

Chapter 10 Study Guide: The Coming of War 1931 – 1942

Section 1: Dictators and War

In the 1920s, some nations moved toward democracy. Others moved toward repressive dictatorships and **totalitarianism**, a type of government in which a single party or leader controls the economic, social, and cultural lives of its people.

The 1917 communist revolution in the Soviet Union produced the first totalitarian state, headed by Vladimir Lenin. In 1924, **Joseph Stalin** took his place as the Communist Party's head.

A postwar economic depression troubled Italy. In 1922, the king asked the founder of the Fascist Party, **Benito Mussolini**, to form a government. Mussolini turned Italy into a fascist country, with a controlled press, secret police, and no political parties.

Following World War I, Germany became a democracy. However, the Great Depression caused severe economic troubles in the 1930s. The National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party) led by **Adolf Hitler** rose to power. Hitler criticized many people, political programs, and ideologies, but his sharpest assaults were against communists and Jews. Hitler was violently **antisemitic**, or prejudiced against Jewish people. He was appointed chancellor in 1933 and became president of Germany within two years.

In Japan, the Great Depression ended a period of increased democracy and peaceful change. Military leaders argued that expansion throughout Asia would solve Japan's problems. Japan attacked Manchuria and established a puppet state in 1931. Six years later, Japan attacked China again, raiding the capital city with such brutal ity that it became known as the "Rape of Nanjing."

In the 1930s, Italy and Germany resorted to acts of aggression similar to those of Japan in Asia. Hitler reclaimed the Saar region from French control and sent troops into the Rhineland, while Mussolini led an invasion into Ethiopia. The League of Nations did almost nothing to stop the aggression.

France, Britain, and the United States pursued the policy of **appeasement** toward the fascist leaders. Appeasement means granting concessions to a potential enemy to maintain peace. However, this approach only encouraged the leaders to become bolder and more aggressive.

Section 2: From Isolation to Involvement

After Japan's violent attack on China in 1937, President Roosevelt criticized the Japanese aggression. The United States, however, continued to back away from intervention in foreign conflicts.

Despite a military alliance among France, Britain, and Poland, Germany invaded Poland in 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany, and World War II had begun. The **Axis Powers** would come to include Germany, Italy, Japan, and several other nations. The Axis Powers fought the **Allies**, which included Britain, France, and eventually the Soviet Union, China, and the United States.

Germany used a new technique called **blitzkrieg**, or “lightning war.” Tanks and planes attacked in a coordinated effort and quickly conquered Poland. In April 1940, Denmark and Norway fell to the German blitzkrieg. In May, Germany took the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, and then invaded France. The next month, Germany attacked Britain from the air.

Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Britain, hoped to convince America to join the Allies. Reports by news reporter Edward R. Murrow on the bombing of London shocked the American public. Murrow emphasized that the Germans were bombing civilians, not armies or military sites. Despite its isolationist policies, the United States moved slowly toward involvement. Congress passed the **Neutrality Act of 1939**. This law helped the Allies buy goods and munitions from the United States. Isolationists, however, believed that getting involved in a bloody European war would be wasteful and dangerous.

Even though most Americans wanted to remain neutral, President Roosevelt constantly argued for helping Britain. In early 1941, Congress approved the **Lend-Lease Act**. This act gave the President the power to sell, give, or lease weapons to protect the United States. In 1941, Roosevelt also met with Churchill to discuss the war. They signed the **Atlantic Charter**, a document that endorsed national self-determination and an international system of “general security.” The agreement signaled the deepening alliance between the two nations. Hitler was not blind to American support of the Allies. In the fall of 1941, he ordered German U-boats to attack American ships. U.S. involvement in the war seemed inevitable.

Section 3: America Enters the War

As Japan expanded its empire throughout Asia, its relationship with the United States worsened. Japan needed resources such as oil, steel, and rubber to maintain its military. The United States began to withhold these goods to limit Japan’s expansion. The United States also instituted a trade embargo against Japan.

At first, **Hideki Tojo**, the Japanese prime minister, tried to keep the United States neutral. However, when a trade agreement with the United States failed, Tojo decided on a decisive military strike. On December 7, 1941, hundreds of Japanese airplanes bombed the site of the United States Navy’s main base in the Pacific at **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii. Nearly 2,500 people were killed in this devastating surprise attack. Many ships were sunk, and hundreds of aircraft were destroyed or damaged.

Congress immediately declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy then declared war on the United States. Men joined the military by the millions. Thousands of women joined the **Women’s Army Corps (WAC)** as clerical workers, truck drivers, instructors, and lab technicians. The government also created agencies to ensure the production of military equipment. These agencies allocated scarce materials to the proper industries.

In Asia, United States Army General **Douglas MacArthur** struggled unsuccessfully to hold the Philippines against the Japanese forces. U.S. forces finally had to retreat, and MacArthur evacuated to Australia. Some 75,000 U.S. troops fell back to the Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor Island where, in May 1942, they had to surrender.

Japanese troops forced these sick and malnourished men to march many miles. More than 7,000 American and Filipino troops died on the march, which is known as the **Bataan Death March**.

By the summer of 1942, Japan controlled Southeast Asia and the western Pacific. Then in May 1942, the United States Navy finally began to stop the Japanese advance. At the **Battle of Coral Sea**, the United States Navy prevented Japan from taking a key spot in New Guinea. The impressive Japanese offensive was over.