Hitler’s Foreign Policy Factsheet:

**Hitler’s three aims for foreign policy**

-Tear up the 1918 Treaty of Versailles

-Unite all Germans in a single country.

-Provide Germany with Lebensraum (living space)

**A ‘reversal’ of the Treaty of Versailles.**

-Rearmament was a breach of the Treaty and Hitler announced his policy for it in **1935**

-In **1934**, Hitler secretly ordered the trebling of the army **from 100,000 to 300,00** and the building of **two pocket battleships and six submarines**

-He reintroduced conscription, which the Treaty had banned, in order to build his desired army of **550,000** men

-In **January of 1935**, the people of the Saar which had been commandeered by the League of Nations following Versailles, voted by a vast majority for a reunion with Germany.

-Hitler ordered his army to march into the Rhineland in **1936** and the German army stayed in the area and built up a great line of forts on the France-Belgium border

-He made several alliances and even achieved the Anschluss with Austria which had been explicitly forbidden in the Treaty.

**Hitler’s allies**

-Franco because he added him in the Spanish Civil War

-Mussolini when he signed the Rome-Berlin Axis Pact, gaining Italy’s support.

-Japan with the signing of the Anti-Communism Pact

-The USSR (briefly) with the Nazi-Soviet Pact

-Austria following the Anschluss

**How Hitler’s foreign policy maintained support for the Nazis:**

- Britain and France were reluctant to take action against Germany’s plans for expansion which allowed Hitler to make serious breaches of Versailles up to 1939 which bolstered support. Most Germans were still angry about the Treaty so any breach was welcomed.

-Most Germans regarded Hitler’s desire for a Greater Germany as reasonable and supported his plans

-Hitler’s spectacular victories early in the war were extremely popular in Germany because it proved German power

-Rearmament boosted domestic support because many Germans believed a strong army was vital for Germany’s security and recovering its position as a great power.

-The return of the Saar boosted Germany’s economy as the Saar was a bountiful coal mining region which in turn increased Hitler’s popularity.

-The breach of the Rhineland was welcomed by most Germans as a restoration of Germany’s full sovereignty.

**Achieving the Anschluss in 1938:**

-The Anschluss was forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles but vital for Hitler’s plan to unite all Germans.

-In **February 1938,** Hitler ordered the Austrian Nazi party to generate as much trouble as possible (parades, marches, arson, bombings, organised fights etc.)

-Hitler met with the Austrian leader following a ban of the party. He threatened invasion unless the Nazis were given the high-power roles in the Austrian government.

-Austria organised a plebiscite (a vote) to see whether the people wanted Austria to remain ‘a free and German, independent, Christian and united’ country.

-Hitler feared the vote would go against him so he had the Austrian leader sacked and replaced with a Nazi who immediately invited the German troops into Austria.

-The Anschluss was proclaimed on **March 12th** and, in a vote, 99% expressed their approval.

**The Sudeten crisis of 1938-39.**

-Hitler saw the Czechs as an inferior race and had resented them since his youth.

-Czechoslovakia was created by the despised 1919-1920 peace settlement and was home to **over 3 million Sudeten Germans** who Hitler believed has been denied the right of self-determination.

-It was clear Hitler wanted an excuse to invade and destroy the country.

-He encouraged the Sudeten German party to keep raising its demands to prevent an agreement between the Czech government and the Sudeten Germans.

-Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain tried to appease Hitler in order to maintain peace.

-After two meetings with Hitler, Chamberlain appealed to Mussolini who persuaded Hitler to attend a conference in Munich.

-Neither the Czechs nor their ally the USSR were invited

-It was decided that Hitler would occupy the Sudetenland in stages and the Czechs were forced to agree

-In **March, 1939**, Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia.

-Hitler also demanded the return of Memel (a city taken from Germany under Versailles) from Lithuania.

**The USSR**

-Germany and the USSR signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact on the 23rd of **August, 1939.**

-Hitler had always wanted to see Germany expand eastwards to gain Lebensraum or 'living space' for its people. After the fall of France, Hitler ordered plans to be drawn up for an invasion of the Soviet Union. He intended to destroy what he saw as Stalin's 'Jewish Bolshevist' regime and establish Nazi dominance.

-Hitler launched several attacks on the USSR (**Operation Barbarossa of 1941** and **Stalingrad in 1942** are notable examples).

- **10,000 Germans died and 93,000 were taken prisoner at Stalingrad**

-From 1942, the war in Russia became a long, drawn-out affair that the German economy was not equipped to handle.

-Stalingrad especially was a great material and psychological blow to the Germans. It proved how much Russian military leadership and capability had improved since 1941.

-This reduced Hitler’s popularity amongst the Germans who believed that the money would have been better spent domestically.

-In **1944**, the Red Army drove the Germans mostly out of Eastern Europe as they advanced on Berlin.

-In **February of 1945,** Russian troops invaded Germany and **by April** they had besieged Berlin.

-It can be argued that this is what pushed Hitler over the edge as he committed suicide at the **end of April 1945**.

**Hitler and Mussolini.**

-They were similar in ideology

-Became allies when they signed the Rome-Berlin Axis Pact in **1936.**

-Mussolini joined Hitler in the war in **June of 1940**

-Hitler soon realised Mussolini was more of a liability than an asset.

-Hitler had to balance aiding Italy and maintaining his own position

-This pushed back his invasion of the USSR which is arguably a reason for its failure

- In the **summer of 1943**, Italy was invaded by US and British forces which essentially took Mussolini out of the game.

-This was after Mussolini has written to Hitler stating that Italy was leaving their alliance

**Blitzkrieg and the beginning of the war**

-Blitzkrieg is defined as an intense military campaign intended to bring about a swift victory

-On **1st September 1939**, Germany invaded Poland

-On **3rd of September**, Britain and France declared war on Germany  
-After failing to negotiate peace with the Allies, Hitler decided that before he attacked the USSR, he needed control over Western Europe.

-In the first half of **1940**, Hitler organised a mass invasion campaign: In **April**, Denmark and Norway were overrun by German forces, in **May** it was Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. **By June**, France was the only one still standing and they surrendered on the **22nd** following the invasion of Italian troops.

-The Battle of Britain occurred between **July and September of 1940.**

-It was a result Churchill’s defiance and refusal to negotiate peace. Hitler decided he need to invade Britain and knock her out of the war before he attacked the USSR.

-Britain was left undefeated

**German people turning against the war (mostly after 1942)**

-As the war raged on, the German people became more and more disgruntled with Hitler.

-The war was costly in both materials and life and did not seem to be getting Germany anywhere.

-The German people felt that the money spent on the war would be better spent domestically.

**The end of the war**

-The Final Solution was the name given to the plan detailing the genocide of the Jewish people.

-The decision to exterminate Europe’s Jewish population was probably made **sometime in 1941**, with the invasion of the Soviet Union.

-On **January 20, 1942**, Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of Germany’s Security Police, held a secret meeting known as the **Wannsee Conference** where leading police and civilian officials discussed the continuing implementation of the "Final Solution."

-The Nazi leaders envisioned killing **11 million Jews** as part of the “Final Solution.” They succeeded in murdering **6 million**.

-On **April 30th**, Hitler committed suicide and Germany surrendered in **May**

-**Goering** and other leading Nazis were captured and tried at Nuremberg.

-They were sentenced to either death or prison terms for war crimes.

-By the end of the Second World War, **4.5 million Germans** had been killed and **6 million of Europe’s Jews** had been exterminated in the Holocaust.