

Origins of World War II

Class 1

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What World War II Was

World War II was a collection of five separate but interrelated wars (designated as theaters of operations)

- The Japan-China land War in Manchuria and China
- The British-Italian naval and land War in North and East Africa
- The Atlantic Naval War with Germany on one side and Great Britain and later America on the other
- The German-Russian land War in Eastern Europe and Russia with related land wars in Western Europe in 1940 and In 1944-45
- The Pacific land and naval War in the Pacific and the islands contained therein

What linked them was that all of the major combatants were fighting in more than one of these wars and that what happened in one of these wars had major effects on one or more of the others. All of them also involved air power

Why Study World War II

Many of us were small children or teenagers during the war and we were touched by it in many ways

All of us grew up in a world the World War left behind, a Cold War world marked by diplomatic crises, wars, and the threat of atomic annihilation

All of us have lived with and been affected by the social changes and technological innovations that came out of the war

Some Things That Came Out of World War II

Shirts	Computers	Vinyl records	SPAM	Penicillin
ee breaks	Employer Health Insurance	Fed Income Tax Withholding	The Jeep	Population shifts
II	A-bomb	Radar	United Nations	Armed Forces Radio
towns	Cruise missiles	DDT	Jet Planes	Federal Impact Aid
o cults	Pentagon	Civil Air Patrol	Widespread Use of Plastics	Pizza as an American

Setting the Stage

German Defeat in World War I

The Russian Revolution

The Treaty of Versailles

The Rise of Fascism in Italy

The Great Depression and its Social-Political Impacts

The Rise of Nazism and Japanese Militarism

A policy of appeasement by nations and leaders traumatized by World War I

A series of events in the 1930s.

Impact of German Defeat

Germany's defeat came as shock to the German people

- Followed the defeat of Russia
- Came after the Germans had made significant gains on the Western Front
- Came without any Allied occupation of German soil

Gave rise to the *dolchstoß* (stab-in-the-back) legend

- Germany was not defeated but betrayed by Weimar politicians
- Led the German Right (and especially the Nazis) to deny the real reasons for Germany's defeat
 - The exhaustion and attrition caused by over four years of war and the Allied blockade
 - America's entry into the war

Effects of a Communist Russia

Led to a fear of Communist revolution among both political elites and the political Right in Europe

- Blinded many to the dangers that Fascism and Nazism would later pose
- Aided the rise of Mussolini to power
- Led to the Freikorps (private armies) in Germany
- Led to the “Red Scare” in the U.S.

Removed Russia from the world economy

- Helped pave the way for the Great Depression

Split the World Socialist movement into a Communist wing and a Democratic Socialist wing.

- Founding of the American and other Communist Parties as a response to the events in Russia

Economic Impact of WWI

European food production declined as agricultural manpower was drafted into military service

- Led U.S., Canadian, Argentinian, and Australian farmers to vastly expand agricultural production
 - Mechanization and chemical fertilizers led to a vast increase in productivity
- After the war, European agriculture (except in Russia) returned to normal levels of production

Result: A Depressed agricultural economy in the 1920s and 1930s in both Europe and America

- Pushed European (especially German) farmers to the political right

Political Impact of World War I & Versailles - 1

Created a weak Weimar Republic

Created instability in eastern Europe

- Strengthened Germany strategically by replacing two empires on its eastern and southern borders with a plethora of weak states
- Created an Eastern European status quo that neither Germany and Russia supported

Left Japan unsatisfied while increasing its strategic position vis-à-vis the United States

- Gave Japan control of the Marshall, Caroline, and Marianas islands – all of which sat astride US sea routes to the Philippines

Political Impact of World War I & Versailles - 2

The American failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or join the League of Nations greatly weakened the League

Fostered within the United States a sense of disillusionment

- With World War I and its results
- With U.S. participation in the war
- With U.S. engagement with the world

Fostered in turn a spirit of isolationism that was reflected in restrictive immigration laws, high tariffs, and the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s

Paved the way for the rise of Mussolini in Italy

Rise of Mussolini - 1

World War I proved catastrophic for Italy

- Italy Lacked the resources to fight such a war
- Italy gained little from the war
- Italy suffered acutely from the disruption that followed the war
 - Many landless and jobless demobilized soldiers
 - Large-scale inflation
- Parliamentary institutions undermined by
 - Orlando's failure at Versailles
 - D'Annunzio's success at seizing Fiume
 - Inability to address Italy's problems
- Between 1919-1922, one weak government followed another

Rise of Mussolini - 2

Mussolini's goal was to gain power by whatever means necessary

- In March 1919, Mussolini organized the *Fascists* as a radical group of mostly embittered ex-soldiers
- But in 1920 strikes, riots, factory occupations, and agrarian disturbances increased to such an extent that a Red revolution seemed imminent
- Given the widespread fear of Communism by the Italian elite and the middle class (as well as by the Church)
- Mussolini realized it was more politically profitable to attack Communism and espouse counter-revolution – often using violence against political opponents

Rise of Mussolini – 3

Mussolini made skillful use propaganda, charismatic appeal, and violence as means to achieving power

- Publicly posed as the champion of order and legality
- Behind the scenes supported violence against opponents

Mussolini saw the political value of pageantry and propaganda.
Hence

- The parades of black-shirted men
- The use of the Roman *fasces*
- The *Giovinezza* hymn
- The speeches to the crowds in an atmosphere designed to stir emotions

Rise of Mussolini - 2

On 27 October 1922, squads of Blackshirts occupied post offices, telephone exchanges, railway stations and key points in many rural areas of northern and central Italy,

The Fascists then prepared to march on Rome although they were ill-equipped and unorganized

The Italian government could have easily routed them

But King Victor Emmanuel III refused to sign a proclamation of martial law

The Premier resigned and Mussolini was invited to become Prime Minister

Benito Mussolini



Mussolini in Power - 1

Once in power, Mussolini created a one-party dictatorship by both legal and illegal means

- Outlawing labor strikes & suppressing civil liberties
- Arresting and, in some cases, murdering political opponents
- Changing the electoral laws to ensure that the Fascist Party always had a large parliamentary majority

One who saw the implications of Mussolini's March on Rome and accession to power was Adolf Hitler

He carried out policies that were generally popular

Mussolini in Power - 2

Launched several public construction projects, including the only partially successful *Battle for Wheat*

Engaged in major land reclamation projects such as draining the Pontine marshes

Sought government control over the Italian economy

- In 1938, instituted wage and price controls
- Followed a policy of economic autarky and high tariffs

Tried to make Italy a nation that was “great, respected, and feared”

- Ruthlessly repressed a revolt in Libya, consolidating Italian control of that country

Conservatism & Fascism - 1

Conservatives were authoritarian pluralists

- Committed to the defense of the status quo
- Believed that social hierarchies were inevitable and beneficial and that the lower classes should defer to their superiors
- Did not believe in equality
- Did not believe power should be invested in any single person or institution
- Believed In a plurality of institutions – churches, regions, corporations, aristocracies, monarchies – each with its own proper sphere of authority
- Were authoritarian but willing to allow freedom outside the political arena
- Were committed to legality
- Were defenders of the Church and traditional religion
- Were strongly anti-communist
- Were willing to resort to violence and war but regarded it as a necessary evil with often unpredictable and unintended consequences

Conservatism & Fascism - 2

Fascists believed in the concentration of power in the charismatic leadership of a single individual and the concentration of power in a single party in a strong state

- Like the conservatives, they believed that social hierarchies were inevitable and beneficial
- Like the conservatives, they did not believe in equality
- Like the conservatives, they were strongly anti-communist
- Tended towards Totalitarianism
- Believed that violence and war were good in themselves as well as necessary means to the ends they sought
- While they believed in elite rule, they were not committed to the defense of the existing political order
- Were often racist and anti-Semitic
- Were often anti-clerical and hostile to traditional religion
- Believed in mass political mobilization of the population but not democracy

Conservatism & Fascism - 3

Conservatives and Fascists had some views in common:

- A common hatred of Communism
- A belief in social hierarchy and elite rule
- Nationalism
- Anti-Semitism to an extent

Conservatives were often beset by a contradiction

- While they believed they were protecting an established order hallowed by time, in practice they often tried to recreate an idealized past whose social arrangements were often creations of a relatively recent past
 - This plus their common views sometimes turned conservatives into fascists
 - Many traditions they defended were the “invented traditions” of the late-19th and early 20th centuries

Conservatives tended to be naïve about Fascism and Nazism

- Often did not perceive the revolutionary aspects of Fascism or Nazism
 - This often led to Conservatives following a policy of appeasement

The Rise of Adolf Hitler - 1

A few biographical points

- **Born on 20 April 1889 in Braunau on the Inn in Austria to a domineering father and an indulgent mother**
- **Went to Vienna to become an artist where**
 - **He lived a bohemian life financed by orphans' benefits and support from his mother**
 - **Rejected twice by the Academy of Fine Arts for lack of talent**
 - **When the money ran out, he worked as a laborer and sold watercolors**
 - **Found life in Vienna miserable and developed a strong dislike of the polyglot Austro-Hungarian Empire**
- **Strongly influenced in his youth by**
 - **George von Schonerer**
 - **Karl Lueger**
 - **Guido von List**
 - **Lans von Liebenfels**

The Rise of Adolf Hitler - 2

- Hitler was greatly influenced by his World War I experiences
 - Gave him a sense of acceptance and comradeship after life as a down-and-out
 - Gave Hitler the sense he was providentially guided
 - Desensitization to mass death
- After World War I, he was influenced by
 - Dietrich Eckart – introduced Hitler to influential and wealthy German nationalists and proto-Nazis
 - Alfred Rosenberg – introduced Hitler to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (and its notion of an international Jewish conspiracy to rule the world), the will-to-power ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche, the geopolitical ideas of Karl Haushofer and Halford MacKinder, and the intellectual racism of Comte Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain

The Beer Hall Putsch and its Consequences

The Nazi Party until 1930 was a minor party – one of several on the German Right

- Appealed mainly to ex-soldiers, anti-Communists, anti-Semites, and a hodgepodge of downwardly mobile individuals

Between 1919 and 1924, it was confined to Bavaria

On 8-9 November 1923, Hitler and GEN Erich von Ludendorff attempted to seize power in Bavaria

After Hitler's arrest, he was found guilty but managed to turn his trial into a verbal attack against the Weimar Republic

Notes About Hitler's Personality

- Had some very distinctive personality traits that had major impacts on his career, attitudes, policies, and eventual failures
 - Showed certain infantile traits like temper tantrums
 - A tendency to choose associates he could dominate
 - Identified with the aggressor and despised the weak
 - Had a problem in forming close relationships with people
 - Strongly believed in the *dolshloss* legend – that Germany lost the war because it was stabbed in the back
 - Had distinct paranoid traits
 - Was an extreme Racist who believed in the superiority of Aryans and the inferiority of everyone else

Hitler's Path to Power- 1

The hyperinflation of the early Weimar years created a fear of inflation among German bankers and economists that affected economic policy in the Great Depression

With the Stock Market Crash of 1929, the U.S. and the world gradually sank into the Great Depression

At the end of March 1930, President von Hindenburg appointed Heinrich Brüning as Chancellor

Brüning who feared inflation followed a policy of raising taxes and cutting expenditures (especially welfare benefits)

Heinrich Brüning



Hitler's Path to Power- 2

As the economic situation worsened, street brawls between Stormtroopers and Communists became common

- In Berlin, Joseph Goebbels used the death of Horst Wessel to achieve a propaganda coup

In September 1930, Germany holds a general election in which the Nazis win 107 seats, making them the second largest party.

In May 1931, the Creditanstalt bank in Vienna, the largest bank in Austria, declared bankruptcy

- This led to a global financial crisis, as banks in Germany and elsewhere also went bankrupt.
- It provoked a run on the banks and a massive outflow of capital from Germany

Horst Wessel



Bundesarchiv, Bild 147-0503
Foto: o. Ang. | 1929

Hitler's Path to Power- 3

In March 1932, Germany held a presidential election

- Paul von Hindenburg won 18,600,000 votes to Adolf Hitler's 11,300,000 and Ernst Thälmann's 5,000,000. Since Hindenburg had only a plurality, this necessitated a runoff election in April in which Hindenburg got 19,400,000 and Hitler 13,400,000

The election results led General Kurt von Schleicher, a top confidant of Hindenburg, to become convinced that

- That Germany needed a strongman to govern
- That some accommodation had to be reached with the Nazis because of their popular support
- Brüning had to go

Von Schleicher



Hitler's Path to Power- 4

Bruning's successor as Chancellor was Franz von Papen. He was appointed Chancellor on June 1, 1932

Appointed a Cabinet derisively referred to as the "Cabinet of barons" or the "Cabinet of monocles"

Was "in over his head" as Chancellor

Repealed ban on the SA

- Led to 461 battles in the streets of Berlin between SA and Communists

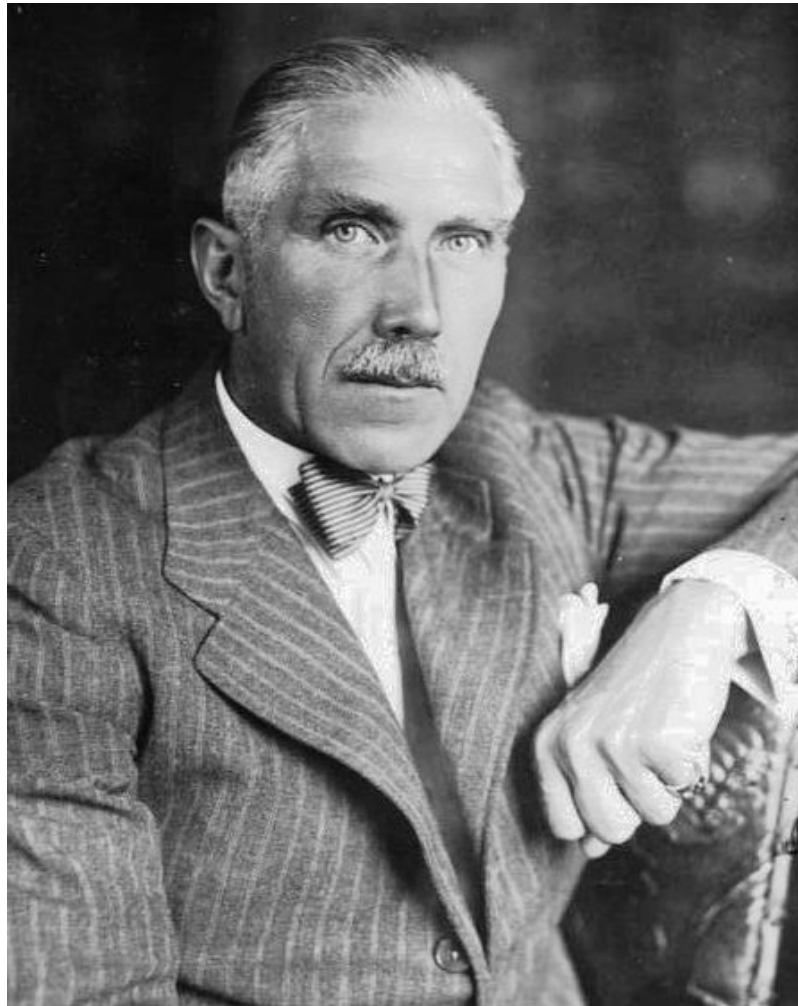
Election of July 1932

- The Nazis won 230 out of 608 Reichstag seats

Election of November 1932

- The Nazis won 196 seats, but the Communists also gained seats

Von Papen



Hitler's Path to Power- 5

Von Papen's successor as Chancellor was General Kurt von Schleicher

- Attempted to drive a wedge between Hitler and Gregor Strasser by offering Strasser the Vice-Chancellorship
- Strasser refused but was forced by Hitler to resign his position in the Nazi party.
- Angered the business community by attempting to control prices and wages
- Angered the Junkers and von Hindenburg by attempting to allow unemployed workers to settle and farm the bankrupt estates of the East

Strasser's departure made the Nazi party more respectable to the conservative industrialists who saw Strasser's version of National Socialism as simply a nationalist version of Communism

- The industrialists now started financing Hitler, saving the party from bankruptcy

Hitler Becomes Dictator - 1

When von Schleicher asked Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag, Hindenburg refused, forcing von Schleicher's resignation

In a secret meeting between von Papen and Hitler, it was agreed that Hitler would become Chancellor

Hitler became Chancellor on January 30, 1933

- On the evening of the 30th, tens of thousands of SA members staged a torchlight parade through the Brandenburg Gate along the Unter den Linden and the Wilhelmstrasse, singing the Horst Wessel Lied

To consolidate his power, Hitler insisted on another Reichstag election to be held on March 5th

Hitler Celebrating his Inauguration as Chancellor



Hitler Becomes Dictator - 2

On February 27th, the Reichstag building burned down

On February 28th, Hitler persuaded von Hindenburg to issue what became known as the Reichstag Fire Decree

- Indefinitely suspended most of the civil liberties set forth in the Weimar Constitution
- Allowed the Reich Government to assume police powers formerly reserved to the German states
- Established draconian penalties for certain offenses

By eliminating such freedoms as a free press, free expression, and the right of public assembly, it crippled Hitler's political opposition

Adolf Hitler

Hitler at a podium
speaking



Reichstag Fire



Hitler Becomes Dictator - 3

Despite the advantages the Nazis had, they still won only 288 seats and only 43.9% of the vote. This despite

- The virtual outlawing of the Communists,
- The handicaps under which the non-Nazi parties operated as a result of the Reichstag Fire Decree
- The Nazi ability to use the power and resources of the state in their campaign,
- The campaign contributions of German big business
- The ability to use the SA and the Prussian police to intimidate voters and to monitor the vote process

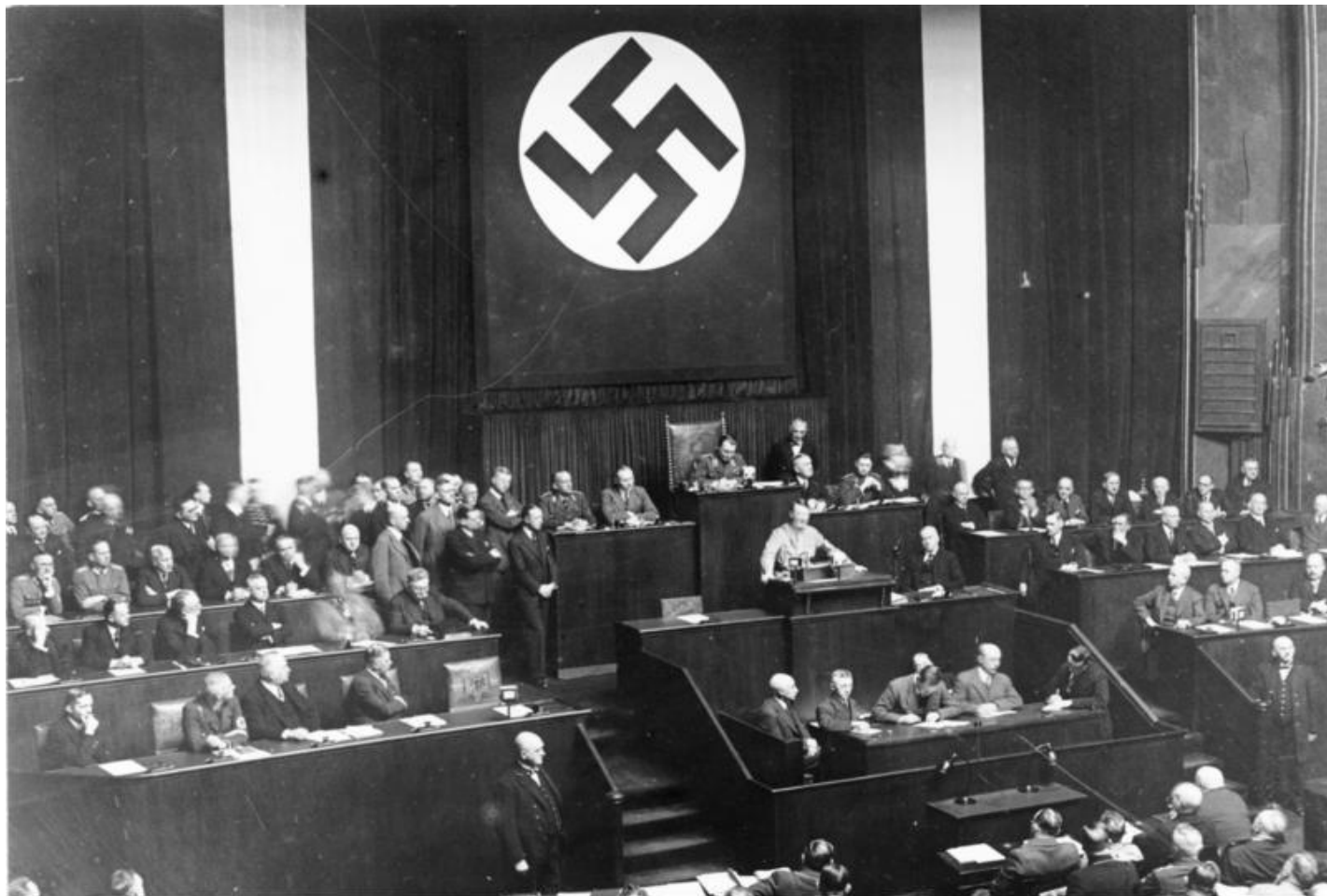
Hitler Becomes Dictator - 4

The Enabling Act gave the Cabinet the right to enact legislation and approve treaties without the approval of the Reichstag

- Because it was considered an amendment to the Weimar Constitution, it required a 2/3rd vote of the Reichstag
- With the Nazis and the Nationalist allies having just a bare majority, the Nazis got their 2/3rd majority by
 - Arresting all the Communist and many of the Socialist deputies
 - Promising the Catholic Center Party that the civil and religious rights of Catholics and the Catholic Church would be respected.
 - Promising the other parties an end to political instability

With the passing of the Enabling Act of 1933, Hitler now achieved total power

Hitler Speaking to the Reichstag



Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-14439
Foto: o. Ang. | 23. März 1933

Hitler in Power - 1

Hitler had four major policy goals prior to World War II

- Bringing Germany out of the Great Depression by ending unemployment
- Preparing Germany economically and militarily for its wars of conquest
- Forestalling any Allied intervention against Germany before she was ready for war
 - This involved peace propaganda and diplomacy
- Removing the Jews from German public life and forcing them out of Germany

Economic Recovery - 1

Hitler left the implementation of his goal of economic recovery to Reich Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank Hjalmar Schacht

Bringing Germany out of the Great Depression

Involved large-scale public investment in public works infrastructure and heavy industry

Developed tourism as a major industry

- Instituted paid vacations for workers

Paid for by credit notes called Mefo bills

- Paid 4 percent interest with principal payment after 5 years

Involved deficit spending

Economic Recovery - 2

Economic Results

- By the end of Hitler's first year in office, unemployment fell by 2 million
- By 1936, Germany had reached full employment

Made Hitler and the Nazi regime very popular both home and abroad

- This blinded many foreigners to the evils of the Nazi regime
- It also had a magnetic effect on ethnic Germans living in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland who contrasted German prosperity with their own economically-depressed state

Hjalmar Schacht



German Rearmament

Was aided by the Great Depression and aided in German recovery from the Great Depression

March 1935 - Germany denounced the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and reinstituted conscription

June 1935 – Anglo-German Naval Agreement

March 7, 1936 – German reoccupation of the Rhineland

October 1936 – German Four-Year Plan -

1936-1939 – German participation in the Spanish Civil War