

How did Hitler out negotiate Chamberlain in World War II?

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June 2024

Background

The 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I (1914 to 1918), expressly forbade Germany, the loser, from rearmament and uniting with Austria. The latter was because European leaders worried that a united Germany and Austria would be too large and powerful. The Treaty directly led to World War II because its terms punished Germany harshly.

Violation

On 11 March 1938, after repeated violations of the above treaties, Nazi Germany unilaterally seized and held the neighbouring country of Austria to join these two German-speaking countries. This event is known as the Annexation, or “Anschluss”, a German word that means “connection” or “joining.”

Post Anschluss

Ignoring criticism of the Anschluss from many countries, Adolf Hitler aimed to continue uniting all Germans into one nation. He then set his sights on the three million Germans residing in the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia.

Appeasement

Other European powers were worried, but the prevailing diplomatic strategy was Appeasement. This strategy involved concessions to Hitler to avoid war. The strategy's origins are that in the 1930s, the governments and their people wished to avoid conflict, as memories of World War I and its suffering were still present. In addition, many countries were struggling with the impact of the Depression in the 1930s, so they could not afford another war and heavy rearmament.

Hitler's way of negotiating to take the Sudetenland

Hitler employed a combination of intimidation, brinkmanship, and strategic ambiguity in negotiations. He portrayed himself as reasonable and open to negotiation while simultaneously making clear his determination to achieve his territorial goals. This approach allowed him to extract concessions without giving up much in return. The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who served from 1937 to 1940, tried hard to dissuade Hitler but based on this policy of appeasement policy Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and France, on 29 September 1938, signed the Munich Agreement, by which Czechoslovakia had to surrender its border regions and defences (the so-called Sudeten region) to Nazi Germany. Hitler then took the Sudetenland for Germany. Chamberlain returned home triumphantly, declaring “peace for our time.” The population of Czechoslovakia was appalled that they were not even given a vote, but we were just told that half of their country would now belong to Germany.



Chamberlain (left) and Hitler

The further invasion of Czechoslovakia

Five months later, Hitler violated the agreement, invaded, and occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia. This invasion was unhindered because of the appeasement policy. Hitler's successes to date and his pact with Italy, especially his non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, gave him the confidence to invade Poland. The German occupation of Czechoslovakia was the final concession of the policy of appeasement, and the German invasion of Poland led Britain and France to declare war.

Failure of Appeasement

In conclusion, the policy of appeasement was a big failure in the 1930s because it allowed Hitler to gain confidence and become greedier with his demands, which the Allies agreed to. The Munich Agreement failed because Hitler did not stop with the Sudetenland. He took the attitude of appeasement as a sign that Western Europe would not declare war on Germany if it expanded even further. The negotiations with Hitler failed because of the appeasement diplomatic strategy, which handicapped the negotiations.

Hitler's negotiation philosophy

We have already seen Hitler's negotiation tactics when he dealt with the Sudetenland, which eventually led to war. According to military history, Hitler's negotiation style with his generals in the war was that he knew better. Initially, the war went well for Germany. However, his recklessness ended with the fall of Stalingrad in 1943 and was a major step towards eventual German defeat. Military history also advises that Hitler could have negotiated a compromise to end the war after Stalingrad's fall. However, Hitler was hampered by his own negotiation philosophy, that he was constitutionally incapable of retreating because it was part of his worldview never to negotiate from a weak point, but only to negotiate from a position of strength. He wanted a significant

breakthrough before negotiating, but over time, as the war deteriorated for Germany, he refused to negotiate.

Vladimir Putin

Russia's Putin likewise could have stopped after taking Crimea, and he would have been seen as a great leader, but like Hitler, he did not stop as it is not in his nature. Both Putin and Hitler have no particularly strong ties to any ethics or morals. Hitler successfully used what was around him, including centuries of antisemitism, to further bring the people of Germany with him on his quest. In Chapter 10, we discuss the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Handling Model Negotiation Matrix. Due to their high assertiveness and low cooperativeness on the matrix, Hitler and Putin are in the Competing category. This top left-hand section is the Fisher and Ury Hard Negotiator category, whose goal is simply to win at all costs.

What do we learn from Hitler and Putin?

There are several learnings. The first is that economics and politics are inextricably mixed. Second, one should always look at the bigger picture. There comes a time when you need to change course and act accordingly. Third, think about the ramifications of your negotiated agreement. An example is the Treaty of Versailles, which led to World War II because its terms punished Germany harshly. Germans became loyal to Hitler, and there was the perfect storm in Germany, ending in World War II.

It is worth repeating Hitler's manipulation style:

Hitler employed a combination of intimidation, brinkmanship, and strategic ambiguity in negotiations. He portrayed himself as reasonable and open to negotiation while simultaneously making clear his determination to achieve his territorial goals.

Does this style look like that of another current world leader, Putin?

Trust

Chapter 14 (Relationships Issues) and Chapter 17 (Relationship Building) discuss long-term relationships versus one-time transactions. Long-term relationships require 'trust', which means that you will adhere to your word. Trust is the foundation of negotiations in any business relationship. Business books often do not discuss the importance of trust. If there is trust, then the contract takes on a unique perspective, that is, as a reference point rather than a tool to hit the other side on the head with. When negotiating would you trust any contract signed with Hitler or Putin?

The scorpion and the frog

Finally, we would like to mention the Scorpion and the Frog fable. This is an animal fable in which a scorpion asks a frog to carry it across a river. The frog hesitates, afraid of being stung, but the scorpion argues that they would both drown if it did. Considering this, the frog agrees, but midway across the river, the scorpion does indeed sting the frog, dooming them both. This fable teaches that brutal people cannot resist hurting others even when it is not in their own interests. This fable seems to have emerged in Russia in the early 20th century, and now it is occurring there a century

later. We also saw it in Germany with Hitler. Can you name any other past or present scorpions on the world stage?



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