When Restraint Failed

Trace how treaty disputes and weak international responses increased the risk of war.

MWH.C.6.4.B "Explain how violations of the Treaty of Versailles and failure of the League of Nations, including unrealistic reparations demands and failed efforts at international disarmament, fueled a second global conflict."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the reparations demand, circle two German violations of the treaty, and draw arrows connecting two weak international responses to the risks they increased.

From Versailles to World War II

1 In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles demanded that Germany reduce its army, surrender territory, and pay reparations for war damage. In 1921, the Allies set the bill at 132 billion gold marks, a sum many Germans saw as impossible to pay. When Germany fell behind, French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr industrial region in 1923. Germany's economic crisis had several causes, but the reparations dispute sharpened hardship and anger. Later agreements reduced the immediate burden, yet Nazi leaders still used the treaty as proof that Germany had been humiliated. This resentment made promises to overturn Versailles politically powerful.

2 The treaty also barred German conscription and limited its military. The League of Nations sponsored a world disarmament conference in Geneva beginning in 1932. Countries disagreed about how much each should cut its weapons and how to verify any cuts. Germany demanded equal treatment, then left the conference and the League in 1933. In 1935, Hitler openly restored conscription, violating the treaty. In 1936, German troops entered the Rhineland, which the treaty required to remain demilitarized. Britain and France did not use force to reverse this move. Their restraint persuaded Hitler that further treaty violations might meet little resistance.

3 The League's failures extended beyond Europe. Japan seized Manchuria in 1931, and Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. League members condemned these attacks but did not take steps strong enough to stop either country; the League had no army of its own. The United States never joined, and member governments often feared the costs of confronting aggressors. Together, these failures weakened trust in collective security, the idea that countries would act together against aggression. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Britain and France declared war. Repeated failures to restrain expansionist governments had increased the risk of a wider conflict.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the reparations dispute help make promises to overturn the treaty appealing in Germany?

2. Explain how the failed Geneva talks and Germany's 1935 decision together undermined disarmament.

3. Why might Britain and France's response to Germany's move into the Rhineland have encouraged further violations?

4. How did the League's response to Japan and Italy weaken collective security?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise governments in the early 1920s. Write a five- or six-sentence memo proposing two actions, one to address reparations and one to make disarmament enforceable, and explain how each might lower the risk of another war.

ANSWER KEY

When Restraint Failed

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.6.4.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the reparations demand, circle two German violations of the treaty, and draw arrows connecting two weak international responses to the risks they increased. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the reparations dispute help make promises to overturn the treaty appealing in Germany?	**The large bill and the dispute over payment increased hardship and anger, which Nazi leaders used to win support for overturning the treaty.**
2	Explain how the failed Geneva talks and Germany's 1935 decision together undermined disarmament.	**Countries could not agree on arms cuts or how to verify them, and Germany then restored conscription in violation of the treaty.**
3	Why might Britain and France's response to Germany's move into the Rhineland have encouraged further violations?	**They did not use force to reverse the move, persuading Hitler that later violations might also face little resistance.**
4	How did the League's response to Japan and Italy weaken collective security?	**The League condemned their attacks but did not stop them, weakening trust that countries would act together against aggression.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Governments should set reparations payments at amounts Germany can realistically meet and allow adjustments during economic crises. That could reduce anger that extremists might exploit. They should also negotiate arms limits for several countries and authorize international inspectors to check compliance. If a state breaks those limits, members should agree in advance on coordinated trade penalties. These steps would address resentment while making military expansion harder to hide, lowering the chance that a local crisis becomes another world war.

Accept other historically plausible proposals if the memo addresses both reparations and enforceable disarmament and explains how each could reduce the risk of war. Students should connect weak responses to increased risks, not claim that reparations alone caused World War II.