European States in the Inter-War Period (1918–1939)

IB HL Study Guide

Contents

HL

How to Use This Guide

- **Paper 3, Regional Option 4 — History of Europe** is an **HL-only** paper worth **35% of the final HL grade**
- The exam is **2.5 hours** long; you write **three essays** chosen from **36 questions** spread across **18 sections**
- Each essay is marked out of **15** and must demonstrate detailed knowledge, analytical argument, and awareness of historiographical debate
- Schools typically teach **three sections**; the most popular globally are Sections 14, 15, 16, and 17
- This guide covers **Section 14: European States in the Inter-War Period (1918–1939)**
- Section 14 overlaps heavily with **Paper 2 World History Topics 10 (Authoritarian States) and 11 (20th-century wars)** — studying it deepens both Paper 2 and Paper 3 preparation simultaneously
- **Exam Alerts** flag the traps that cost marks in essays
- **IB Tips** highlight what examiners reward in extended responses
- **Worked Examples** provide model essay outlines for common question types

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Paper 3 Is HL Only. SL students do not sit Paper 3. HL students sit three papers: Paper 1 (source-based, 1 hour, 20%), Paper 2 (two essays, 90 min, 25%), and Paper 3 (three essays, 2.5 hours, 35%). Do not confuse the essay formats — Paper 3 essays require greater depth, specific regional detail, and engagement with historiography.

Aligned to IB History HL Subject Guide — Regional Option 4: History of Europe, Section 14

Section 0: Paper 3 Exam Format

What Paper 3 Tests

Paper 3 tests your ability to construct detailed, analytical, well-evidenced historical essays on a regional depth study. The IB expects you to demonstrate:

1. **Detailed factual knowledge** — specific dates, names, statistics, events, and policies, not vague generalisations

2. **Analytical argument** — a clear line of argument that directly addresses the question, not a narrative of events
3. **Historiographical awareness** — awareness that historians interpret the same events differently; your essay should engage with this
4. **Evaluation** — the ability to weigh competing explanations, qualify your argument, and reach a reasoned conclusion

MEMORISE THIS

Paper 3 at a Glance:

- **HL only** — SL students do not sit this paper
- **Duration:** 2.5 hours
- **Questions:** 36 questions across 18 sections (2 questions per section)
- **What you do:** Choose 3 questions, write 3 essays
- **Mark scheme:** 15 marks per essay (45 marks total); 35% of HL grade
- **Time per essay:** Approximately 50 minutes (including planning time)

How to Structure a Paper 3 Essay

A strong Paper 3 essay follows a clear architecture:

Component	Purpose	Length
Introduction	State your argument; define key terms; signpost structure	1 short paragraph
Body paragraphs (3–4)	Each paragraph = one analytical point, supported by specific evidence	3–4 paragraphs
Historiographical integration	Integrate historians' views to support or complicate your argument	Woven in throughout
Conclusion	Restate argument; weigh competing factors; reach a reasoned judgement	1 paragraph

IB TIP

IB Tip — Avoid "Historiography Dumps." A common mistake is to open with a paragraph listing what several historians say before the argument begins. Examiners do not reward this. Integrate historiographical references where they illuminate a specific point: "Ian Kershaw's concept of 'working towards the Führer' (1998) helps explain why the Nazi state functioned without Hitler micro-managing every decision — subordinates competed to anticipate and implement his wishes."

Section 1: The Weimar Republic — Creation, Challenges, and Collapse

1.1 Creation of the Weimar Republic (1918–1919)

The Weimar Republic emerged from Germany's defeat in World War I and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II on 9 November 1918. It was, from the beginning, a democracy born in crisis rather than by popular demand.

Key founding events:

- **9 November 1918:** Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates; Chancellor Max von Baden transfers power to SPD leader Friedrich Ebert; Philipp Scheidemann (SPD) proclaims a republic from a Reichstag window to pre-empt Karl Liebknecht's proclamation of a Soviet republic
- **January 1919:** Spartacist Uprising in Berlin — KPD (Communist Party) leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht attempt a revolutionary seizure of power; Ebert deploys the Freikorps (right-wing paramilitary veterans) to crush it; both leaders are murdered
- **June 1919:** Treaty of Versailles signed under protest; German delegates describe it as a *Diktat* (dictated peace)
- **August 1919:** Weimar Constitution comes into force — proportional representation, universal suffrage, a powerful presidency (Article 48 emergency powers)

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — The Weimar Republic's "Original Sin." The republic's reliance on the Freikorps to crush the Spartacists in January 1919 had long-term consequences: it left the right-wing military establishment intact within the new state; it alienated the working-class left; and it associated the SPD with suppressing socialist revolution. Many historians argue the republic never fully controlled the military and judiciary it inherited, both of which remained hostile to democracy throughout the Weimar period.

1.2 Structural Weaknesses of the Weimar Constitution

Structural Weakness	Detail	Long-term Consequence
Proportional representation	No electoral threshold; tiny parties won seats	Perpetual coalition governments; no stable majority
Article 48	President could rule by emergency decree, bypassing parliament	Abused by Brüning (1930–32) and then exploited by Hitler
Presidential power	President appointed and could dismiss the Chancellor	Hindenburg's personal decisions determined Hitler's appointment
Federal structure	Tension between national government and state (Länder) governments	Prussia (SPD-run) was a democratic bulwark; its 1932 removal by Papen was crucial
No electoral threshold	Dozens of parties competed	Impossible to build stable governing coalitions

MEMORISE THIS

Weimar's Structural Weaknesses — PAPF:

- **P**roportional representation with no threshold
- **A**rticle 48 emergency decree powers
- **P**residential appointment of chancellor
- **F**ederal tensions (Prussia vs. national government)

1.3 Crises of the Early Weimar Period (1919–1923)

The republic faced simultaneous political, economic, and social crises in its first four years — a period sometimes described as the "crisis years."

Political threats from right and left:

- **Kapp Putsch (March 1920):** Right-wing Freikorps units under Wolfgang Kapp seized Berlin and proclaimed a new government. The army refused to fire on them ("Reichswehr does not shoot on Reichswehr"). A general strike by German workers defeated the putsch — demonstrating that mass democratic action could defend the republic, but also that the military's loyalty was doubtful
- **Beer Hall Putsch (November 1923):** Hitler's failed attempt to seize the Munich government and march on Berlin, imitating Mussolini's March on Rome. Crushed by police gunfire; 16 Nazis killed. Hitler used his subsequent trial as a national propaganda platform
- **Communist uprisings:** KPD-led revolts in Hamburg, Saxony, and Thuringia in 1923 reflected genuine working-class radicalisation but were crushed by Reichswehr and Freikorps

The Hyperinflation Crisis (1921–1923):

Germany had financed WWI by printing money and borrowing, creating a fragile currency. After the war, reparations obligations further strained public finances. The immediate trigger for hyperinflation was the **French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr** (January 1923) after Germany defaulted on reparations timber deliveries. The German government encouraged passive resistance — paying striking workers with freshly printed marks. The result was catastrophic:

Date	Price of a loaf of bread
January 1923	250 marks
July 1923	3,465 marks
September 1923	1.5 million marks
November 1923	200 billion marks

The crisis wiped out middle-class savings held in cash or bonds — the *Mittelstand* (artisans, civil servants, small business owners) were devastated, generating lasting resentment of the republic and its associated parties.

> **IB TIP**
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> **IB Tip — Who Actually Suffered from Hyperinflation?** The standard narrative is that "hyperinflation destroyed the middle class." This is broadly accurate but needs nuancing: those with real assets (land, factories, foreign currency) actually benefited; industrial capitalists and landowners could pay off debts in worthless marks. Debtors gained; creditors lost. The political consequences were felt most acutely by the salaried *Mittelstand* and pensioners — exactly the groups that later drifted to the Nazis.

Stabilisation (1923–1924): Gustav Stresemann as Chancellor (August–November 1923) ended passive resistance, introduced the Rentenmark (backed by land values rather than gold), and negotiated the Dawes Plan (1924) with the United States, restructuring reparations payments and unlocking American loans.

1.4 The "Golden Twenties" and the Limits of Stability (1924–1929)

The years 1924–1929 saw relative economic recovery and political stabilisation — sometimes called the "Golden Twenties" or the Stresemann era. But the stability was fragile.

Stresemann's foreign policy achievements:

- **Dawes Plan (1924):** Rescheduled German reparations; opened American loans to Germany; economic recovery followed
- **Locarno Treaties (1925):** Germany accepted its western borders; France, Britain, and Germany agreed to peaceful dispute resolution; Germany entered the League of Nations (1926)
- **Young Plan (1929):** Further reduced and restructured reparations

Persistent weaknesses:

- German recovery was built on American short-term loans — not organic growth. When US banks called in loans after 1929, the economy collapsed immediately
- Coalition governments remained unstable; between 1919 and 1933, Germany had 20 separate governments
- The SPD never built a majority; the Catholic Centre Party and liberal parties constantly negotiated for cabinet seats
- The *Reichswehr* (army) maintained an independent political culture hostile to the republic; Hindenburg (elected president 1925) was a monarchist who had little commitment to democracy

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — The "Golden Twenties" Were Never Really Golden. Do not write that "the Weimar Republic succeeded in the 1920s." The recovery was entirely dependent on US loans; political instability continued throughout; the army remained undemocratic; and the republic's most prominent parties (SPD, Centre) were always governing in crisis mode. Some historians (e.g., Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 1987) argue that "the crisis of modernity" — the collision of rapid industrialisation, mass politics, and cultural upheaval — was inherent to the republic and was never resolved.

1.5 The Great Depression and the Fall of the Republic (1929–1933)

The Wall Street Crash (October 1929) triggered the withdrawal of American loans from Germany. By January 1933:

- Official unemployment stood at **6.1 million** (real figure substantially higher)
- Industrial production had fallen by 40% from 1929 levels
- The last majority coalition government collapsed in March 1930 over disagreements on unemployment benefit cuts
- Chancellor Brüning (Centre Party) governed by emergency decree under Article 48, austerity policies deepened the depression
- Nazi electoral support rose from **2.6% (1928)** to **18.3% (September 1930)** to **37.4% (July 1932)**
- On **30 January 1933**, President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor, convinced by von Papen that Hitler could be "boxed in" by conservative cabinet members

MEMORISE THIS

Key dates — Weimar's end:

- **29 March 1930:** Last majority coalition collapses
- **September 1930:** NSDAP becomes second-largest party (18.3%)
- **July 1932:** NSDAP becomes largest party (37.4%)
- **6 November 1932:** NSDAP vote falls to 33.1% — the republic's last free election

- **30 January 1933:** Hindenburg appoints Hitler Chancellor
- **23 March 1933:** Enabling Act passed — parliamentary democracy ends

Section 2: The Rise of Hitler and the Nazi State

2.1 Nazi Ideology

National Socialism was not merely opportunistic — it had a coherent (if internally contradictory) ideological core that shaped policy once in power.

Core ideological elements:

Element	Content
Racial hierarchy	*Volksgemeinschaft* (racial community); Aryans as "master race"; Jews, Roma, Slavs, and others as racial enemies to be excluded or destroyed
Lebensraum	"Living space" — Germany must expand eastward into Poland and the USSR to secure agricultural land and raw materials for the German race
Führerprinzip	The "leader principle" — absolute authority flows downward from the Führer; democracy is a Jewish-Marxist corruption
Anti-Marxism	Marxism is a Jewish conspiracy to subvert nations; the "November criminals" who signed the armistice betrayed Germany
Anti-capitalism (selective)	Early Nazi programme attacked "Jewish finance capitalism" while protecting German private enterprise and big industry
Social Darwinism	Nations and races compete; the strong must dominate or be destroyed; war is natural and ennobling

IB TIP

IB Tip — Ideology vs. Opportunism. Historians debate how far Hitler was an ideological true believer versus a pragmatic opportunist. Ian Kershaw (*Hitler*, 1998–2000) identifies two fixed ideological obsessions that never changed: anti-Semitism and *Lebensraum* in the East. Everything else — economic policy, alliances, tactics — was flexible. This distinction matters for essays on the nature of the Nazi state.

2.2 Consolidation of Power (1933–1934)

Hitler used a combination of legal manipulation, emergency powers, and targeted violence to dismantle democracy within 18 months of appointment.

Key steps:

- **Reichstag Fire (27 February 1933):** A Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, set the Reichstag ablaze. Hitler used the fire as a pretext to issue the **Reichstag Fire Decree** (28 February 1933) — suspending civil liberties and enabling mass arrest of KPD members. Historians debate whether the Nazis

orchestrated the fire; the academic consensus (Fritz Tobias, Richard Evans) is that van der Lubbe acted alone

- **March 1933 elections:** Held under conditions of SA intimidation and press censorship; NSDAP won 43.9% — still not a majority, but in coalition with the DNVP controlled parliament
- **Enabling Act (23 March 1933):** The *Ermächtigungsgesetz* gave Hitler's cabinet the power to pass laws without Reichstag approval for four years. Required a two-thirds majority — achieved by arresting KPD deputies, intimidating others, and securing Centre Party votes in exchange for false promises. Only the SPD voted against
- **Gleichschaltung ("coordination," 1933):** Systematic bringing of all institutions under Nazi control — trade unions dissolved (May 1933), state governments abolished, political parties banned (July 1933, leaving only the NSDAP)
- **Night of the Long Knives (30 June–2 July 1934):** Hitler purged the SA leadership (Ernst Röhm and approximately 85 others), using the SS and army. This secured army loyalty by removing the threat of SA takeover of military functions
- **Hindenburg's death (August 1934):** Hitler merged the offices of President and Chancellor, becoming *Führer und Reichskanzler*; the army swore a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler (not the German state)

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — "Legal Revolution." Hitler's seizure of power has been called a "legal revolution" — he used constitutional mechanisms (emergency decrees, the Enabling Act) to destroy constitutionalism. This is a sophisticated point worth making in essays. However, do not imply the process was purely legal — the SA's intimidation of opponents, the arrest of KPD deputies, and the murder of SA leaders during the Night of the Long Knives all show that violence underpinned the "legal" facade.

2.3 Domestic Policies of the Nazi State (1933–1939)

Economic Policy

Nazi economic policy had two phases: recovery (1933–1936) and rearmament-driven expansion (1936–1939).

Recovery phase:

- Public works programmes (Autobahn, housing, reforestation) reduced visible unemployment
- *Mefo* bills — secret rearmament bonds used to finance hidden weapons production; deferred inflationary pressure
- Official unemployment fell from 6.1 million (January 1933) to **1.6 million by 1936** — real figures were distorted by removing women, Jews, and compulsory labour service participants from statistics

The Four-Year Plan (1936): Göring directed economic preparation for war — autarky (self-sufficiency), synthetic fuel (*Ersatz*) production, and massive rearmament. The economy was bent toward war preparation; consumer goods were sacrificed.

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — Did the Nazi Economy Succeed? Unemployment fell, but the recovery was built on rearmament spending that created structural economic instability by the late 1930s. Adam Tooze (*The Wages of Destruction*, 2006) argues that the Nazi economy was perpetually on the brink of crisis — wage freezes, suppressed consumption, hidden inflation — and that this economic pressure was a major driver of Hitler's decision to launch war in 1939: the regime could not sustain peacetime rearmament indefinitely.

Social Policy and the *Volksgemeinschaft*

The Nazi regime sought to reshape German society around the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* — a racially pure people's community united by blood and soil.

Women and family: The "Three Ks" (*Kinder, Küche, Kirche* — children, kitchen, church) defined the ideal Nazi woman. Marriage loans and child allowances incentivised large families; women were expelled from many professions after 1933. Paradoxically, by 1937–1939, labour shortages brought women back into the workforce — ideology was overridden by economic necessity.

Youth: The **Hitler Youth** (boys) and **League of German Girls** (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*, BDM) enrolled virtually all German young people by 1939. Education was heavily politicised — racial science, military drill, and Nazi ideology replaced academic subjects. Resistance within the youth population did exist (Edelweiss Pirates, Swing Youth) but was marginal.

Persecution of "racial enemies":

Policy	Date	Content
Boycott of Jewish businesses	April 1933	First organised anti-Semitic measure
Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service	April 1933	Jews and political opponents removed from state employment
Nuremberg Laws	September 1935	Stripped Jews of citizenship; banned marriage/sexual relations between Jews and "Aryans"
Kristallnacht ("Night of Broken Glass")	9–10 November 1938	Pogrom organised by the SS; 91 Jews killed officially (far more in reality); 7,500 Jewish businesses destroyed; 30,000 sent to concentration camps

IB TIP

> **IB Tip — The "Twisted Road to Auschwitz."** Historians debate whether the Holocaust was always Hitler's intention (intentionalism) or emerged through a chaotic, cumulative radicalisation (functionalism/structuralism). The current consensus ("moderate intentionalism" — Ian Kershaw, Christopher Browning) holds that Hitler's anti-Semitic ideology was a necessary precondition but that the decision to pursue systematic genocide emerged from the conditions of war in 1941. For Paper 3 essays on domestic policy, the pre-war persecution (1933–1939) is the relevant period — the Holocaust itself belongs to Paper 2 Topic 11.

Control and Terror

The Nazi state combined propaganda, surveillance, and organised terror to achieve social conformity.

- **Propaganda Ministry (Goebbels):** Controlled all media — radio, film, press, art, music. The *Volksempfänger* ("people's receiver") cheap radio set brought Nazi broadcasts into German homes. Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) exemplified Nazi aesthetic politics
- **The SS (Schutzstaffel):** Under Himmler, the SS grew from a personal bodyguard into a state-within-a-state — running concentration camps (from 1933), the *Gestapo* (secret police), the SD (security service), and eventually entire SS military divisions
- **The Gestapo:** Often assumed to be an omnipresent surveillance force — but Robert Gellately's research (*The Gestapo and German Society*, 1990) showed the Gestapo was actually understaffed and relied heavily on **denunciations from ordinary Germans**. Terror worked partly through self-policing

Section 3: Italy — The Rise of Mussolini and the Fascist State

3.1 Italy After World War I — The "Mutilated Victory"

Italy entered WWI in 1915 on the promise of territorial gains (London Pact): Trentino, Trieste, Istria, and a share of Africa and Asia Minor. By 1919, Italy had lost 600,000 men but received far less than promised at Paris — Fiume was awarded to Yugoslavia, African claims were rejected. The nationalists proclaimed a *vittoria mutilata* (mutilated victory).

Political crisis, 1919–1922:

- Five Prime Ministers in three years — trasformismo coalition politics had reached collapse
- The **Biennio Rosso** ("Two Red Years," 1919–1920): wave of strikes, factory occupations in the industrial North, land seizures in the South — terrified the middle class and landowners

- **Giolitti** (Prime Minister) attempted to co-opt Mussolini into a coalition (1921 *Blocco Nazionale*) — giving fascism electoral legitimacy while expecting to control it
- D'Annunzio's occupation of **Fiume** (1919–1920) established the theatrical, paramilitary style that Mussolini would borrow: uniforms, salutes, mass rallies, the *Leader*'s balcony speech

3.2 Mussolini's Rise and the March on Rome (1919–1922)

Mussolini founded the *fasci di combattimento* in Milan in March 1919. By 1922 he led a mass movement of approximately 300,000, financed by industrialists (Fiat's Agnelli) and landowners, tolerated by the police and army, and feared by socialist trade unions.

The March on Rome (27–29 October 1922):

- Approximately 25,000 Blackshirts gathered outside Rome; the army had sufficient force to disperse them
- Prime Minister Facta requested martial law; King Victor Emmanuel III refused to sign the decree
- On 29 October 1922, the King invited Mussolini to Rome by telegram to form a government
- Mussolini arrived by overnight sleeper train from Milan — the "march" was largely symbolic

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — "The March on Rome Was a Bluff." Many students write that Mussolini "led a military seizure of power." This is misleading. The March on Rome was a threatened coup that succeeded because the King surrendered political authority without fighting. The constitutional mechanism of royal appointment was used — as with Hitler in 1933. This parallel between Hitler and Mussolini (both invited into office by establishment figures who misread their intentions) is a high-value comparative point for Paper 3.

3.3 Building the Fascist Dictatorship (1922–1928)

Mussolini did not immediately establish a dictatorship — it was a gradual process accelerated by the Matteotti Crisis.

1922–1924 — "legal" transition:

- Mussolini initially governed through coalition; only four of his cabinet of fourteen were fascists
- **Acerbo Law (1923):** Electoral law granting the largest party two-thirds of parliamentary seats if it won at least 25% of the vote — rigged to ensure fascist dominance
- **1924 elections:** Fascists won 64% (amid widespread violence and intimidation)

The Matteotti Crisis (1924):

- Socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti was murdered by fascist thugs in June 1924 after he denounced election fraud in parliament
- Opposition parties boycotted parliament in protest (the "Aventine Secession") — this paradoxically removed their ability to challenge Mussolini
- Mussolini's position seemed endangered, but the King, army, and Church maintained support; the crisis passed

1925–1928 — the "Fascist laws":

- *Legge fascistissime* (1925–1926): banned opposition parties and trade unions; replaced elected local government with appointed *podestà*; introduced press censorship; created the OVRA (secret police)
- Mussolini assumed the title *Il Duce* ("The Leader")
- **Lateran Accords (1929):** Concordat with the Catholic Church — Vatican recognised as an independent state; Catholicism as Italy's state religion; Church education permitted in schools. This gave the regime crucial legitimacy with Italy's overwhelmingly Catholic population

3.4 Fascist Domestic and Foreign Policy

Economic policy — the "Battle" campaigns:

Policy	Date	Goal	Outcome
Battle for the Lira	1926	Revalue the lira at "Quota 90" (90 lire per £) to demonstrate power	Damaged exports; deflation hurt workers and small businesses
Battle for Grain	1925	Grain self-sufficiency; propaganda centred on Mussolini harvesting wheat	Increased grain production; less efficient land shifted from export crops
Battle for Births	1927	Increase birth rate; taxes on bachelors	Largely failed; birth rate continued to fall
Battle for Land (*bonifica integrale*)	1928+	Drain marshes (Pontine Marshes), reclaim agricultural land	Some genuine achievements; became showpiece propaganda

The corporate state:

Mussolini claimed to have replaced capitalism and Marxism with a "Third Way" — the **corporate state**, in which employers and workers were organised into state-controlled corporations. In reality, the corporations were dominated by employers and served to suppress trade union action. Dennis Mack Smith (*Mussolini*, 1981) dismisses the corporate state as largely a propaganda exercise.

Foreign policy:

- Initially pursued revisionist claims through diplomacy — Corfu Incident (1923), Locarno (1925)

- **Abyssinian Crisis (1935–36):** Invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia); conquest completed by May 1936; League of Nations imposed sanctions (largely ineffective); Mussolini moved toward Hitler
- **Spanish Civil War (1936–39):** Italy sent 70,000 troops and major air and armoured support to Franco; Italian forces suffered embarrassing defeat at Guadalajara (1937)
- **Stresa Front (1935) to Rome-Berlin Axis (1936):** Mussolini's strategic trajectory moved from alignment with Britain and France to alliance with Nazi Germany — driven partly by Abyssinian sanctions, partly by ideological affinity

> **IB TIP**
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> **IB Tip — Was Italian Fascism Totalitarian?** Mussolini coined the term "totalitarian" but Italy was less thoroughly totalitarian than Nazi Germany. The Catholic Church retained independent institutions; the monarchy remained; the industrial and landowning elites maintained significant autonomy. R.J.B. Bosworth (*Mussolini's Italy*, 2005) argues that Fascism functioned through negotiation with existing power structures rather than replacing them. This contrasts with the more comprehensive (though still incomplete) Nazi *Gleichschaltung*.

Section 4: Spain — Political Instability, Civil War, and Franco

4.1 Spain's Political Instability (1918–1936)

Spain in the inter-war period was deeply divided — by region (Catalan and Basque nationalism), class (landowners vs. landless peasants, industrialists vs. workers), religion (the Catholic Church vs. anticlerical republicans and anarchists), and ideology (liberals, socialists, anarchists, conservatives, monarchists, fascists).

Key context:

- Spain did not participate in WWI — it was neutral, which meant it experienced neither the nationalist mobilisation nor the democratic pressures of the postwar settlement
- The Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1930): King Alfonso XIII appointed General Primo de Rivera as dictator; the dictatorship collapsed in 1930; the King abdicated in 1931
- **Second Spanish Republic (April 1931):** A democratically elected republic replaced the monarchy; immediate agenda: land reform, secularisation of education, Catalan autonomy
- **1931–1933 (left-republican government):** Reforms alienated the Church, army, and landowners; failed to satisfy anarchist and socialist workers
- **1933–1936 (right-wing government — "Black Biennium"):** CEDA (Catholic right) rolled back reforms; **Asturias Miners' Revolt (October 1934)** crushed by the army under General Francisco Franco

- **Popular Front victory (February 1936):** Left-wing coalition won elections; political violence escalated; coup followed within months

4.2 The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)

Origins — the military uprising (July 1936):

On 17–18 July 1936, a group of military commanders launched a *pronunciamiento* (military uprising) against the Republic. General Mola coordinated the plot; General Franco (initially skeptical) emerged as the key leader after Mola's and Sanjurjo's early deaths.

The coup failed to capture the main cities immediately — loyal Republican forces, workers' militias, and anarchist units held Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and the Basque coast. Spain fractured into two zones: **Nationalist** (army, Church, right) and **Republican** (government, workers, regional autonomists).

International intervention — a European proxy war:

Power	Support	Recipient
Nazi Germany	Condor Legion (aircraft, pilots, tanks, artillery); 16,000 personnel	Nationalists (Franco)
Fascist Italy	70,000+ troops, aircraft, naval support	Nationalists (Franco)
Soviet Union	Aircraft, tanks, advisers, political commissars; International Brigades organised	Republicans
Britain and France	Non-Intervention Agreement (officially neutral)	Effectively aided Nationalists by denying Republicans arms
Mexico	Limited arms and refuge for Republican exiles	Republicans

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — The Spanish Civil War as an International Event. Paper 3 questions on the Spanish Civil War often ask you to assess the role of foreign intervention. Do not simply list who helped whom — analyse the significance. German air power (the Condor Legion's bombing of Guernica, 26 April 1937) provided the Nationalists with a decisive military advantage. Soviet support for the Republicans came with political strings — Stalin used the NKVD to purge anarchists and Trotskyists in Republican-held Spain, deepening Republican disunity.

Key phases and battles:

- **Summer 1936:** Nationalist advance from Morocco; Franco airlifted to Spain with German and Italian air support; siege of Madrid begins (November 1936)
- **Battle of Jarama (February 1937):** Nationalists failed to encircle Madrid
- **Battle of Guadalajara (March 1937):** Republican forces (including International Brigades) defeated Italian motorised troops — significant propaganda victory for the Republic

- **Fall of Bilbao (June 1937):** Basque country fell to Nationalists; German aerial bombardment decisive
- **Battle of Teruel (1937–38):** Last major Republican offensive; eventually reversed by Nationalists
- **Nationalist offensives (1938):** Aragon offensive split Republican territory; Catalonia isolated
- **Fall of Barcelona (January 1939) and Madrid (March 1939):** Republican resistance collapsed

Guernica (26 April 1937):

The German Condor Legion's bombing of the Basque market town of Guernica killed approximately 150–400 civilians (estimates vary). It was the first major aerial bombardment of a civilian target in European history and became a global symbol of fascist terror — memorialised in Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*.

4.3 Franco's Spain (1939 onwards)

Francisco Franco proclaimed himself *Caudillo* (leader) and head of state. His regime was authoritarian but not totalitarian in the Nazi/Fascist sense — it rested on a coalition of support (the Catholic Church, the army, the Falange, monarchists) and evolved over decades.

Immediate post-war repression:

- Approximately 100,000–200,000 executions in the immediate post-Civil War period (estimates vary)
- Mass imprisonment; forced labour; cultural repression (Catalan and Basque languages banned in public)
- The **Francoist state** blended elements of fascism (the Falange), Catholic conservatism, and military authoritarianism — unlike Mussolini or Hitler, Franco did not seek to mobilise a mass movement but to depoliticise Spanish society

> **IB TIP**
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> **IB Tip — Was Franco a Fascist?** This is a genuine historiographical debate. Paul Preston (*Franco*, 1993) argues Franco was an opportunist who used fascist trappings while remaining essentially a conservative military dictator. Stanley Payne distinguishes between "fascist-style" and "fascist" — Franco's regime lacked the fascist movements' revolutionary mass mobilisation and eventually evolved toward Catholic conservatism (especially after 1945). This nuance distinguishes sophisticated Paper 3 essays from superficial ones.

Section 5: France — Third Republic, Political Divisions, and Popular Front

5.1 France After World War I

France emerged from WWI as a formal victor but a deeply damaged society: 1.4 million military dead, 4 million wounded, the industrial north devastated, massive war debt, and a demographic crisis that would persist for decades.

Political context of the Third Republic:

The Third Republic (1870–1940) was a parliamentary system chronically prone to governmental instability — 44 governments between 1918 and 1940. Its coalition structure mirrored Weimar Germany in its inability to produce stable majorities, though the underlying democratic culture was more resilient.

French society in the inter-war period was deeply polarised:

- **Right:** Traditional conservatives, Catholic nationalists, the far-right *ligues* (paramilitary leagues) — *Action Française*, Croix de Feu, Cagoule
- **Centre:** Radical Party (confusingly, a centrist party of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry)
- **Left:** SFIO (Socialists), PCF (Communists, affiliated to Moscow's Comintern)

5.2 The Crisis of the 1930s and the Popular Front

The Great Depression hit France later than Germany — the full impact was felt from 1931–1932 — but produced similar political radicalisation.

The 6 February 1934 riots:

Far-right *ligues* (including the Croix de Feu, *Action Française*, and former Stavisky scandal rioters) marched on the Chamber of Deputies. Police killed 15 demonstrators. The left interpreted this as a French fascist *coup d'état* attempt — in reality it was disorganised, but the fear it generated was decisive.

The Popular Front (1936–1938):

In response to the apparent fascist threat, the Communists (PCF), Socialists (SFIO), and Radicals formed an electoral alliance — the **Popular Front** — directed by the Comintern's new "antifascist" policy. The Popular Front won the May 1936 elections; **Léon Blum** (SFIO) became France's first Socialist (and first Jewish) Prime Minister.

Popular Front reforms:

- **Matignon Agreements (June 1936):** Negotiated after a wave of factory sit-in strikes; 40-hour working week, paid holidays, collective bargaining rights, wage increases

- Nationalisation of the Bank of France; partial nationalisation of arms industry
- Repeal of fascist leagues (including Croix de Feu)

Collapse of the Popular Front:

- Financial crisis: capital flight; the franc was devalued; business confidence collapsed
- The Radicals defected over spending levels by 1937
- Blum refused to intervene in Spain (bowing to British pressure and domestic division) — alienating the left
- Blum resigned June 1937; the Popular Front effectively ended by 1938
- **Daladier** government (1938) signed the **Munich Agreement** (September 1938), ceding Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland to Hitler — a policy of appeasement that the Popular Front's left bitterly opposed

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — France's Response to Fascism. Questions often ask you to assess whether France's response to the rise of fascism was adequate. The Popular Front represents one coherent answer (build a democratic coalition against fascism); the Daladier government's Munich policy represents the alternative (appeasement to preserve peace). Do not simply condemn appeasement — consider the strategic constraints France faced: military unreadiness, British pressure, domestic divisions, and the genuine trauma of WWI's losses that made another war psychologically and politically unacceptable to many French citizens.

IB TIP

IB Tip — France as a Comparative Case. France is the critical counter-example in Section 14: unlike Germany and Italy, France did not succumb to fascism in the inter-war period, despite experiencing the same economic crises and political pressures. Why? Historians point to the resilience of republican culture (legitimated by 1789 and 1870), the absence of the specific conditions of military defeat and national humiliation that drove German and Italian radicalisation, and the relative strength of left-wing party organisation. This comparative framing is exactly what Paper 3 examiners reward.

Section 6: Economic Crises Across Europe

6.1 Hyperinflation (1921–1923)

Hyperinflation was primarily a German phenomenon (see Section 1.3 above), though Austria and Hungary also experienced severe inflation after WWI. Its causes were rooted in wartime monetary policy and the reparations crisis; its effects were catastrophic for the middle class while benefiting debtors (including the German state).

Cross-European context: The new successor states of Eastern Europe (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania) all faced severe monetary instability in the early 1920s. The interwar period began with a generalised European financial crisis, resolved only through American capital (Dawes Plan, 1924; Young Plan, 1929) and League of Nations financial assistance programmes.

6.2 The Great Depression (1929–1933) and Its European Impact

The Great Depression was transmitted to Europe primarily through two mechanisms: the withdrawal of American short-term loans (on which Germany, Austria, and Hungary were heavily dependent) and the collapse of commodity prices (devastating agricultural economies throughout Central and Eastern Europe).

Country responses:

Country	Policy Response	Political Consequence
Germany	Brüning's deflation/austerity (1930–32); then Nazi public works + rearmament (1933+)	Austerity destroyed the republic; Nazi recovery built on hidden rearmament debt
Britain	National Government (coalition, 1931); limited public works; eventual recovery via housing and consumer goods	Democracy preserved; the 1935 Jarrow March shows continuing suffering
France	Delayed impact; successive governments' deflation until Blum's 1936 reflation	Political polarisation; Popular Front reforms; capital flight
Italy	Relatively insulated by autarky policies; but living standards fell sharply	Regime intensified nationalist foreign policy (Abyssinia, 1935) to distract from domestic austerity
Eastern Europe	Collapse of agricultural commodity prices; peasant debt crises	Democratic systems collapsed across the region (Hungary, Romania, Poland, Yugoslavia)

MEMORISE THIS

European Responses to the Depression — DAN:

- **D**eflation/austerity (Germany under Brüning, France under multiple cabinets)
- **A**utarky/national economic management (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy)
- **N**ew Deal-style reflation (Blum's Popular Front in France, 1936; limited British public works)

Section 7: The Treaty of Versailles and Its Impact on European States

7.1 The Treaty's Main Terms and Their Reception

The Treaty of Versailles (signed 28 June 1919) imposed a settlement on Germany that was simultaneously too harsh to be acceptable to German public opinion and too lenient to be enforceable without sustained Allied will.

Key terms:

Category	Term	Detail
Territorial	Loss of Alsace-Lorraine	Returned to France
Territorial	Loss of Polish Corridor and Danzig	Access to Baltic; German populations placed under Polish rule
Territorial	Loss of colonies	All German colonies mandated to Britain, France, and others
Military	100,000-man Reichswehr	Army limited; no air force, no submarines; Rhineland demilitarised
Financial	Reparations	Final figure: 132 billion gold marks (London Schedule, 1921)
Political	Article 231 ("war guilt")	Germany accepted responsibility for the war — used to justify reparations

German reception: The treaty was universally condemned across the German political spectrum — from Communists to Nationalists. The "stab-in-the-back" myth (*Dolchstosslegende*) — that Germany had been betrayed internally while undefeated in the field — gained wide currency and was deliberately promoted by the military establishment (Hindenburg, Ludendorff) to deflect blame from the High Command.

7.2 The Historiography of Versailles

The Versailles settlement has been the subject of one of the most enduring debates in inter-war historiography.

AJP Taylor (*The Origins of the Second World War*, 1961): Taylor provocatively argued that Hitler was a conventional European statesman who exploited opportunities created by the peace settlement's unresolved tensions — and that Allied leaders' own miscalculations were as responsible for WWII as Hitler's aggression. This "revisionist" view was controversial; most historians now regard it as overstating the case.

Keynes (*The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, 1919): The British economist argued at the time that the reparations were economically irrational and would destabilise Europe. His critique shaped inter-war Anglo-American opinion toward "guilty guilt" about Versailles — contributing to appeasement.

Margaret MacMillan (*Paris 1919*, 2001): Argues that the peacemakers faced impossible constraints — nationalist pressures, territorial ethnic mixing, Allied public demands for punishment — and that the settlement was more flexible than its critics acknowledge. The problem was not the treaty's terms but the failure to enforce them consistently.

Sally Marks and Zara Steiner: Both argue that Versailles was a workable settlement that German leaders were determined to revise regardless; the real problem was Allied unwillingness to enforce it after 1923.

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — Versailles as Root Cause. Do not write that "Versailles caused WWII." This is a causal oversimplification that examiners penalise. Versailles created conditions that extremists could exploit, but it required Hitler's specific ideology and decisions, Allied appeasement, and the contingency of the Great Depression to produce the outcome it did. A strong essay will present Versailles as a necessary but not sufficient cause of inter-war instability.

Section 8: Comparative Analysis — How European States Responded to the Crises

8.1 Why Did Some States Fall to Authoritarianism?

The inter-war period saw democratic collapse across much of Europe — but not in all countries. Comparing those that fell (Germany, Italy) with those that survived (France, Britain, Czechoslovakia) reveals the key variables.

Conditions that correlated with democratic collapse:

Factor	Germany	Italy	Spain	France
WWI defeat / "mutilated" outcome	Yes (defeat)	Yes (mutilated victory)	No (neutral)	No (victor)
Severe economic crisis (hyperinflation + Depression)	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial
Weak/new democratic institutions	Yes (new 1919)	Yes (unstable)	Yes (new 1931)	No (1870)
Strong paramilitary right-wing movement	Yes (SA, SS)	Yes (Squadrismo)	Yes (Falange)	Limited (Croix de Feu)
Elite miscalculation (invitation to office)	Yes (Hindenburg/Papen)	Yes (Victor Emmanuel III)	No (coup)	No
Communist threat perceived by elites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Why France survived:

France experienced all the same economic pressures and political tensions, yet democracy survived (until the military collapse of 1940). Historians point to:

- The Third Republic's deeper historical legitimacy (1870–1940 without interruption)
- The relative weakness of French fascist movements — Croix de Feu was large but not revolutionary
- The Popular Front's success in mobilising a democratic coalition against the far right
- The absence of a figure comparable to Hitler or Mussolini with the political will and public appeal to break the constitutional order

8.2 Common Patterns in the Authoritarian States

Despite their differences, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Francoist Spain (and other European authoritarian regimes) share significant structural features that are worth comparing systematically.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Worked Example — Comparative Essay Outline

Question: "Economic crisis was the most important reason for the rise of authoritarian regimes in inter-war Europe." Discuss.

Argument structure:

Thesis: Economic crisis (hyperinflation, then the Great Depression) was a necessary condition for authoritarian rise in Germany and Italy, but it was not sufficient — political weakness, elite miscalculation, and the specific agency of charismatic leaders were equally or more decisive. Spain's instability preceded the Depression and reflected different structural factors.

Paragraph 1 — The role of economic crisis (support the claim):

- Germany: hyperinflation (1923) destroyed middle-class savings; Great Depression (1929–33) drove unemployment to 6.1 million; NSDAP vote directly tracked unemployment
- Italy: post-war economic dislocation drove the Biennio Rosso; landowners and industrialists financed fascism as insurance against socialist revolution
- Evidence: correlation between economic deterioration and extremist electoral gains in Germany is empirically clear

Paragraph 2 — Qualify with political weakness:

- Economic crisis is a constant (many democracies survived the Depression); what varied was institutional resilience
- Weimar's constitutional flaws (Article 48, proportional representation, presidential appointment) made economic crisis politically lethal in ways that British or French institutions could absorb
- Italian parliamentary trasformismo had already produced governmental collapse before the economic crisis peaked

Paragraph 3 — The role of elite miscalculation:

- Hitler was not elected but appointed; Hindenburg and von Papen calculated they could control him — a catastrophically wrong judgement
- Victor Emmanuel III's refusal to sign martial law was not economically determined — it was a political choice
- Economic crisis created the mass constituency; elite failure opened the door

Paragraph 4 — Spain as counter-evidence:

- Spain's instability (1931–36) preceded the full impact of the Depression on the Spanish economy
- The Civil War arose from land reform conflicts, regional nationalism, and Church-state conflict — class and religious divisions were as important as economic crisis

Conclusion: Economic crisis was the most visible trigger and the most important mass-political factor, but it operated within a specific context of institutional weakness and elite failure. In France, the same economic pressures did not produce authoritarianism — demonstrating that crisis alone does not determine outcome.

Section 9: Historiographical Perspectives

Engagement with historiography is a requirement of Paper 3. The following are the key historians and interpretive debates for Section 14.

9.1 On Weimar and the Nazi Rise

Historian	Work	Key Argument
Ian Kershaw	*Hitler* (2 vols., 1998–2000); *The Hitler Myth* (1987)	Hitler's charismatic authority was socially constructed; the Nazi state was polycratic, not simply Hitler's will; "working towards the Führer" explains its functioning
Richard Evans	*The Third Reich* trilogy (2003–2008)	Comprehensive narrative; emphasises the contingency of Nazi rise — it was not inevitable; rejects determinism
Detlev Peukert	*The Weimar Republic* (1987)	Structural "crisis of modernity" — Weimar's failure reflected irresolvable contradictions of industrial modernity, not just political mistakes
William Brustein	*The Logic of Evil* (1996)	Nazi support stemmed from material class interests, not primarily ideology or emotional manipulation
Robert Gellately	*The Gestapo and German Society* (1990)	Gestapo operated through public denunciation; terror was socially embedded, not imposed from above alone
Adam Tooze	*The Wages of Destruction* (2006)	Nazi economy was structurally unstable; economic pressure drove Hitler's 1939 war decision

9.2 On Fascist Italy

Historian	Work	Key Argument
Denis Mack Smith	*Mussolini* (1981)	Mussolini was an opportunist, not a systematic ideologue; the corporate state was propaganda
R.J.B. Bosworth	*Mussolini's Italy* (2005)	Fascism negotiated with, rather than replaced, existing power structures; totalitarianism was more aspiration than reality
Paul Corner	*The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (2012)	Popular support was manufactured and coerced; many Italians complied without genuine belief
Angelo Tasca	Early anti-fascist analysis	Emphasised the role of agrarian capitalists in financing and enabling fascism

9.3 On Spain and the Civil War

Historian	Work	Key Argument
Paul Preston	*Franco* (1993); *The Spanish Civil War* (2006)	Franco was a calculating opportunist; the Civil War was a class war as much as an ideological one
Antony Beevor	*The Battle for Spain* (2006)	Accessible military-political narrative; emphasises Soviet intervention's destructive role within the Republic
Helen Graham	*The Spanish Republic at War* (2002)	Sympathetic account of the Republic; argues Republican defeat was not inevitable but contingent on international non-intervention
George Orwell	*Homage to Catalonia* (1938)	Eyewitness account by International Brigades volunteer; documents Stalinist suppression of anarchists/POUM in Barcelona

9.4 On the Treaty of Versailles

Historian	Work	Key Argument
AJP Taylor	*The Origins of the Second World War* (1961)	Hitler a conventional European statesman exploiting structural opportunities; Allied failures equally responsible
John Maynard Keynes	*The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919)	Reparations economically irrational; peace economically destructive
Margaret MacMillan	*Paris 1919* (2001)	Peacemakers faced impossible constraints; the settlement was more defensible than critics allow
Zara Steiner	*The Lights That Failed* (2005)	Versailles was workable; the problem was Allied failure to enforce it consistently after 1923

Section 10: Essay Question Bank

The following questions reflect the style of actual IB Paper 3 questions for Section 14.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Practice Question 1:

"The Weimar Republic's collapse was caused more by its structural weaknesses than by the impact of the Great Depression." Discuss.

Planning framework:

- Define: what are Weimar's structural weaknesses? (Article 48, PR, presidential power, inherited military)
- Evidence FOR: those weaknesses predated the Depression; the republic nearly fell in 1923; Article 48 was already being used by 1930
- Evidence AGAINST: the republic stabilised in 1924–29 despite those weaknesses; the Depression's specific impact (6.1m unemployment, Nazi electoral surge) was the proximate trigger
- Historiography: Peukert's structural crisis vs. contingency arguments (Evans)
- Conclusion: both were necessary; structural weakness made the republic fragile; the Depression was the shock that broke it — a distinction between fragility and collapse

WORKED EXAMPLE

Practice Question 2:

Evaluate the methods used by Mussolini to consolidate power in Italy between 1922 and 1928.

Planning framework:

- Identify the range of methods: legal manipulation (Acerbo Law), violence and intimidation, elite support (King, Church, industrialists), propaganda, legal repression (*legge fascistissime*)
- Assess effectiveness of each
- Key turning point: the Matteotti Crisis — near-collapse followed by decisive move to full dictatorship
- Comparison with Hitler: both used legal and illegal means; both benefited from elite miscalculation
- Historiography: Mack Smith (opportunism) vs. Bosworth (negotiation with existing power)
- Conclusion: consolidation was not inevitable — it depended on the failure of opposition (Aventine Secession) as much as fascist strength

WORKED EXAMPLE

Practice Question 3:

"The Spanish Civil War was primarily a conflict between democracy and fascism." How far do you agree?

Planning framework:

- The "democracy vs. fascism" narrative: this was how the Republic and its international supporters (Comintern, International Brigades) framed the conflict
- Complicating factors: the Republic included anarchists, communists, regional nationalists — not simply "democrats"; the Nationalist side included monarchists, Carlists, Catholics, and military conservatives alongside the Falange proper
- The role of foreign intervention: Germany/Italy (fascist support for Nationalists) vs. USSR (Soviet support for Republic) — it became a proxy ideological war even if the origins were domestic
- Class dimension: Paul Preston's argument that it was also a class war (landowners vs. landless peasants, industrialists vs. workers)
- Conclusion: the "democracy vs. fascism" framing captures an important international dimension but oversimplifies the domestic origins — it was also a class conflict, a religious war, and a struggle over regional nationalism

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — The 15-Mark Essay. IB Paper 3 essays are marked on a 0–15 scale using a mark scheme that rewards: (a) knowledge and understanding of the question's focus, (b) a clear analytical argument rather than narrative, (c) integration of historiographical perspectives, and (d) a reasoned evaluative conclusion. Essays that tell the story without arguing a position consistently score in the 5–8 range. The difference between a 10 and a 14 is usually the quality of analytical argument and the sophistication of the conclusion.

MEMORISE THIS

Key Historians to Know for Section 14 — Paper 3:

- **Ian Kershaw** — Nazi Germany, Hitler's role, "working towards the Führer"
- **Richard Evans** — Nazi Germany, Third Reich trilogy
- **Denis Mack Smith** — Mussolini, Italian Fascism (opportunist reading)
- **R.J.B. Bosworth** — Italy, fascism as negotiation with existing power
- **Paul Preston** — Franco, Spanish Civil War
- **AJP Taylor** — Origins of WWII, Versailles (revisionist)
- **Margaret MacMillan** — Versailles peacemakers, *Paris 1919*
- **Adam Tooze** — Nazi economy, *Wages of Destruction*
- **Detlev Peukert** — Weimar Republic as structural crisis of modernity