were given a sector of Berlin to control although it was in the middle of the Russian zone of occupation.

- Those responsible for war crimes would be put on trial.
- New borders were to be agreed for Poland.

The Allied leaders met again at Potsdam in July 1945 after Germany had surrendered. It was agreed that the occupation of Germany would end at some point when it was decided that Germans could govern themselves again. Then there would be a final peace treaty between Germany and the Allies. It was agreed that Germans living in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary would be moved back to Germany.

As a result of the end of the war and the redrawing of the eastern frontier there were expulsions of Germans from east European countries on a massive scale. The transfers were not conducted in the humane manner agreed at Potsdam. Some estimates place the number of Germans killed at over half a million. By October, 1946 9.5 million Germans had been forced to leave eastern Europe and return to Germany.

During 1945–6 the Allies cooperated to put the main Nazi leaders on trial for war crimes. Twenty-one Nazis were tried at Nuremberg: twelve, including Hermann Goering were sentenced to death, seven were jailed and three found not guilty.

The division of Germany

Quarrels between the USA and Britain on one side and USSR on the other meant that the plans for Germany changed dramatically. The threat of atomic weapons, the USSR's reluctance to hold free elections in the east European countries and the fear of communism all contributed to a climate of suspicion and lack of trust.

Britain, France and the USA decided that it was in their interests to revive the economy of the German areas they occupied. In 1947 the American and British zones were

united into a single economic unit called Bizonia. They also introduced a new currency called the Deutschmark. The leader of the USSR, Stalin, viewed these developments with mounting horror and regarded them as breaking the promises made at Potsdam. This led to the blockade of Berlin and the Berlin airlift in 1948 which is looked at in ([Part 2, Page 25](#)). These events led to the western Allies (Britain, USA and France) making separate arrangements for their zones as the Russians did for theirs. Germany was being divided into two parts, a division which would last for over 40 years.

Life at the end of the war

In May 1945 Germany surrendered to the Allies. One of the most serious consequences for Germans was their forced expulsion from areas where they had settled in occupied Europe. By October 1946 some 9.5 million Germans were expelled from all over the continent, arriving in the western and eastern zones of occupation as homeless refugees. Not surprisingly, life was harsh, not only for the refugees but also for the remaining home population. The condition of the bombed German cities was appalling, with millions living in temporary and sub-standard housing. Their diet was poor, starvation common and food supplies almost entirely dependent on the Allied armies. It has been estimated that the average daily calories for all Germans went down from 2,000 in 1944 to 1,412 in 1945–6. To the misery of this life was added the huge problem of inflation and shortages of most products. The problem of inflation had once again ruined Germans and eventually the Allies had to introduce a new currency in 1948 to solve the problem.

The major Nazi war criminals were put on trial at Nuremberg in 1946: twelve were sentenced to death, seven (including Albert Speer) were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Trials of other Nazis prison camp guards and army officers continued for many years – in the British zone alone between 1945 and 1949 24,000 trials were held. In all of the Allied zones a process

of denazification began, designed to remove Nazis from positions of power and to re-educate the German population. The Nazi Party was made illegal and German schools were reorganised to remove all trace of Nazi propaganda. It has been estimated that over 6 million Germans were investigated in the denazification process but the western Allies soon realised that so many Germans were compromised by their links to the Nazi government that there was no hope of rebuilding the economy, government, police, judiciary and legal system or schools unless ex-Nazis were re-employed. By 1947 the process of denazification had definitely slowed down and by 1951 it was abandoned.

Immediately after the end of the war, all the Allies began a programme of de-industrialisation to destroy all trace of heavy industry in Germany so that any future armaments industry would be impossible. Large-scale unemployment resulted when other industries, for example the chemical and electrical industries, were also destroyed. The supply of food dried up and any realistic prospect of Germany paying reparations faded. The British government found itself in the crazy situation of paying more for importing food into the British zone in Germany than it was receiving in reparations. The western Allies came to the conclusion that unless Germany was allowed to revive its economy there was no hope of reparations, recovery or ending the starvation of the German people.

In June 1947 a massive boost to not only the West German economy but to western Europe generally came with the Marshall Plan. The US Secretary of State, George Marshall, announced that the wealthy USA would make funds available to all the European states to rebuild their economies. Between 1948 and 1952 \$13 billion was spent on this aid in western Europe, and the western zones of Germany benefited enormously. At the same time, in June 1948, the western Allies suspended the German currency and replaced it with the Deutschmark to bring an end to inflation. The revival of the German economy in the western zones began.

Stalin, the leader of the USSR, had viewed these developments in the western zones with growing suspicion and fear that the agreements made at Yalta and Potsdam were being violated by the western powers.

Key learning points: Treatment of Germany at the end of the war

- Decisions made at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945.
- How the political division of Germany came about.
- Conditions in Germany at the end of the war.
- Denazification.
- Impact of the Marshall Plan.

6. Germany and the Cold War

The start of the Cold War

As we have seen in **Part 2, Page 24**, tensions between the western Allies (Britain, USA and France) and the USSR had heightened at the end of the Second World War. Part of the problem was that the western Allies saw that eastern Europe was dominated by the USSR: Stalin refused to hold free elections in these countries which he saw as buffer states to protect the USSR from invasion again. He wanted them to be friendly communist governments and would not risk elections there. The western powers underestimated the traumatic effect the invasion of the USSR had had on Stalin. To the western Allies it looked as if the USSR had simply taken over the whole of eastern Europe. In 1946, Winston Churchill, Britain's war-time Prime Minister, in a speech at Fulton, Missouri, referred to an 'Iron Curtain':

'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line are all the capitals of the ancient states of central and eastern Europe. All these famous cities and the populations around them, lie in the Soviet sphere.'

The phrase 'Iron Curtain' stuck. By 1948 Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Albania and Czechoslovakia

had communist governments. Yugoslavia was also communist but took an independent line, refusing to cooperate with Stalin. It was the only east European state without Soviet troops on its soil as it had not been liberated by the Soviet army. The western Allies' possession of atomic weapons was another source of distrust as were the growing quarrels over the fate of Germany (**Part 1, Page 31**).

President Truman, the new US President, took a tough anti-communist line called the Truman Doctrine, which was based on the ideas of:

- containing the USSR within its current areas of influence and not allowing it to spread;
- promising to support any nations that wished to resist what Truman called totalitarian (he meant communist) governments being forced upon them.

This was followed up by the Marshall Plan (**Part 2, Page 28**) which Stalin regarded as a major threat to the settlement he thought he had reached with the western Allies in 1945. Berlin was now the flashpoint of 'cold war' tension – hostility and tension that stopped short of actual fighting.

The Berlin Airlift

Stalin's fears about Marshall Aid and about the Allied decision to introduce a new currency in the western zones prompted his decision to blockade Berlin. He thought that this would be easily organised and result in the western powers leaving the city of Berlin. Road and rail links between Berlin and the west were cut in June 1948. Stalin had, however, underestimated the determination of President Truman and his allies to keep an Allied presence in Berlin. He also underestimated the air power that the USA and its allies could use. The Allies organised an airlift to supply west Berliners with food, fuel and other essential supplies for the 2.4 million population.

Although the Russians 'buzzed' Allied aircraft using the three air corridors into Berlin, they did not shoot down any planes. Stalin hesitated to do so as it would start a war

between USSR and the western Allies: he also doubted whether the airlift would work. In this belief he was wrong. The airlift lasted eleven months: a flight left bases in West Germany every 30 seconds to Berlin. The worst moment for the west Berliners came in January 1949 when supplies of coal were down to one week and food to three weeks. But the supplies kept coming: 278,000 flights in all, carrying 2.3 million tons of supplies at a cost of more than \$200 million. Tens of thousands of Berliners helped to build a new airport at Tegel to reduce congestion at the other two Berlin airports.

West Berliners had to suffer near-famine conditions but most were not tempted into the eastern zone with promises of food and fuel. In the end only 2 per cent of the population of west Berlin was tempted to leave. West Berliners came under great pressure to become part of a single-city communist government. Instead a clear majority supported the airlift and the city council moved to west Berlin. Many students and teachers from Berlin University in the eastern zone set up the new Free University in west Berlin.

Stalin called off the blockade on 12 May 1949, realising it was not working and not wanting to risk a full-scale war. The results were significant not only for the German people but also for the rest of the world:

- Two separate German countries were now created. Berlin had become a symbol of opposition to the spread of communism.
- The USA was now committed to maintain substantial forces in Europe.
- A cold war now existed between the east and west.

NATO and the Warsaw Pact

The outcome of these events led, as we have seen, to the formation of two separate German countries. The western Allies now felt that the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan needed to be backed up by a military alliance. In 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was set

up, creating an important military alliance of 11 nations including all the major western European states, the USA and Canada. Each of the nations involved agreed to assist each other if attacked by an aggressor. The Soviet Union followed by creating its own military alliance of communist states in Europe in 1955 – this was called the Warsaw Pact. By now the USSR also had atomic weapons and Europe was firmly divided into two very hostile, armed alliances. In 1955 West Germany joined NATO and a new German army was created (the *Bundeswehr*). One of Hitler's leading generals, von Manstein, who had been jailed as a war criminal, was allowed out of prison to give advice upon, and supervise, the creation of the new *Bundeswehr*, a move that only increased tensions between west and east.

East and West Germany

Whilst living conditions in West Germany and west Berlin remained high in the 1950s, East Germany (GDR) faced enormous problems. It had a population of only one-third that of West Germany and its industrial output was barely 20 per cent that of West Germany. Poor living and working conditions encouraged many Germans living in the GDR to move to the west in their thousands. This movement made the shortage of skilled workers even worse and the economy did not prosper, especially as the USSR was still demanding reparations. Although the border was closed by the East German government in 1952, thousands still escaped through the free city of Berlin. In 1952, 182,000 left for the west through that route.

The pressure on the East German government was shown in June 1953 when hundreds of thousands of workers went on strike, attacking Communist Party buildings and demanding free and secret elections. The Soviet army was called in to restore order: many thousands were arrested and it has been estimated that 125 people were killed. Although wages were increased after this uprising, the government took steps to double the size of the Stasi, its secret police force, to ensure that a similar protest did

not occur. Many voted with their feet and, in 1953 alone, 408,000 people emigrated from East to West Germany. The East German one-party, police state could only continue with the support of the Soviet army.

Tensions remained over the situation in Berlin for many years after the Berlin airlift. The migration of people from east to west continued: in 1958 the leader of the USSR, Nikita Krushchev, threatened western access routes to Berlin but then backed down. Life in west and east Berlin was very different. West Berlin was a centre of consumerism – with modern, well-stocked shops, thriving cafés and restaurants, packed theatres and night clubs. The west German ‘economic miracle’ was plain for all to see. Conditions in east Berlin were very different. Whilst everyone was fed and housed and there was health care and free education, it was nevertheless a much lower standard of living. Consumer goods such as washing machines and cars were not readily available: there were waiting lists. The migration of people from east to west was not only politically embarrassing, it was also economically disastrous as there was a serious labour shortage. Many of those who left tended to be young and highly skilled. The overall impression in east Berlin was one of drabness – buildings were still derelict and much war damage remained unrepaired. The tensions over divided Berlin and the migration of people to the west boiled over into a major crisis in 1961.

The Berlin Wall

In August 1961 the East German government, under instructions from the USSR, started to construct a wall to divide east and west Berlin in order to prevent people moving from East Germany to the west. This 103-mile perimeter wall around West Berlin was quickly built. It was a massive stone wall, topped with barbed wire with gun positions. A second barrier created a gap with the first that was soon nicknamed the Death Strip. There were specially constructed crossing points into east Berlin for which special permits were required. The most famous was called

Checkpoint Charlie – the only point at which non-Germans could cross into the east.

Escape across the wall was highly dangerous. It has been estimated that nearly a hundred people were shot trying to cross into the west between 1961 and 1989, 41 in the first year. Families and friends were forced to live apart for decades.

The border between the two Germanies was heavily fortified, not only in Berlin but also along the whole frontier. One famous example of an attempted escape was that of Pete Lechter on 17 August 1962. He attempted to cross the wall to see his sister. As he climbed the barbed wire he was shot and fell back into the Death Strip where he slowly bled to death only 300 metres from a border post. Crowds gathered, begging the US guards to rescue him but this would have meant violating the border and risking an international crisis. He was left to die. A tense stand-off existed between the west and the east over Berlin. President Kennedy of the USA made a famous visit to west Berlin in 1963 which may have boosted morale in west Berlin but, at the same time, the USA was powerless to remove the wall without risking a nuclear war. The wall survived for 28 years, a symbol of the cold war and a divided Germany.

Key learning points: Germany and the Cold War

- The reasons for east-west tensions.
- The reasons for, and impact of, the Berlin Airlift.
- Germany, NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- The differences between East and West Germany.
- The Berlin Wall and its impact.

7. The impact of reunification

The ECSC and EEC

The idea of a united western Europe became more

popular as the division between east and west became more important. Chancellor Adenauer of West Germany in particular saw great advantages for the new West Germany in a united Europe. European countries had become used to the idea of cooperation in 1948 with the OECC (Organisation for European Economic Cooperation) which implemented the Marshall Plan.

In 1950 Jean Monnet, a leading French politician and believer in west European cooperation, persuaded the French foreign minister, Robert Schuman, to write French–German production of coal, iron and steel. The plan was designed not only to make economic cooperation easier by removing customs duties but also to improve relations between France and Germany after being at war so frequently. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established in 1951 and by 1953 included France, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg and Italy. It proved an amazing success. By 1958 the trade in steel was 151 per cent above 1950 figures. The surge in economic activity helped the recovery of the West German economy in the 1950s.

The success of the ECSC persuaded the six countries that a common market, which reduced and later eliminated customs duties and brought about free movement of goods, labour, services and capital, was in every country's interest. The common market or EEC (European Economic Community Community, later known as the European Union) was formed by the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Brandt and the policy of Ostpolitik

The poor relations between East and West Germany and the dangerous cold-war atmosphere of the Berlin Wall persuaded some West German politicians to find ways of improving relations between east and west. The most important politician in West Germany to adopt this policy was Willy Brandt who was Foreign Minister from 1966 and Chancellor from 1969. He had been mayor of west Berlin during the Berlin Wall crisis, which had tested his leadership skills and made him a popular figure. He called

Ostpolitik

Policy of improving relations between West Germany and the communist countries of eastern Europe, including East Germany.

his policy **Ostpolitik**. The policy involved:

- a non-aggression treaty between West Germany and the USSR;
- an agreement with Poland that recognised Poland's acquisition of territory that had once belonged to Germany;
- Brandt kneeling in homage at the memorial to Polish Jews killed by the Nazis in the Warsaw ghetto;
- acceptance of the four-power division of Berlin as permanent;
- a Basic Treaty in 1972 between East and West Germany in which they agreed to exchange diplomatic missions, increase cross-border contacts and respect each other's independence.

Brandt received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971 in recognition of his efforts. The results of Ostpolitik saw improved relations between East and West Germany. Both countries were now part of the United Nations, travel and communications were easier and trade increased throughout the 1970s.

Reunification

In 1982 Helmut Kohl became Chancellor of West Germany and under his leadership the economy began to recover from the recession of the late 1970s. His period in office coincided with the end of the cold war. Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (openness) in the USSR not only ended tensions between the east and west but also relaxed the ban on other political parties in eastern Europe. The Polish and Hungarian governments changed into coalition governments where communists were either in a minority position or non-existent. The new Hungarian government dismantled the Iron Curtain, opening up its borders to Austria in March 1989.

This had a dramatic impact in East Germany where thousands now had a new route to move west. By June 1989, 12 per cent of the entire population of East Germany

had placed applications to emigrate. In September 1989 alone, 33,000 people moved west from East Germany. The East German economy was heading for bankruptcy. Gorbachev had already announced that he would not order the Red Army to crush opposition in eastern Europe as had happened on so many previous occasions in the past.

On 9 November 1989 the East German government had no option left, without Russian support, but to open its borders and allow free travel. Thousands marched to the Berlin Wall and pulled it down in one of the most momentous events in post-war history. In the next few days hundreds of thousands of East Germans crossed the remains of the wall and visited the west.

Helmut Kohl now seized the opportunity to lead the reunification of Germany:

- Huge loans were made by the West German government to bail out the bankrupt state of East Germany.
- By March 1990 300,000 East Germans had left for the west. At this rate of emigration, coupled with its poor economy, it had no long-term future as a country.
- Gorbachev assured Kohl he would not oppose reunification in return for West German loans to the USSR: by 1997 133 billion Deutschmarks had been paid to the USSR and the countries that replaced it.
- There was overwhelming support for reunification in East Germany as was shown in free elections in March 1990.

Germany now became a complete federal democracy. The two currencies were merged in May 1990 and East Germans found that their mark could be exchanged at a value of one for one with the West German Deutschmark when its market value was only a fraction of the West German mark. This was an important factor ensuring that unification was popular in the east.

The treaty of unification followed in August 1990, Berlin became the capital of the new Germany and Helmut Kohl easily won in the new election for a new German government, becoming Chancellor of a united Germany, forty-one years after the country's division.

Although unification and destruction of the Berlin Wall had happened quickly, significant problems remained:

- The economy of the old east Germany needed massive subsidies from the west to survive. For example, wages in the old East Germany rose from 35 per cent to 74 per cent of western levels by 1995, pensions rose from 40 per cent to 79 per cent of western levels too. The cost was massive and highly unpopular in the former West Germany.
- Huge migration from east to west took place after reunification, resulting in a rise of unemployment (to 79 per cent) in the old West. The West was not used to such social problems and reunification was blamed.

However Berlin, overall, has undergone massive redevelopment since 1991 and has been redesigned as a new capital, with an iconic Reichstag building. It is a centre of creativity, with a thriving music scene, active nightlife and important tourist industry. The German economy, in spite of all the problems of reunification, is still a major success story and has been justly described as the economic powerhouse of Europe, ranked in 2008 as the third largest in the world. Most Germans have not only done well out of reunification, the majority are also firmly in favour of it. Unemployment by 2013 in the east was at its lowest since 1991, though gross domestic product in the east was still only 67 per cent of that in the former West Germany and unemployment in the east is 9.5 per cent whilst in the west it is 5.8 per cent.

Key learning points: The impact of reunification

- Moves towards a united Europe (ECSC and EEC).
- Brandt and the policy of Ostpolitik: causes and importance.
- New policies in the USSR.
- The end of the Berlin Wall 1989.
- Helmut Kohl's leadership.
- Reasons for, and impact of, unification.

Acknowledgements

Source 1: German troops entering the Rhineland in 1936 – AKG Images

Source 2: Chamberlain meeting Hitler and General Keitel, 1938 - AKG Images

Source 3: Soviet pact, 1939 – [Wikimedia CC](#)

Source 4: Hitler in Paris, June 1940 – Roger-Wiollet / Rex Shutterstock

Source 5: Victorious Soviet soldier waves red flag over Stalingrad – Sputnik / Alamy Stock Photo

Source 6: D-Day landing, 1944 – Sipa Press / Rex Shutterstock

Source 7: Hitler standing in bombed ruins of the Chancellery, Berlin 1945 – AKG Images