

11 – Democracy, Depression, Dictatorship, World War and Its Aftermath (1919-1945)

Key Terms

Isolationism	Stock Market Crash	British Mandate System
Great Depression	Benito Mussolini	Nonaggression Pact
Age of Anxiety	German Weimar Republic	Atlantic Charter
Stream of Consciousness	Fascist	Joseph Stalin
Tariff Policies	Weimar Constitution	United Nations
James Joyce	Adolf Hitler	Armenian Genocide
Franz Kafka	National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis)	New Technology of Warfare
Jean Paul Sartre	<i>Mein Kampf</i>	Superpowers
Keynesianism	Nuremberg Laws	Iron Curtain
Erich Remarque	Holocaust	Cold War
Virginia Woolf	League of Nations	Marshall Plan
Werner Heisenberg	Axis Powers	
Surrealism	<i>Blitzkrieg</i>	

OVERVIEW

The First World War saw states increase the degree and scope of their authority over their economies, societies, and cultures. “Total War” had required the centralization of power and the regimentation of the lives of citizens. During the war, governments sought to control information and used propaganda to create stronger emotional ties to the nation and its war effort. Ironically, these measures also produced distrust of traditional authorities. The fall of four great empires after the First World War—Russian, German, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian – not only created a central Europe comprised of smaller nations but left a political vacuum among peoples without a tradition of democracy. Their weak economies and ethnic tensions compounded the problem of a lack of democratic traditions, making progress in these newly created nations difficult and pushing citizens to accept more extreme viewpoints and solutions to perceived national problems. In the two decades between the world wars, totalitarian dictatorships were established in Russia (the Stalinist regime in the USSR), Italy, Spain, and Germany. For the first time in history, governments of great nations were dedicated to the total control of every area of human life, and individuals were expected to subordinate themselves to the needs of the state as defined by the single party in control. Soviet communism, despite its idealistic goal of the withering away of the state, imposed brutal repression to enforce the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” Italian Fascism and German Nazism shared a common ideology

of racist nationalism and the glorification of war. Fascism promised to solve economic problems through state direction, although not ownership, of production. These movements also promised to counteract the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles by rearming and by territorial expansion. The efforts of fascist governments to revise the Treaty of Versailles led to the most violent and destructive conflict in human history (the Second World War), a clash between liberal democracies, temporarily allied with communist Russia, and Fascist states.

The Western democracies of England, France, and the United States came out of the First World War with their heritage of democracy intact. In the 1930s, their tradition of dissent and their democratic institutions were sorely tested both by economic collapse and by the aggressions of the dictatorships. Ten years after the end of the First World War, the worst depression in modern history began and lasted for over a decade. The human misery brought each of these nations close to the point of collapse and encouraged extremist movements, both on the left and the right, to offer simple solutions that would have destroyed democracy.

Wracked by weakness and dissent, the democracies were unwilling to respond to the aggressions of the European dictators and the Japanese militarists. The policy of appeasement, which sought to placate the aggressors with concessions, only whet the dictators' appetites and led eventually to worldwide war.

During the twentieth century, European thought and culture generally moved from an optimistic view that modern science and technology could solve the problems of humankind to the formation of eclectic and sometimes skeptical movements that doubted the possibility of objective knowledge and of progress. Existentialism, postmodernism, and renewed religiosity challenged the supremacy of science as an epistemological method. While European society became increasingly secular, religion continued to play a role in the lives of many Europeans.

As many as 70 million people perished in the Second World War, and for the first time in history, tens of millions of the casualties were noncombatants. Saturation bombing of cities, widespread starvation caused by war damage and displacement of people, and state-sponsored murder to exterminate a people (genocide) contributed to the terrible losses.

The war was fought on three continents by combatants from six continents; it was global in scale; it was made up of separate conflicts, each with an identifiable beginning and end; it was a series of strategic

improvisations rather than the result of carefully laid plans; it began at various times, as early as 1931 for the Manchurians and Japanese, as late as 1941 for the Americans.

It began over issues never resolved after the First World War: the failure of the Versailles Treaty to settle the problems of nationalistic yearnings for autonomy, of economic security, of blame for the First World War. The nations without large colonial holdings (Germany, Italy, and Japan), fell under the rule of repressive dictatorships and sought to redress what they saw as the inequities of the peace settlements after the First World War. The imperialist nations: the United States, France, and England, were absorbed in dealing with economic depression and with avoiding another costly war. When the Western democracies' policy of appeasement failed to stop the aggressions of the formative Axis powers, war resulted. It was officially declared in Europe in September 1939, after Germany's invasion of Poland. It ended with the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany to the Russians, British, Americans, and French in May of 1945 and with the surrender of Japan in September 1945.

It not only changed the balance of power in Europe with an international "balance of terror" created by nuclear weapons, but it gave rise to a nonmilitary conflict between the world's two new superpowers: the Cold War.

The Western Democracies after the First World War

The conflicting goals of the First World War peace negotiators in Paris pitted diplomatic idealism against the desire to punish Germany, producing a settlement that satisfied few. The war created a “lost generation,” fostered disillusionment and cynicism, transformed the lives of women, and democratized societies. Wilsonian idealism clashed with postwar realities in both the victorious and the defeated states. Democratic successor states, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, emerged from former empires and eventually succumbed to significant political, economic, and diplomatic crises. The **League of Nations**, created to prevent future wars, was weakened from the outset by the nonparticipation of major powers, including the United States, Germany, and the Soviet Union. The Versailles settlement, particularly its provisions on the assignment of guilt and reparations for the war, hindered the **German Weimar Republic**'s ability to establish a stable and legitimate political and economic system.

1920s in England

The nation did not recover, during the 1920s, from the economic losses suffered during the war. Its merchant fleet had been decimated by German submarines and its foreign trade had declined disastrously. International competition from world-wide industrialization, from the proliferation of tariffs, and from rival shipping nations further eroded a British economy already saddled by war debts, defaulted loans by investors and by business owners, and homeowners, and war relief programs.

Politics

- The Liberal Party, headed by David Lloyd George, fell into decline.
- Replaced by the Conservatives (Tory Party), who favored high tariffs and welfare payments to the growing numbers of unemployed.
- The Labour party, whose program included a gradual nationalization of major industries, took power briefly.
- By 1929 and the start of the Depression, an alliance of Labourites and Conservatives led by **Ramsay MacDonald** (1866--1937), then **Stanley Baldwin** (1867-1947), and finally **Neville Chamberlain** (1869-1940) ran the government until the start of the Second World War.
 - Chamberlain's black umbrella became a symbol for the policy of

appeasement (the willingness to give in to the demands of the aggressive dictatorships).

Foreign Policy

- The League of Nations distributed former German and Ottoman possessions to France and Great Britain through the mandate system, thereby altering the imperial balance of power and creating strategic interest in the Middle East states and their oil.
 - Middle East mandates included **Lebanon**, **Syria**, **Iraq**, and **Palestine**.
- British foreign policy during this period was consumed by the **Irish Question**, the granting of eventual independence to Southern Ireland after failure to suppress rebellion.
- The ending of the **British protectorate** in **Egypt**, although control of the Suez Canal was continued was another major issue.
- The Statute of Westminster formally recognized the equality of the British dominions such as Canada and Australia.
 - Set up a Commonwealth of Nations, which enjoyed special trading privileges.

1920s in France

- The death, devastation, and debt of the First World War created economic chaos and political unrest. When the Germans defaulted on their reparations payments to France (which was to get 52 percent of the German reparations of \$33 billion [valued at \$510 billion in 2014 dollars]), the French economy nearly collapsed.

Politics

- Through the 1920s, the government (a multiparty system requiring coalitions to function) was dominated by the parties on the right – which supported the status quo and had the backing of business, the military, the Church, and the wealthy upper classes.

Germany and Reparations

- In 1922, when Germany managed to pay only part of that year's reparation bill, Raymond Poincare (1860-1934), prime minister, sent French troops to occupy the mineral-rich Ruhr Valley in western Germany.”
- The Dawes Plan, the Young Plan, and the Lausanne Settlement each, in

turn, pared down German payments and diminished the ability of the French to collect.

- Tax and spending reforms by Poincare's government, though, led to a temporary resurgence of prosperity until the worldwide depression hit.

French Foreign Policy

- Aimed at neutralizing Germany in the event of a resurgence of militarism there.
- A series of alliances with buffer states such as Belgium and Poland surrounded Germany with French allies.
- The **Locarno Pact** of 1925 attempted to settle French-German border disputes.
- The **Kellogg-Briand Pact** of 1928 aimed at outlawing war and was championed as the high point of post First World War diplomacy, despite its futility in reality.

1920s in the United States

Foreign Policy

- Disillusionment with the **Versailles Treaty** resulted in the Senate's rejection of U.S. membership in the League of Nations.
- Despite nostalgia for traditional **isolationism**, the United States participated in a series of naval disarmament conferences that agreed to limit the building of new battleships and fix the size of the major powers' navies.
- Despite an economic boom in the United States, international trade was thwarted by a series of shortsighted **tariffs** (taxes on imports) that contributed to the **Great Depression** by diminishing foreign markets and limiting the ability of the Europeans to pay off their war debts to the United States.
- Immigration quotas, which favored Northern Europeans over those from the south and east, ended the **age of immigration** that peaked at the turn of the century.

The Age of Anxiety

The carnage and disruption of the First World War and the collapse of the "old order" that had defined European politics and diplomacy for nearly a century resulted in what commentators have called an **age of anxiety**. The

traditional assumption of the perfectibility of mankind through reason collapsed under the weight of events and new ideas. .

Philosophy, science, the arts, and literature contributed to this crisis of confidence and conscience, but also offered new models to explain and portray humanity.

The Lost Generation

After the First World War, Ernest Hemingway popularized Gertrude Stein's term, the **Lost Generation**, to describe those who had come of age during the war. It included the thinkers below who showed a rejection of the belief in reason and technology to solve the problems of humanity.

Philosophy

Edmund Husserl and **Martin Heidegger** (1889-1976), both Germans, extended the work of Nietzsche and **Søren Kierkegaard** (1813-1855) to establish the foundations of existentialism, a philosophical school, popularized by **Jean-Paul Sartre** after the Second World War, that emphasized individual responsibility and capability for giving meaning to a meaningless universe.

Physics

Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) developed the **uncertainty principle** that stated that a particle's velocity or position (but not both) could be calculated.

- This fundamental uncertainty about the nature of matter is endemic of the "Age of Anxiety."
- The theories of **relativity of Albert Einstein** (1879-1955), another German, further disrupted the comfortable assumptions of an orderly, rationally discoverable universe that Newton's seventeenth-century physics had supported and encouraged: relativism in ethics, politics, and worldviews.
- **Neils Bohr** explained the fundamental ideas of chemistry and quantum physics by explaining the arrangement of the electron shells around atoms.
- **Enrico Fermi**, an Italian, worked on inducing radioactivity and eventually built the first nuclear reactor in Chicago.
- **Erwin Schrödinger** created a wave particle theory that shook up quantum physics.

Literature

Throughout the century, a number of writers challenged traditional literary conventions, questioned Western values, and addressed controversial social and political issues. The aftermath of the war and intellectual trends, such as Freudianism, influenced writers to emphasize the irrational aspects of the human condition.

- Stream of consciousness, the portrayal of an individual's random thoughts and feelings, was a style perfected by **James Joyce** (1882-1941), an Irish novelist, and **Virginia Woolf** (1882-1941), an English fiction writer.
 - It reflected the prevailing view of human life as alienated, irrational, and chaotic.
- The horrors of the First World War were examined by **Erich Remarque** in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which found meaninglessness in war and subsequently was banned by the Nazi government.
- **Franz Kafka** explored the overreaching power of the state in *The Trial* and *Metamorphosis*, which explored themes of alienation, brutality (both physical and psychological), bureaucratic labyrinths of futility, and parent-child conflicts.

Visual Art

Expressionism – abstract and nonrepresentational – replaced impressionism and was pioneered by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), who painted with bold colors and images to focus on emotions and imagination.

- Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), a Spaniard, invented cubism, the depiction of mood through the use of geometric angles, planes, and clashing lines.
- Dadaism and surrealism were among the abstract styles created by artists of many nationalities, most of whom did their experimentation in postwar France.
- Architecture exemplified functionalism, buildings designed with practicality and clean lines instead of ornamentation.

Architecture

The Bauhaus movement considered form and function to be united and saw over-ornamentation as a crime. Clean-lined steel and glass buildings were created as well as modernist furniture to go into these buildings.

- A house was seen as a machine for living in.
- Minimalist and Spartan in nature.
- Foundation of the modernist artistic movement.

- Walter Gropius was a leader of this movement.

Music

Some music of the era challenged existing aesthetic standards, explored subconscious and subjective states, and satirized Western society and its values.

- Igor Stravinsky revolutionized classical music with his *Rite of Spring* and other works and eventually adopted the 12-tone technique of composition of Arnold Schoenberg, another revolutionary composer of the era.
- The tone poems of Richard Strauss were also a new way to look at music.

Medicine

Medical theories and technologies extended life but posed social and moral questions that eluded consensus and crossed religious, political, and philosophical perspectives. Some of the most controversial ones are seen below:

- **Eugenics:** The idea of breeding the best people and sterilizing or killing the undesirables: utilized by Hitler.
- **Birth control** revolutionized reproductive freedom but many religious and moral objections abounded.
- Abortion became legal throughout much of Europe and remains controversial to this day.
- Fertility treatments have been developed to allow those with conception problems to become parents but they are very expensive and the world is overpopulated.
- Genetic engineering is now approaching the point where we can clone and engineer humans: Should we?

Media

Film and radio became major means for entertainment, information, and propaganda in the 1920s and 1930s. National broadcasting networks were set up by every major European power, and radio was employed by Adolf Hitler and other European dictators for propaganda and indoctrination.

- Movies became a prime medium for mass entertainment and also were employed to produce powerful propaganda.
- The modern cult of celebrity or the (ironic) glorification of the personalities who portrayed people other than themselves, was born with the advent of movies.

The Great Depression (1929-1939)

The Great Depression, caused by weaknesses in international trade and monetary theories and practices, undermined Western European democracies and fomented radical political responses throughout the Continent.

- First World War debt, nationalistic tariff policies, overproduction, depreciated currencies, disrupted trade patterns, and speculation created weaknesses in economies worldwide.
- Dependence on post-First World War American investment capital led to financial collapse when, following the 1929 stock market crash, the United States cut off capital flows to Europe.
- Despite attempts to rethink economic theories and policies and forge political alliances, Western democracies failed to overcome the Great Depression and were weakened by extremist movements.

United States

The **economic boom** of the “Roaring Twenties” masked a deep-seated malaise. Farm prices had dropped disastrously after the selling peak during wartime; sizable segments of the population were poor; credit buying encouraged exorbitant personal debt; a dearth of new products (once the market for radios, autos, and refrigerators had been saturated) discouraged business investment.

- The **stock market crash** of October 1929 was more a symptom than a cause of the economic depression that seized America and most of the industrialized world for the next decade.
- There were many contributing factors to the Great Depression, including:
 - Buying stocks on large margins.
 - Stock bubble that was not sustainable.
 - Adjustment from a wartime economy to a peaceful one.
 - Increased mechanization creating structural unemployment.
 - Changes in international patterns of trade.
 - Declines in consumption caused by the aftermath of the First World War.
- The Federal Reserve also exacerbated a weak economy by tightening the money supply when it needed to be loosened.
 - Created deflation, which further devastated a weakened world economy.

- World was using the dollar more than any other single currency.
- *American and European economies were interdependent through extensive investments and war debts owed to the United States.*
- Failure of the U.S. economy led to a global breakdown.
 - The **command economy** of the USSR managed to maintain, and even surpass, earlier productivity.
 - By 1932, nearly 15 million Americans were unemployed, about a quarter of the work force.
 - Herbert Hoover's stubborn insistence that the Depression was a normal fluctuation of the economy that would run its course brought the Roosevelt Democrats into the White House with a "New Deal."
 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) (1882-1945) and the New Deal may not have ended the Depression in America, but they helped preserve capitalism and democracy in the United States.
 - Used the deficit-spending theories of economist, **John Maynard Keynes** (1883-1946), who had predicted the Great Depression.
- Established a theory that justified profound involvement of the federal government in the economy.
- Created idea of economic stimulus and restraint.
- Although the Depression ended in the United States only when it began to rearm (1940-1941), the New Deal created a social **welfare state** with the obligation to relieve economic hardship, while it preserved a modified and revitalized American capitalism.

Great Britain

During the 1930s, under the **National Party** (the coalition of Labourites and Conservatives) the British tried to alleviate the Depression by reorganizing industry, abandoning free trade, reforming finances, and cutting government spending.

- Also utilized the ideas of Keynes to help alleviate the worst parts of the Depression.
 - Great Britain was able to create a strong recovery and by 1937 advance output to 20 percent above 1929.
 - 'Conservative governments paid generous unemployment benefits.
 - They focused more on the domestic market than exports.

- Low interest rates brought on a housing boom.
- New industries like appliances and automobiles helped spur consumption.
- The North stayed depressed while the South expanded and renovated.
- Like the United States, Britain came out of the Depression only through rearmament for the coming world war.

France

The Depression increased class tensions and gave birth to a radical right that supported government reorganization along Fascist lines.

- After a financial scandal that involved high government officials in 1934, pro-Fascist riots broke out all over France
- A coalition of socialists, republicans, labor unionists, and communists responded by organizing the Popular Front, which opposed Fascism, supported reform, and upheld the republic.
 - In 1936, socialist **Leon Blum** (1872-1950) became prime minister under the **Popular Front** banner.
 - He instituted a “French New Deal,” which offered labor and agricultural reforms similar to those in the United States except that his measures were ineffective in ending the Depression.
 - Opposed by the conservative bloc in the Senate, the program failed to hold together the Popular Front coalition, and Blum resigned in 1937 to be replaced by conservative Edouard Daladier (1884-1970), who overturned the Blum reforms and practiced a policy of **appeasement** of Hitler’s aggressions.

Scandinavia

The Scandinavian Answer to the Great Depression: The Social Democrat Party in Norway and Sweden developed a unique brand of socialism.

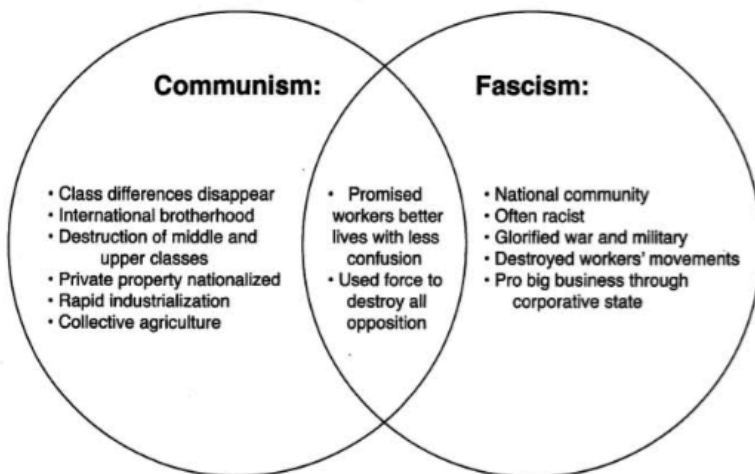
- Strong worker and peasant reforms.
- Used Scandinavian tradition of cooperative community action to create a flexible non-revolutionary socialism.
- Agricultural cooperatives joined together to form organizations that benefitted all.
- Labor leaders and capitalists worked together.
- Deficit spending to stimulate the economy.

- Higher taxes.
- Like New Deal but more intense with greater spending and taxation of the wealthy.
- This worked and was seen as a middle way between capitalism and communism.
- Created the model for the modern **welfare state**.
- Still in practice in most of Europe today.

Dictatorship

What Is Fascism: A Brief on Fascist Ideology

Fascism is the belief in a strong state allied with corporations to organize and control a “willing” population and glorify the state. It is one-party totalitarianism that limits the political power of the individual and sees people as mere cells in the organism of the state. It is extremely nationalist in nature and is led by a charismatic dictator with unlimited power, usually a military leader. Fascists favor private ownership of property and Fascist governments ally with big businesses to weaken or eliminate labor unions and communists. It is important to note that Fascism was a negative response to communism, and that the two ideologies were opposed to each other. However, BOTH Fascism and communism were created in this era as totalitarian systems of rule by only one party. The unique aspect of totalitarian regimes is that they make total claims on the actions and thoughts of the populations ruled by them.



The Venn diagram above shows the similarities and differences between the two ideologies as they existed in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century.

Nazism was a special case of Fascism in which race was the primary factor for determining one's role in the state in Germany. Germans were the "master race," meant to be served by the Slavic peoples of Europe, who would be slaves and workers. Other ethnic groups, such as Jews and the Roma, were to be eliminated to make more room for the "superior" Germanic people.

Fascism in Italy

The peace settlements that ended the First World War were extremely disappointing to Italian nationalists. None of the Austrian and Ottoman territories and German colonies in Africa that had been promised were received. To add to Italian discontent, a depression hit in 1919 and provoked nationwide strikes and class antagonisms. Terrified of a communist revolution, the propertied classes looked hopefully for a strong leader to restore order.

Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), editor of a socialist newspaper and paradoxically an ardent nationalist, organized the Fascist party, a combination of socialism and nationalism, named after *fascis* (the rods carried by Imperial Roman officials as symbols of power).

- His *squadristi*, paramilitary **blackshirts**, attacked communists, socialists, and other enemies of his program.
- Promising to protect private property, Mussolini won the support of the conservative classes and quickly abandoned his socialist programs.
- The Fascist **March on Rome**, October 1922, caused the government to collapse and won Mussolini the right to organize a new government. King Victor Emmanuel III granted him dictatorial powers for one year to end the nation's social unrest.
- The **corporate state** was the economic core of Italian Fascism: "Labor unions" run by the fascist party managed and controlled industry.
 - Those unions then set the national political agenda.
 - Unlike socialist corporate states, where workers make decisions, authority flowed from the top.
- The Fascists consolidated power through the 1920s by rigging elections and intimidating and terrorizing opponents.
 - By 1928, all independent labor unions had been organized into

government-controlled syndicates, the right to vote had been severely limited, and all candidates for the Italian parliament were selected by the Fascist party.

- Through the 1930s, an organization of corporations, headed by Mussolini, effectively replaced parliamentary government ..
- Democracy was suppressed; the totalitarian state was created in Italy.

Fascist Accomplishments In Italy

- Internal improvements such as electrification and road building.
- More efficient municipal governing.
- Suppression of the Mafia.
- Improvement of the justice system (except for “enemies of the state”).
- Reconciliation with the papacy through the **Lateran Pact** of 1929, which gave the papacy \$92 million for seized church lands in return for Pope Pius XII’s recognition of the legitimacy of the Italian state.
- The notoriously undependable trains in Italy finally ran on schedule.

Fascist Failings

Italian democracy destroyed.

Press censorship.

No right to strike.

Denial of all dissent.

Destruction of suffrage.

Terrorism became a state policy.

Poor industrial growth was seen due to militarism and colonialism.

Attempt to recapture the imperialistic glories of ancient Rome led to disastrous involvements in war.

The Rise of Nazism in Germany

The Weimar Republic

In November 1918, a provisional government, both socialist and democratic, was organized to negotiate a peace with the Allies. Although this government had very little input to the decisions made at the Paris Peace Conference, it did sign the Versailles Treaty and would be held responsible by conservative factions for the pact’s inequities.

- The Weimar Constitution, drafted in July 1919, setup Germany’s first modern democracy.

- Provided for a directly elected president.
 - Provided for a directly elected parliament (the Reichstag).
 - A senate (the Reichsrat) would represent the German states.
 - Provided for a chancellor (prime minister), who represented the majority party of the Reichstag, and a cabinet to run the government.
- After the inflation of 1923, Germany defaulted on its reparations to France, the French seized the Ruhr Valley, and German workers there went on a general strike.
 - To pay these workers, the Weimar government printed paper currency and the prevalent inflation in the country became runaway.
 - When debtors rushed to pay off their creditors with this worthless currency, the middle class was financially wiped out.

The Munich Beer Hall Putsch

The Weimar government's economic disasters in 1923 encouraged **Adolf Hitler** (1889-1945) and his Nazi **Brownshirts** to attempt to seize power from the government of Bavaria, a state of southern Germany. Hitler, Austrian by birth, had fled poverty in his native land and joined the German army at the start of the First World War. He helped organize the **National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis)** after the war.

- Racist, paranoid, sociopathic, and megalomaniacal, Hitler was a brilliant orator and political strategist who played on popular discontent with the Weimar government.
 - Blamed democracy, communism, and the Jewish people for Germany's ills.
- He and **Erich Ludendorff** (1865-1937), a distinguished general who had led German troops to victory on the Eastern Front during the First World War, led an attempted coup in Munich at the end of 1923.
 - It was suppressed, and Hitler was sentenced to five years in jail.
 - He served only about a year of his already-lenient term.
 - Many higher-ups in the justice system sympathized with his narrow nationalistic goals.
 - While in prison, he wrote his blueprint for domination of Germany and eventually Europe, **Mein Kampf** (*My Struggle*).
 - A rambling, irrational, but convincing work.
 - Argued that Germany was never defeated in the First World

- War but was betrayed from within by Jews and socialists.
- Claimed the Treaty of Versailles was a humiliation.
 - Propagated the idea that Germans were a master race destined to expand into Eastern Europe to obtain lebensraum (living space) and to rule or exterminate inferior races, such as Jews and Slavs.

Germany 1923-1933

After the **Dawes Plan** stabilized Germany's economy in 1924, the Nazi party's membership fell off so that by 1928 the Nazis won only 12 seats in the Reichstag.

- For a short while after the Beer Hall Putsch, conditions were hopeful in Germany and in Europe as a whole.
- Gustav Stresemann, the chancellor and then foreign minister of the Weimar Republic, oversaw a short period of prosperity from 1925-1929, known as the Weimar Golden Age.
 - Part of the **Locarno** treaties of 1925 in which all European nations agreed to respect the borders drawn after the First World War.
 - Also a signatory to the 1928 **Kellogg-Briand Pact**, condemning warfare.
 - The Weimar Golden Age was a culturally vibrant and politically idealistic brief flicker
 - in the otherwise dismal Germany of the early twentieth century.
 - This can be used to contrast the political and cultural conservatism that dominated the rest of the period.
- When the Depression hit Germany in 1930, the Nazis won 107 seats and the communists 77.
 - Center parties, the socialists and Christian Democrats, were unable to maintain a ruling coalition.
 - Many conservatives, including large landowners, industrialists, and army officers, threw their support to Hitler to avoid a communist takeover.
- In January, 1933, after a series of machinations, Hitler was invited by the aging president of the Weimar Republic, **Paul von Hindenburg** (1847-1934), another renowned general of the First World War, to form a government as chancellor.

- Hitler entered government legally, according to the constitution that he was publicly dedicated to destroy.

The Nazi Revolution

The week before the elections of March 1933, which Hitler ordered to obtain a clear majority in the Reichstag, *the Reichstag building was destroyed by arson.*

- Although Nazis are believed to have started the fire, Hitler used it as a pretext to declare emergency powers for the government.
- The election that followed was influenced by suspension of freedom of the press and of speech, and by outright terrorizing of political opponents.
- After gaining a majority coalition in the Reichstag, the Nazis granted dictatorial powers to Hitler for four years with the **Enabling Act**.
- Within six months, all political parties but the Nazis were outlawed.
- When President Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler merged his office of chancellor with that of president with 90 percent of the German voters approving.

The Nazis Consolidated Power

- **Dachau**, the first concentration camp, was opened in March 1933.
 - Although the camps did not become death factories for mass extermination until 1941, they were brutal centers for punishing political opponents of the Nazis.
- During the **Night of the Long Knives**, in June 1934, Hitler purged the party by executing left-wing Nazis who had pushed for the socialist programs that Hitler had promised, and also leaders of the Brown shirts who had maintained autonomy within the party.
 - The black-uniformed elite guard, the infamous **SS** (*Schutzstaffel*, or “Protection Squadron”) became the party’s and the nation’s enforcers.
 - The **Gestapo** was the secret police force of the SS.
 - A rigorous selection and training process was set up for the SS.
 - Became the overseers of the death camps.
- Labor unions were replaced, as in Fascist Italy, by a Nazi-led labor organization.
 - Strikes were outlawed.
 - Factories put under the management of local Nazi officials who

had dictatorial powers over the workers.

- Full employment resumed with military production that thrived despite its prohibition under the terms of the Versailles Treaty.
- A policy of **autarchy**, economic self-sufficiency, was developed to make Germany independent of imports and foreign markets.
- The **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935 stripped Germany's half-million Jews of their rights as citizens.
 - When Nazi mobs wrecked Jewish shops and synagogues throughout Germany during **Kristallnacht** ("Night of the Broken Glass") in 1938, it was the beginning of the **Holocaust** – the systematic extermination of Jews in Germany and eventually throughout Europe.
 - About 200,000 German Jews managed to escape from Germany.
 - Of those that remained, over 90 percent were murdered.
 - The Holocaust was used to eliminate all of Hitler's enemies:
 - Many ethnic groups.
 - Those politically opposed to him.
 - Those whom his theories stated were weakening the German state.
 - Communists, Catholics, Jewish people, Roma, homosexuals, and the handicapped were systematically imprisoned, enslaved, and eliminated.
 - In the end over 6 million Jews and 7 million others were killed; with millions more enslaved or imprisoned.

Authoritarian Dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe

After failures to establish functioning democracies, authoritarian dictatorships took power in Central and Eastern Europe during the interwar period. Poland, Hungary, and Romania all established authoritarian dictatorships that functioned poorly.

- In Poland, Jozef Pilsudski never claimed personal power, although he exercised extensive influence over Polish politics after Sanation coup d'état in 1926 promised a restoration of political life.
- In Romania the Iron Guard led by Ion Antonescu forced King Carol II to abdicate in 1940, allowing their pro-Nazi regime to take power.
- In Hungary a Fascist prime minister was appointed by 1932 and the

arrow cross movement of Fascists there gained power.

Prelude to War

The rise of nationalist, industrialist, and imperialist single-party states, was a significant factor contributing to the outbreak of the Second World War. One political factor was the personal will of Adolf Hitler, which many historians credit with being a major cause of the war. Another was the weakness of the Treaty of Versailles, which did not fix the underlying economic and social pressures in Western Europe, leaving the Continent ripe for another war. The failure of the League of Nations to intervene in many instances when Hitler or Hideki Tojo (r. 1941-1945) broke the Treaty of Versailles made the dictators more brazen. Finally, the policy of appeasement, as outlined below, led to more and more aggression from the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Aggression And Appeasement

1931

- Japan invaded Manchuria and the League of Nations did not intervene in any meaningful way.
- Japan began to imperialize China.
- The Japanese occupation of Manchuria lasted until the end of the war.

1933

- Hitler pulled Germany out of the League of Nations.

1935

- Hitler began rebuilding the German armed forces in open violation of the Treaty of Versailles.
- The Western powers, immersed in the Great Depression, objected but did not act.
- The Saar Plebiscite returned the Saar Valley to Germany.
- Mussolini attacked the independent kingdom of Ethiopia in East Africa.
- The League ordered **sanctions** (an embargo on trade in arms and raw materials) against Italy, but the sanctions were not enforced.

1936

- Hitler's troops occupied the **Rhineland**, which the Treaty of Versailles had made into a demilitarized zone between France and Germany.
- France and England failed to act, giving birth to the policy of

appeasement.

- General **Francisco Franco** and his Spanish Falangists (Fascists) began an insurrection against the democratically chosen republican government of Spain.
- The Fascist dictators, Mussolini and Hitler, supported Franco with men, arms, and money.
- Stalin backed the Republicans, a significant number of whom were Communists.
- The brutal and destructive **Spanish Civil War**, which lasted for over three years and claimed the lives of 600,000, became a testing ground for the war machines of the dictatorships.
- The Fascists won, and Franco remained as the longest-reigning Fascist dictator, his regime ending only when he died in 1975.

1937

The second Sino-Japanese War began in earnest as the Japanese launched a full-scale attack, made significant territorial gains, and committed atrocities on the Chinese people, such as the Rape of Nanking.

The League of Nations again did not respond.

Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the **Anti-Comintern Pact** to oppose international communism.

Marked the beginning of their alliance, the Axis.

Japan invaded mainland China, quickly conquering the seacoast and driving **Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists** deep into the interior, where they, along with their political opposition led by Mao Tse-tung, waged a guerrilla war that proved costly to the Japanese.

1938

- Hitler engineered the **Anschluss** (the forced union of Germany and Austria), again in violation of the Versailles Treaty.
- Once again the Western powers failed to act.
- Hitler prepared to annex the **Sudetenland** (a part of Czechoslovakia that before the First World War had been German territory).
 - France and England, at the urging of the USSR, issued warnings.
 - After tensions and talks, a conference was called, at Mussolini's suggestion, in which **Neville Chamberlain**, prime minister of Britain, and Edouard Daladier, prime minister of France, met with Hitler and Mussolini.

- The infamous **Munich Conference** ceded the Sudetenland to Germany and marked the pinnacle of appeasement.

1939

- Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia, abandoned by the West, and the western part of Lithuania.
- Mussolini invaded Albania.
- Hitler and Stalin signed a Nonaggression Pact, which cleared the way for Hitler's invasion of Poland.

Triumph of the Axis Powers (1939-1942)

Although Germany, Italy, and Japan were often referred to as Fascists, their dictatorships were significantly different.

- The German Nazis and, to a lesser degree, the Italian Fascists imposed totalitarian systems upon their people.
- The Japanese, whose constitutional government was loyal to the emperor (who was seen as a "living god") had a military dictatorship imposed in the 1930s.
- The term "Axis" came from the Rome, Berlin, Tokyo Axis, a pledge of mutual cooperation between the three nations that in the end led to virtually no combined military ventures involving the two European powers and Japan.

The War Against the Minorities

In addition to the military attacks on nations, wars against ethnic and other minorities, waged more by Germany and Japan than by Italy, were a separate front.

- The Japanese economically and militarily dominated the areas they conquered.
 - The Japanese turned the civilians into a slave-labor force, including hundreds of thousands of women forced into prostitution for Japanese soldiers, commonly referred to as "comfort women."
 - It is believed that almost 20 million Chinese were killed in the course of the Second World War.
 - The Japanese performed medical experimentation on the Chinese civilians with biological agents.
- The Nazis created a systematic method for enslaving the peoples they

conquered.

- They had a system for deciding a civilian's fate by ethnicity.
 - Germanic people held all positions of importance or power.
 - Slavs and Russians were sent to forced work camps and factories.
 - Jews, the Roma, homosexuals, handicapped people, known communists, and dissidents were sent to concentration camps to be exterminated.
- The Jews were a special target for genocide.
- Jews were first ostracized and forced from positions of authority by the racist Nuremberg Laws.
- Then, all Jewish people in Nazi occupied territories were sent from their homes without their possessions to ghettos to live in squalid conditions.
- After the secret Wannsee Conference of 1942, the Germans decided on a Final Solution in which the ghettos would be liquidated and all the Jews would be sent to death camps, such as Auschwitz and Maidanek.
- Many Jewish people were saved by Christians and humanitarian networks.
- The stories of **Anne Frank** and **Elie Wiesel** testify to the brutality of the Nazi regime.
- One Christian response was to try to protect Jewish people and others as seen in the famous poem and actions of the Protestant minister, **Martin Niemöller**.

September 1: Hitler invaded Poland, ostensibly to get back the part of East Prussia that the Versailles Treaty had ceded to Poland for access to the Baltic Sea, the Polish Corridor.

- The Germans used the **blitzkrieg** technique for this invasion: a massive air strike at a specific area of the enemy lines, followed by a reinforced, rapid, and massive mechanized attack at the point of the air strike.
 - The Germans penetrated Polish lines and divided the enemy troops, who could then be eliminated in sections by the superior firepower of the German war machine.
 - Tanks and mechanized infantry swept in at lightning speed, giving the **blitzkrieg** its name, “lightning war.”

- The Germans also used their **Einsatzgruppen**, a special military force dedicated to killing leaders of Jews, communists, and the Roma during the invasion.

September 3: England and France declared war against Germany to honor their treaty with Poland.

October: Poland fell, occupied by the Germans in the West and the Russians in the East as part of the 1938 **Nonaggression Pact** between the two dictatorships.

- Russia also annexed the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, which had been granted autonomy by the Versailles Treaty.

1940

The time period from the fall of Poland to April 1940 was called the **“sitzkrieg”** because the French sat behind their supposedly impregnable **Maginot Line**, a series of fortresses on the German border, and the **British Expeditionary Force** in France made no moves. Meanwhile, the Germans prepared for a spring offensive.

- In this time, German forces overran and occupied Denmark and Norway in a matter of days.
- In May 1940, the German army cut through neutral Belgium and Luxembourg to outflank the Maginot Line
- Within six weeks, the Nazi tactics of blitzkrieg caused France to fall.
- Isolated and surrounded, the 250,000-man British Expeditionary Force retreated to **Dunkirk** in Belgium, most of them to be evacuated to England along with about 100,000 French troops. The Allies lost their heavy equipment.
- Mussolini invaded southern France, an invasion that was ineffectual militarily but symbolic of Nazi-Fascist solidarity.
- France surrendered on June 22. Germany occupied the north and west, and there, as in all the Nazi-occupied lands, terror and repression reigned.
 - A puppet French government, known as the Vichy Regime, led by First World War hero, **Marshal Philippe Petain**, controlled the south and the North African possessions.
 - General Charles De Gaulle (1880-1970), however, escaped to Britain, where he took command of the “Free French”:
 - Continued to fight the Nazis.
 - Claimed the role of the Provisional Government of France.

- The French Resistance undermined the Nazis from inside France.
- The **Battle of Britain**, an air war for supremacy of the skies over Britain.
 - Began in August, 1940.
 - Targeted industrial cities of southern England, including London.
 - Subjected to nightly bombings called “the Blitz,” harking back to the “lighting” or blitz, in *blitzkrieg*.

1941

This was a pivotal year for the war. It looked like Great Britain was the last holdout at the beginning of the war when the war moved to Africa, but that fall Germany invaded the USSR and in December the Japanese attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippines. The USSR and the United States joined the British as enemies of the Axis.

- The United States had been supporting the British through a “lend-lease” program that allowed the British to have the use of American-built ships and to purchase war materials.
- After Russia was invaded, it looked like it too might fall quickly, but the Germans soon were caught in the Russian winter just as the Americans declared war on the Axis powers.
- President **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, Prime Minister **Winston Churchill**, and Soviet Premier **Joseph Stalin** became the “**Big Three**,” who made Allied policy.

1942

By June, the Axis powers in Europe controlled virtually the entire continent from the Atlantic in the West to the gates of Moscow in the East, from Scandinavia in the North to a good part of North Africa in the South.

- The Nazis set up extermination camps in Poland, Austria, and Germany:
 - Transported millions of Jews, other minorities, Soviet prisoners of war, and political enemies there for systematic murder.
 - **Auschwitz**: the most infamous of these new extermination camps.
 - Almost 12 million people were slaughtered inside concentration camps in accord with Nazi racist doctrine; 6 million were European Jews (about 60 percent of the prewar Jewish population).
- The Asian Axis partner, Japan, had seized the cities of coastal China and taken Indochina from the French, Indonesia from the Dutch, Malaya and

Burma from the British, and the Philippines from the United States.

- General **Erwin Rommel**, the “Desert Fox,” had managed to push back the British in North Africa deep into Egypt, threatening the Suez Canal, a lifeline of the British Empire.

The Tide of War Turns (Mid-1942-1943)

1942

- **June-November:** Rommel’s Afrika Corps, the elite mechanized force that spearheaded the advance of Axis troops in this theater of war, was defeated at El Alamein in Egypt by the British under Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery.
- **June:** American aircraft carriers and their fighter planes won a stunning victory against a superior Japanese naval force at the Battle of Midway in the Pacific.
- **Summer to winter:** The Russian city of Stalingrad, stood against German invaders and counterattacked.
 - The fierce battle there marked the end of Nazi advances in the Soviet Union and the eventual destruction of the German Sixth Army, with a loss of 600,000 troops.
- **November:** A joint Anglo-American force landed on the shores of Axis-held territory in North Africa.

1942

The Axis was cleared from North Africa.

- The Russians began the advance that would lead them ultimately into Germany itself.
 - About 80 percent of German casualties in the Second World War were inflicted by the Soviets.
 - Between 25 and 30 million Russians, combatants and civilians, died during the war.
- Allied leaders Roosevelt and Churchill and representatives of Stalin met at **Casablanca** in North Africa and agreed to settle on a strategy of only stopping the war when they had achieved the **unconditional surrender** of the Axis powers.

Allied Victories (1943-1945)

1943

- American, British, and Canadian forces invaded the island of Sicily off the boot of Italy.
- Mussolini overthrown.
- Allies landed in Italy proper and fought against determined German resistance.
- At the **Teheran Conference** the Big Three agreed that they would accept only unconditional surrender from all three of the Axis powers, and that after the war was won, Germany would be occupied by the Allied powers and demilitarized.

1944

The **D-Day Invasion** of the French coast at Normandy marked the beginning of the end of Nazi domination of the continent.

- Paris was liberated by August.
- The last German offensive took place at the **Battle of the Bulge** in Belgium that December.
- From that point on, the Germans were in retreat on all fronts.

1945

In February a huge Allied air attack dropped 3,900 tons of high explosives and incendiary bombs on the old German city of Dresden, a cultural landmark, setting it ablaze, and killing 25,000 civilians.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Army smashed into East Prussia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia while the Americans crossed the Rhine River. Hitler committed suicide; encircled Berlin was seized by the Russians; Germany surrendered, unconditionally, on May 8.

- **August 6:** The United States dropped the **first atomic bomb** on the Japanese city of **Hiroshima**.
 - 70,000 people died immediately; tens of thousands suffered after-effects.
- **August 9:** A second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of **Nagasaki**, and Japan surrendered.
- **September:** Japan signed an official surrender and agreed to occupation by U.S. forces.
 - Under the supervision of the commander of Allied forces in the Pacific theater,
 - **General Douglas MacArthur**, the emperor denied his own divinity.

- An antiwar constitution was imposed on Japan.
- With American financial aid, Japan's wartime destruction was repaired.
- Technical and financial assistance was given for further industrialization and modernization.
- A democratic government was set up that still thrives today.

Aftermath of the War

Crucial Conferences for Postwar Europe

The **Yalta Conference**, among the Big Three in February of 1945, drew up a plan for the postwar settlement in Europe. Its main provisions:

- Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania) would be set up with coalition governments of communists and non-communists until free elections could be held.
- Germany would be partitioned into four zones of occupation: American, British, French, and Soviet.
- The Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan in return for territories in Asia and islands north of Japan.
- The **United Nations** was set up as a successor to the defunct League of Nations, with a **General Assembly** to represent all member nations in deliberations.
 - A separate **Security Council** of 15 members dominated by five permanent members: the "Great Powers," (the United States, the USSR, Britain, France, and China), each of which was given veto rights over any proposal for involving the organization in preserving international peace.

The **Potsdam Conference**, July 1945, was attended by Churchill, Stalin, and Harry S. Truman, who had become president after Roosevelt's sudden death in April. Already, cracks showed in the alliance between the Western democracies and communist Russia when Truman and Churchill criticized Stalin for not allowing free elections in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe.

- Millions of refugees from concentration camps and from the war itself attempted to return home or to make new lives for themselves.
 - Many tried to reconnect with families and friends with varying degrees of success.
 - Thousands of refugees from the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were

returned to those nations by the Western powers.

- The Marshall Plan offered U.S. financial aid to the European countries devastated by the Second World War.
 - The money came in the form of loans that had to be spent on American goods, helping to transition economies from wartime to peacetime.
 - The Marshall Plan also helped draw the lines between the capitalist countries that were tied together through the financial web of trade, symbolized by the Marshall Plan, and the communist nations that rejected Marshall Plan aid.
 - Led to greater interconnectedness between the economies of Western Europe and the dissolution of trade barriers that had plagued prewar Europe.

The Conflict for Control of Europe

At the end of the Second World War, only two great powers remained with the resources, land mass, population, industrial capacity, and military strength to affect world events. The United States, physically undamaged by the war, and the USSR, devastated but industrially and militarily powerful, became **superpowers**.

- Since the seventeenth century, there had been powerful single nations in Europe (Spain, France, England, Austria) but six or seven other great states had managed, through alliances, to maintain a balance of power.
- Soon after the war, two competing blocs would emerge: the Soviet Bloc with its **satellites** of puppet governments in Eastern and Central Europe and the Western Bloc or “Free World” made up, primarily, of the democracies.
- With the collapse of the colonial empires (see Chapter 9, “Imperialism”), a third bloc would emerge: the **Developing World**, consisting of newly independent nations.
- In a speech in Fulton, Missouri, in 1946, former prime minister Winston Churchill described Stalin’s expansion of Communist totalitarianism as bringing down an **Iron Curtain** separating the captive peoples of Eastern and Central Europe from the rest of the world.
- A competition developed between the superpowers to win Europe, its cities in ruins, its population decimated and displaced, but still a great industrial and population center of the world.

The **Cold War** had begun.

Casualties of the Second World War by Nation

Country	Population	Military Deaths	Civilian Death	Jewish Deaths	Total Deaths	1939 Pop.
Albania	1,073,000	30,000		200	30,200	2.63%
Australia	6,998,000	40,500	700		41,200	0.57%
Austria	6,653,000		40,500	65,000	105,500	5.5%
Belgium	8,387,000	12,100	49,600	24,400	86,100	1.02%
Bulgaria	6,458,000	22,000	3,000		25,000	0.38%
China	517,568,000	3,800,000	16,200,000		20,000,000	3.86%
Czechoslovakia	15,300,000	25,000	43,000	277,000	345,000	2.25%
Denmark	3,795,000	2,100	1,000	100	3,200	0.08%
Dutch E. Indies	69,435,000	11,350	2,500,000-4,000,000		2,511,350-4,011,350	3.75%-5.75%
Estonia	1,134,000		50,000	1,000	51,000	4.50%
Finland	3,700,000	95,000	2,000		97,000	2.62%
France	41,700,000	217,600	267,000	83,000	567,600	1.35%
Germany	69,623,000	5,533,000	1,540,000	160,000	7,233,000	8.6%
Greece	7,222,000	20,000	220,000	71,300	311,300	4.31%
Hungary	9,129,000	300,000	80,000	200,000	580,000	6.35%
Iceland	119,000		200		200	0.17%
Italy	44,394,000	301,400	145,100	8,000	454,500	1.02%
Japan	71,380,000	2,120,000	580,000		2,700,000	3.78%
Latvia	1,995,000		147,000	80,000	227,000	11.38%
Lithuania	2,575,000		212,000	141,000	353,000	13.71%
Luxembourg	295,000		1,300	700	2,000	0.68%
Netherlands	8,729,000	21,000	176,000	104,000	301,000	3.44%
Norway	2,945,000	3,000	5,800	700	9,500	0.32%
Poland	34,849,000	240,000	2,760,000	3,000,000	6,000,000	17.2%
Romania	19,934,000	300,000	64,000	469,000	833,000	4.22%
USSR (Soviet Union)	168,500,000	10,700,000	11,400,000	1,000,000	23,100,000	13.71%
United Kingdom	47,760,000	382,700	67,100		449,800	0.94%
United States	131,028,000	416,800	1,700		418,500	0.32%
Yugoslavia	15,400,000	446,000	514,000	67,000	1,027,000	6.67%
World Totals	1,963,205,000	25,282,100	42,168,400	5,752,400	73,169,900	3.71%