

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORLD WAR II

CAUSES

RISE OF EXTREME IDEOLOGIES

People lost confidence in their governments' ability to handle the rise of poverty, food shortages and economic issues during the post war period. This lack of confidence allowed for the emergence of extreme ideologies such as Fascism, Nazism and Totalitarianism. Under these ideologies tyrants promised to create jobs, relieve hunger and restore the economy thus winning the hearts of the disgruntled people.

FAILURE OF POST GREAT WAR INITIATIVES

Several initiatives were enacted during the post Great War period to prevent another catastrophe. Two of these initiatives were the formation of the League of Nations and several diplomatic treaties, most notable the Treaty of Versailles. The League of Nations was founded to protect independent nations from aggression, to preserve peace and to prevent further disasters. Several reasons caused the League of Nations to fail some of which included: the League being dominated by major powers leaving no role for smaller nations, these major powers using the League to serve their own purposes and the League not having an armed force to deter aggressors. At the end of the Great War, Germany bore the brunt of the 'punishment' as she was declared guilty of initiating the war. As such her punishments were laid out in various treaties. Germany was decimated economically due to the £6,500,000,000 reparations they had to pay. Plagued by various social issues, Germans became disgruntled and susceptible to the ideologies of Nazism where Hitler promised them that Germany would regain its power. Under Nazism, Hitler began rearming Germany and invaded countries such as Czechoslovakia and Austria. The Anglo-French foreign policy known as the Appeasement Policy was enacted which entailed making concessions to the dictatorial powers in order to avoid conflict. Under this approach, Hitler's acts of aggression were ignored and as a result, Germany was allowed to commit acts of aggression without any major punishment.

GERMANY INVADES POLAND

Germany, continuing their imperialistic quest, demanded the city of Danzig from Poland. With the guaranteed protection of Britain and France, Poland refused to yield to Germany's demand. Furious, Germany invaded Poland on September 1st 1939. This invasion pulled Britain and France into the conflict consequently plunging the world into another World War.

CONSEQUENCES

HUMAN AND ECONOMIC COST

Human fatalities during World War Two were extremely high. It was estimated that 23,620,100 soldiers were killed while civilian casualties were estimated at 33,833,000. The amount of people killed at concentration camps amounted to about 5,907,000. The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan killed about 1,600,000 people and those who survived suffered from various diseases through the generations. The war is estimated to have cost about one trillion dollars in damages and another trillion in war efforts.

THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION

The United Nations is a world organisation intended to provide peace. The term "United Nations" was first coined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the first draft for the Charter of the United Nations was signed by fifty nations on June 26th 1945 in the United States of America. Officially coming into existence on the 24th of October 1945, The United Nations has a charter containing nineteen (19) chapters and clearly listed purposes.

RISE OF NEW WORLD SUPERPOWERS

At the end of World War II a shift in world powers occurred. France and Britain faced economic challenges both on a domestic front and in their colonies. These problems fueled the demand of their colonies for Independence. To be a superpower, a nation needs to have a strong economy, an overpowering military, immense international political power and related to this a strong national ideology. These were the characteristics that were once held by Britain and France but now belonged to the United States of America and The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.