



## World War 2 Causes

### World War 2 Causes



### World War 2 Causes

World War 2 Causes: [World War II](#), also called Second World War, World War 2 was the most devastating, and in many cases the cruelest, conflict in human history. If we look at it from our current perspective, it seems unthinkable that anyone would intentionally launch such a devastating war. It may surprise you to hear that it was just as shocking to many people at that time as well. Parts of the world, [Europe](#) in particular, had yet to recover from the horrors of the First World War.

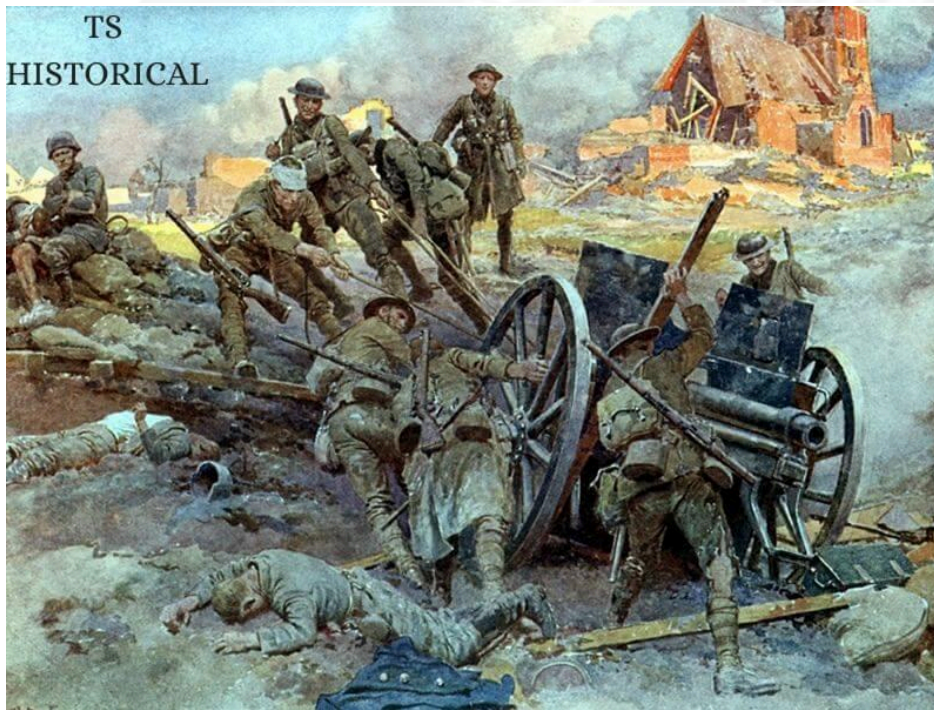
Millions had vowed that they would not get sucked into another global conflict. And yet, two decades later, it happened again. For years, historians treated the causes of World War 2 as separate from the causes of its predecessor. However, the leadups to the First and Second World Wars are inseparably linked. When [Germany](#) was united in the



Franco-Prussian War of 1871-1872, it immediately cemented into a rich and powerful country.

However, its late arrival meant that it did not gain the prestige and power it believed the nation deserved. It was kept out of the major trade networks and could not expand its colonial holdings. In short, Kaiser Wilhelm and the German government felt they had been disrespected. German frustration was only one cause of [World War 1](#), but it was a crucial one. However, the Wilhelmine bid to gain more influence failed, and the Entente powers in the war defeated them. However, that only exacerbated the gap between German self-perception and their actual stature in the world.

## The Impact of the First World War



Impact of First World War ( World War 2 Causes)



The **Great War**, as it was called at the time, was incredibly costly for the victors. They also blamed the Germans entirely for the outbreak of the war, even though there were other important causes. Therefore, the winning side, especially [Britain](#) and [France](#), was hungry for revenge. As a result, the peace agreement that ended that war focused far more on punishing Germany than constructing a sustainable peace agreement.

Therefore, the agreement included several clauses that most Germans considered humiliating. The victors were not satisfied with blaming the defeated party for the war. They also sought compensation and forced Berlin to pay war reparations. The amounts of money involved were crippling, and France also demanded wildly excessive quantities of coal that were difficult for the vanquished party to provide. Perhaps most painfully, parts of Germany have been stripped away and handed over to other countries.

However, the United States worked to defang the agreement somewhat. Through their insistence, Germany was allowed to rebuild its economy and retain sovereignty. They also allowed the defeated side to maintain a small but potent military force. The peace agreement was poorly designed. It was not forgiving enough to bring [Germany](#) into the fold. However, it was not harsh enough to prevent the defeated nation from rebuilding and ultimately taking revenge. [American](#) President Woodrow Wilson identified some of the leading causes of World War One and aimed to prevent their recurrence.

One measure he suggested was creating a League of Nations, not too different from the modern United Nations, which would help states resolve their conflicts. However, the enterprise was doomed from the start. Wilson was in the process of selling the idea to Congress and the American public when he fell victim to a stroke. The motion to join the international organization was defeated.

The League released feeble condemnations when Germany repeatedly violated the Versailles Treaty; Japan ran amok in Manchuria, and Italy invaded Abyssinia. The neutered League of Nations was unable to prevent future conflicts. Rather than obey it or even respect it, nations such as Japan and Germany left the organization and ignored its resolutions. Germany was already a partial democracy before World War 1. However, after the conflict, they adopted a fully democratic system, with a capital in the city of Weimar.





However, the catastrophic events of World War 1 had undermined faith in liberal democracy throughout the world. Many turned to Communism, while others feared the specter of nationalization and redistribution and turned to Fascism instead. Like many other countries, Weimar Germany was caught between both forces. Despite the reparations and rise of ideological extremism, the Weimer Republic limped on until the [Great Depression](#). The ensuing inflation and poverty engulfed Germany and led to the demise of the regime.

## Hitler rise to power



Adolf Hitler (World War 2 Causes)



**World War 2 Causes:** [Adolph Hitler](#) and the [Nazi Party](#) took advantage of the weakness of the Weimar government and blamed reparations for the state of the German economy. He also exploited the fear of Communism and antisemitism prevalent amongst the middle class to cement support. These factors allowed the Nazis to pursue a policy of unparalleled racist expansionism.

By the time **Nazis** and the [Hitler](#) come to power, many citizens and leaders in the liberal democracies recognized the inequities of the Versailles Treaty. Indeed, the shock of seeing virulent nationalism and antisemitism take over the country hastened the long-overdue recognition.

This belated, though accurate, recognition ended up being problematic. The oppressive clauses of the agreement had unfairly burdened the Weimar Republic. The former Entente powers should have recognized the need to strengthen that government. However, once the Nazis were in power, the democracies required a strong policy to counter their ambitions. Instead, they laid down their guard and attempted to satisfy Hitler's demands to avoid war.

The British policy was particularly problematic. Hitler made escalating demands and moves in the 1930s to strengthen the German military and territorial position. Though he had written his entire manifesto of massive expansionism in the book *Mein Kampf*, the leadership in London believed this was posturing. Successive governments, particularly the one led by Neville Chamberlain, turned a blind eye to increased German provocations.

At first, the demands of the Nazi Fuhrer seemed to fall under the category of revanchism, defined as the desire to reverse territorial losses. In 1936, the German military remilitarized the industrial Ruhr area in violation of the Versailles Treaty. The French and the paralyzed League of Nations' lack of reaction encouraged Hitler to continue his policy of brinkmanship. In 1938, Germany annexed Austria, which had never been part of it. However, many observers accepted it, as Austria and Germany shared a language and many cultural similarities.

World War 2 was fought on two major fronts, the European theater and the Pacific one. Correspondingly, both areas played an important role in causing the conflict. Just like



Germany, Japan was dissatisfied with the peace agreements ending World War 1. They had fought, ironically enough, against Wilhelmine Germany. However, the sacrifices of the Japanese were not recognized by the allies.

A combination of frustration with their position in the world and the 1929 stock market crash's fallout pushed Japan towards a militaristic regime. Unwilling to continue to exist at the mercy of Western colonialism and their monopoly on trade, the island nation embarked on a mission to secure the resources and territory needed to establish their empire. Starting in 1931, the Japanese increased their influence in Manchuria, a province of China. By 1937, they refused to recognize Chinese sovereignty and launched a full-scale war against their larger neighbors.

In 1938, Hitler pushed to annex the Sudetenland, a mountainous region in Czechoslovakia. Though ethnic Germans populated the area, it was essential for Czechoslovakian national security. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Premier Edouard Daladier negotiated with the Nazi government in Munich, agreeing to the German annexation of the area. The Fuhrer agreed, formally waiving all future demands on the rest of the country. Chamberlain returned to England and announced that he had made "peace for our time." However, Hitler flagrantly violated the agreement.

In March 1939, German troops marched into Prague and put an end to Czechoslovakian independence. The French and British knew they had been duped – and prepared for war.

The [Soviet Union](#) had been a close ally of Czechoslovakia. However, when the Western allies abandoned the country, Soviet premier Joseph Stalin adjusted his foreign policy. Moscow decided to sign a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany, doing so on August 23, 1939. That cleared the final and most blatant German provocation. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland on a flimsy pretext. By this point, no one believed their rationalizations. Both London and Paris declared war on Nazi Germany.

The British and French policy of appeasement played a significant role in paving the road to war. However, more than anything else, it was the gaping open wound of World War 1, I that guaranteed a grim sequel.



**TS HISTORICAL**  
ENCYCLOPEDIA

