WWII - timeline
1939-1945
Prelude to WWII - 1939

**Pact of Steel Between Germany and Italy (1939):** Germany and Italy both conquered territories each felt were rightfully theirs, in Czechoslovakia (for Germany) and Albania (Italy). The Allies responded with strong rhetoric and threats of a military response if territorial conquests continued. This compelled Germany and Italy to enter into a new pact, pledging military support to one or the other if either was attacked.

**First Vienna Award to Hungary (1939):** Nazi Germany awards the southern borderlands of Czechoslovakia to Hungary to entice them to join the Axis Powers.
• **German-USSR Non-Aggression Pact (1939):** Before the outbreak of WWII, Nazi Germany and the USSR were eager to end the status quo, and extend their respective spheres of control. Therefore, they signed a secret pact where they divided central and eastern Europe in half, with Germany being ceded all lands to the west, and the Soviets being ceded all territories to the east. Both were determined to regain lands lost during WWI, and with each other eliminated as a threat, there was little to stop them. Nazi Germany would strike first, invading and occupying most of Poland. Within a few weeks, the Soviet Red Army pushed west, reclaiming its lost territories in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) as well as Eastern Poland. It struggled to gain only minimal territory from Finland though.

• **Spanish Dictator Attempts to Join Axis Powers (1939):** General Francesco Franco ascends to the head of the Spanish government in 1939, as his faction gains victory against the socialist opposition in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Victory was achieved with the support of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Since Franco's authoritarian regime was ideologically-compatible with the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy), Franco attempted to reach an agreement with Hitler and Mussolini to join their alliance. However, Franco's proposal was insufficient since a weakened Spain did not have enough to offer Europe's emerging powers. Nonetheless, Spain remains supportive to the Axis cause, offering naval bases for German ships. However, Franco's Spain refuses to adopt the Nazi's anti-Jewish policies, serving as a safe haven for Jews within Spain, and those escaping German-controlled France.
German Invasion of Poland, Start of WWII (Sept. 1, 1939): Germany invades Poland, officially beginning World War II in Europe (it had already begun in East Asia between China and Japan in 1937). Hitler was adamant about restoring ownership of the "Polish Corridor" (northern handle of Poland) since it was lost during WWI, reconnecting East Prussia to the rest of Germany. Poland and its ally, UK, attempted to negotiate with Nazi Germany to cede the Polish Corridor in order to avoid war with a militarily superior Germany. Hitler preferred invasion and occupation of Poland, knowing that it had a secret non-aggression pact with the USSR, and that without Russia, Germany could not be stopped.

When negotiations briefly stalled as Poland gave consideration to the final Nazi demand, Hitler seized the moment and invaded under the misleading notion that talks had broken down. Poland was no match for the Nazi army. Most of it came quickly under German control with the eastern portion coming under USSR occupation.

Allies Declare War on Germany (Sept 3, 1939): The United Kingdom and France declare war on Germany shortly after launching its invasion of Poland, commencing WWII.
• **USSR Invasions of East Poland (Sept. 17, 1939)**: USSR invades Eastern Poland as part of its secret agreement with the Nazis, allowing Germany to take over the remaining majority of Poland.

• **Allies Engage Germany in Phony War (1939)**: The UK and France had pledged their support for Poland if invaded. When Poland was invaded, the British and French engaged in only minor skirmishes with Germany along the French-German border. This negligible level of intervention did nothing to aid the Poles in their struggle to defend themselves, which came to a quick end.

• **Soviets Take Control of Eastern Poland (1939)**: As part of the German-USSR Non-Aggression Pact, the Eastern borderlands of Poland were assigned to Soviet control. A few weeks after the Germans invaded Poland from the west, the Soviets began their invasion from the east to claim their agreed-upon portion. Officially, the USSR claimed now that Poland was no longer a sovereign state, it could not guarantee the protection of the ethnic Belarusians and Ukrainians in the eastern borderlands, necessitating Soviet occupation. In reality, the USSR was interested in expanding its sphere of control westward as far as possible to regain territories lost during the Russian Civil War. It also felt a need to recreate the large buffer territory to protect against threats from the West.
**Baltic Nations of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia Accept USSR Control (1939)**: The German-USSR Non-Aggression Pact assigned the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to Russia. The USSR had a guarantee that Germany would not intervene. Also, the Soviets knew that the western nations that supported the independence of these nations (UK, France, USA) would be unwilling to intercede on their behalf. After Germany invaded Poland, the USSR dispatched warships to the coast of each Baltic nation to satisfy its part of the pact. They arrived with an ultimatum to either accept Soviet occupation or prepare for an invasion. Within a few weeks (by October of '39), each of the three states had accepted the USSR's terms, essentially losing their independence.

**Soviets Invade, Finland Holds Strong (1939)**: As part of the Soviet-Nazi non-aggression pact, Finland was ceded to the USSR, along with the Baltic nations and Eastern Poland. The Soviet Red Army experienced little difficulty conquering the other nations, but ran into difficulties with Finland. With the large number of army officer executions under Stalin, much of the Red Army was inexperienced, enabling Finland to largely protect its borders.
• **Primary Combatants as of 1939:**

  - **Allied Powers:** United Kingdom, France, Poland
  - **Axis Powers:** Germany, Italy, Hungary

• **German U-Boat Submarine Warfare in the Atlantic (1939):** U-boats sink a few commercial boats and carriers, but Allies learn from WWI, and travel in convoys to minimize damage. However, Allies fail to successfully seek and destroy U-boats.

• **UK Naval Blockade of Germany (1939):** United Kingdom imposes a naval blockade of German ports, which has a minimal effect upon German industry.
• **End of Winter War Between USSR and Finland (Mar. 12, 1940):** Date of peace treaty ending war. By February, both Finland and the USSR were eager to sign a peace treaty to end the war. The Finns, who had defended themselves admirably, had nearly exhausted their ammunitions, while the Soviets were eager to end what had turned out to be an embarrassing war. World opinion was largely in favor of Finland, as it was seen as a malicious invasion on the part of the USSR. Even worse, the Soviets were outperformed, suffering over 126,000 casualties against the much smaller army. The USSR demanded the region of Korelia (SE Finland), which was ceded by Finland after WWI.

• **Germany Conquers Denmark (Apr. 9, 1940):** Knowing the Allies (UK & France) were considering occupation of the Scandinavian nations, or a naval blockade in the area at the very least, Germany decided to strike first to retain a strategic advantage. The Nazi army encountered brief resistance before Denmark surrendered as the first day of battle ended, knowing that its army was no match for the Germans.

• **German Conquest of Low Countries (Netherlands, Belgium & Luxembourg) by May 15, 1940.**
• **Germany Conquers Norway (June 10, 1940):** The real prize for Germany in Scandinavia was Norway. It provided ports for its Atlantic Ocean naval campaigns, and allowed Germany to secure shipments of iron-ore from Sweden, which the Allies desired to blockade. Germany needed the iron-ore to fuel its war and industrial machine. Capturing Norway proved to be Germany's most difficult conquest since the war began, especially with the Allied troops provided in support of the Norwegians. However, the Nazi army proved too powerful, effecting Norway's surrender after about one month of fighting. With Norway and Denmark occupied, Sweden and Finland were essentially controlled by default.

• **Germany Conquers France (May 10 - June 25, 1940):** Hitler's ultimate plan was to expand east at the expense of the USSR. He attempted to establish a peace treaty with France and the UK to recognize German conquests and annexations in Central Europe, to enable Germany to recharge before invading the USSR. When the Allies refused, Hitler knew he would have to quickly conquer France, through the Low Countries (Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) to remove France as a combatant, isolating the UK to carry the Allied cause and hopefully forcing a peace treaty. The German army quickly defeated the Low Countries, with its vastly superior numbers and equipment. France was also overpowered, as Paris was captured on June 5, precipitating France's official surrender a few weeks later. The Germans directly occupied and administered Northern France, while the reconstituted French government was established in Vichy to the south, referred to as "Vichy France", a wartime puppet state under Nazi control.
• **German-controlled puppet state of Vichy France set up in Southern France after surrender to Germany (June, 1940).**

• **Conditions of German-Occupied Northern France and Vichy France**
  
  • **Racial Discrimination:** Both were forced to comply with Nazi anti-Jewish policies, as well as detaining and executing other non-desirables such as homosexuals, the handicapped, political dissenters and other ethnic groups.

  • **Food Shortages:** The Germans essentially robbed the French treasury, with one of the effects being food shortages throughout both zones.

  • **Lack of Raw Materials:** Raw materials used for industry were redirected to Germany to support the German war effort.

  • **Forced Labor:** Hundreds of thousands of French were sent to Germany against their will to provide labor for the German war effort.

  • **Propaganda:** The French were continually exposed to Nazi propaganda, including education curriculums, as the content of information was tightly regulated.
• **USSR Invasion and Occupation of Baltic Nations (June 15, 1940):** The USSR invades Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In 1939, the Soviets forced each of these Baltic nations to permit USSR military bases inside their borders. In 1940, the Soviets took the next step toward complete control. Each nation determined that it was best to peacefully surrender, rather than resist and suffer heavy loss of life against a vastly superior USSR Red Army. The Soviets deported large numbers of citizens of each nation to Siberia to work in slave camps. Upon fully occupying each of the three Baltic nations, the USSR supported the overthrow of their respective governments, replaced by Soviet-controlled communist regimes in each case.

• **USSR Takes Moldova from Romania (June 28, 1940):** The USSR crosses the border to take possession of Bessarabia (eastern half of modern Moldova). When drafting the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in 1939, both sides agreed to assign Bessarabia to the USSR sphere of control, as it had traditionally been passed back and forth between Romania and Russia, and the USSR viewed it as rightfully theirs. In 1940, the USSR gave an ultimatum to Romania that the territory must be ceded to the USSR. Romania knew it could not withstand a Soviet invasion, and that there was no outside relief available to it. It accepted the ultimatum, on the terms that ethnic Romanians could leave peacefully. The Soviets agreed, but did not hold up their end of the bargain, committing atrocities against fleeing Romanians. Furthermore, the USSR took advantage of the situation, staking out more territory to the west, beyond Bessarabia, the basis for the soon-to-be Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, and the modern Moldova.
• **British Attack Free French Forces in Algeria (July 3, 1940):** After France fell into German hands, the overseas French armed forces (Free French) vowed to continue fighting against the Axis Powers. The UK was concerned that the French naval fleet based at the French colony of Algeria would also surrender to Nazi Germany.

Despite assurances from the Free French that this would not be the case, the UK demanded that the fleet be handed over to the British Royal Navy. When the Free French refused, the British attacked. The invasion lasted one day, resulting in the loss of 1297 Free French lives, four destroyers and considerable additional damage. Relations would be strained between the UK and the Free French Forces for a couple of more years.

• **Battle of Britain Ends with Decisive UK Victory (July-Oct, 1940):** Now that Germany had captured Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, its next object was to force the United Kingdom to surrender. Hitler's strategy in doing so was to launch a major offensive into Britain, by first breaking down their air defense through a relentless air force bombing campaign. Germany then planned to follow up with an amphibious invasion after crippling UK's air defense. However, the British air force decisively defeated the German air force (Luftwaffe). In spite of their victory, the UK suffered more than 27,000 in civilian casualties during the air force campaign.
Japan and Italy Join Germany in Axis Agreement (Sept. 27, 1940): The three powers officially enter into a military alliance, referred to as the Axis Powers, to oppose the Allied Powers. Their purpose is to support the economic and general welfare of participating nations through all levers possible, particularly through military support. Their larger objective is to change the traditional power of balance established after WWI, which favored western powers such as the UK, France and the USA. Japan had already been at war with China since 1937, so their entrance into the Axis Powers dovetailed into the Sino-Japanese War. Hungary and Romania would join the Axis Powers in WWII in November. Hungary was promised territorial gains by the Axis Powers, while Romania was seeking support against the Soviet Union, which had captured Moldova from them, and threatened the country as a whole.

Italy's Unsuccessful Invasion of Greece (Oct. 28, 1940): Italy invaded Greece after Greece had rejected demand for Italian occupation. The Greek military successfully defended its country from the assault, while gaining the southern quarter of Albania by the end of the year. This would force the Germany army to assist Italian troops, bringing Greece under Axis Occupation in 1941, but at the cost of diverting significant Axis resources away from other battle zones.

Note: Italian Ambition. Since unification in 1871, Italy desired to reassert itself as the pre-eminent Mediterranean power, reminiscent of the Roman Empire. This ambition was intensified with the rise of Mussolini and his Fascist Party during the Interwar Period. Greece was viewed as an important part of this objective. After the start of WWII, Mussolini became jealous of Hitler's rapid conquests, triggering his eagerness to match the Nazi expansion. This led to the demand upon Greece to submit to Italian control in 1940. However, the Italian military proved much less adept compared to its German counterparts, unable to capture Greece until receiving support from Germany in 1941.
• **Note: Jewish Ghettos Established by Nazis.** In 1940, Nazis begin to establish Jewish Ghettos throughout the areas it controlled in Europe (forcing conquered nations to comply), as the first stepping stone in its plan to rid the world of the Jews. The ghettos were restricted areas reserved for Jews and other undesirables (such as Gypsies, homosexuals, etc.). All Jews and other undesirables were ordered to these ghettos, where they resided until being assigned to concentration or death camps for slave labor or extermination.

• **Axis Powers Gain Strong Advantage in Battle of the Atlantic (1940):** Now that Germany controlled all of the coastal territory of Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium and all of France's Atlantic coast lines, they were able to deploy vessels much more effectively into the Atlantic. German vessels and submarines (U-boats) managed to sink a large number of Allied ships, gaining the advantage in the Atlantic.

• **African Theater (1940):**
  - **West Africa:** UK and Free French Forces from Algeria unsuccessfully invade Vichy France forces to the south in Vichy-controlled French West Africa.
  - **North Africa:** Allied forces and Italian forces engage in combat along Libya-Egypt border.
  - **East Africa:** Italian Somaliland (East Africa) conquers British Somaliland in Horn of Africa.
**Jewish Exterminations Enter Full-Swing (1941):** Now that Germany was firmly in control of most of Europe, they began to aggressively implement their final solution in regards to the Jews and other undesirables. From 1933-40, less than 100,000 Jews had been exterminated. In 1941, about 1,100,000 were slaughtered. In addition to being murdered in death camps, Jews (including children) were forced to serve as subjects in cruel and torturous medical experiments. Many were forced to perform slave labor to support the war effort before being killed or literally worked to death (or starved to death). Death camps were set up throughout German-controlled territory. Other groups captured and exterminated included ethnic Poles, ethnic Roma, Soviet POWs, the disabled, homosexuals, and political dissenters (such as various religious leaders).

**Axis Powers Take Iraq from UK (April, 1941):** In April, Axis-friendly regime overthrows UK-supported government in Baghdad.

**German/Axis Invasion and Conquest of Yugoslavia (April, 1941):** The Germans commenced the invasion on Yugoslavia the same day as their invasion of Greece (April 6). Victory came swiftly, with Yugoslavia surrendering just 11 days later. Yugoslavia was divided among Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria.

**Hungary Awarded Romanian Territory by Nazis (1941):** As part of the Nazi’s promise to Hungary for joining the Axis Powers, they are awarded a significant portion of northern Romania, which contained a significant Hungarian population.
Germany Helps Italy to Conquer Greece (April, 1941): With the Italians struggling to gain a foothold in Greece, Germany decides its participation is necessary. The Germans force Romania and then Bulgaria to allow their troops to pass through, beginning their invasion of Greece from Bulgaria to the north on April 6. With German's involvement, the Axis Powers quickly defeat Greece and supplemental Allied troops within a little more than a month. Germany then dictated how Greece would be divided among the Axis Powers.

Germany Sets Up Independent State of Croatia (1941): Nazi Germany puppet state. Declared itself as independent before the completion of the conquest of Yugoslavia. Most of Croatia's coastline was awarded to Italy.

Allies Retake Iraq from Axis Powers (May, 1941).
Germany Begins Invasion of USSR (June 22, 1941): On this date, the German army crossed the German-Soviet border, commencing Operation Barbarossa. The Nazi army quickly conquered Soviet-controlled Poland, the Baltic nations, Ukraine SSR, Belarus SSR and a large chunk of Western Russia. Despite this crippling blow to the Soviets, the Germans failed to realize their objective of achieving victory. Although it controlled many dense population centers and important industrial sectors, it failed to capture Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad. This would turn the tide against Germany in both the USSR campaign and the war in general, as the Germans would become overextended, enabling the Soviets to regroup and push back. Operation Barbarossa became the largest and most deadly single military campaign in the history of the world.

Note: Purpose of Nazi Invasion of USSR. Hitler had always intended to invade the USSR, with the purpose of expanding the territory for Germans to inhabit and to increase access to needed raw materials. Furthermore, Hitler viewed the Slavs as an inferior race, while also despising communism, providing justification to destroy and deport Soviets from the Soviet land he coveted. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 simply gave Germany the time to build strength in Central Europe before poising themselves to conquer Eastern Europe. By fall of 1941, Hitler felt his army was prepared and that the USSR was weakened following their poor performance in the Winter War vs. Finland.
Germany Takes Baltic Nations from USSR (1941): As part of Germany's invasion of the USSR, it also invades and conquers the Baltic nations (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) which the Soviets just captured the year before. For Baltic peoples, the Nazi occupation is less harsh than that under the Soviets. However, it is far worse for the Jewish residents, a large portion who are massacred under Nazi rule, as part of their extermination program.

Allies Take Syria (June, 1941): The Allies determine that the Vichy France-controlled colony in the Middle East is supporting the Axis war effort. In June, the UK and fellow Allies invade from Iraq, successfully gaining control of Syria by July.

German Siege of Leningrad (USSR) Begins (Sept. 8, 1941): The German army attempted to destroy and starve the city of Leningrad through heavy bombardments and blockade. The worst of the siege lasted from September until December of 1941. Although the Germans would not abandon siege until January of 1944, they would lose their greatest advantage before the end of 1941, when the Soviets established a narrow land link to the outside world. More than 1.1 million would die during the siege.

Germany Initiates Battle of Moscow (Oct. 2, 1941): The German army attempted to submit the Soviet capital to their control. The Soviets managed to keep the Nazi army just outside city lines, forcing the Germans to abandon their objective by January of 1942, although the front line remained precariously close to Moscow over the course of the next few years. It marked the first Soviet victory against the invading Germans in WWII. By preventing a quick conquest of Moscow and Leningrad to the NW, the Soviets forced the Germans into a long, protracted war of attrition, which would prove unsustainable for the Nazis in a spacious foreign nation, forcing their all-out retreat in 1944.
Japan Attack of Pearl Harbor, U.S. (Dec. 7, 1941): In 1940, the U.S. prohibited the shipment of various types of war-related goods to Japan, escalating tensions. After Japan invaded and conquered French Indochina (Vietnam) in the summer of 1941, with Germany's endorsement, the U.S. responded by freezing Japanese assets and placing an embargo on oil exports to Japan. Japan was highly dependent on U.S. oil and therefore considered the embargo an act of war. This provoked the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941, abruptly drawing the U.S. into the war with full public support. The successful invasion proved to be a strategic blunder. First, Japan assumed that the U.S. would enter war against it at any moment, but this turned out to be a false assumption, as the U.S. only intended to declare war against Germany and Italy. By engaging the U.S. into the Pacific Theater, Japan turned the tide of the war against itself. Second, Japan focused its attack on battleships, but it was aircraft carriers and submarines that proved decisive in the Pacific Theater.

Note: U.S. Support of Allies Before Joining War. In 1941, the U.S. significantly increased the size of its navy in light of the escalating threats from hostile German and Japanese ships. The U.S. Navy protected commercial ships conducting business with Allied nations and China, adding tension with Axis Powers, setting the stage for the entry of the U.S. into WWII on the side of the Allies.

Allied Vessel Losses Decrease Significantly in Battle of the Atlantic (1941): 1940 was a disastrous year for Allied ships (primarily UK and its former/current colonies), as German submarines and surface vessels hunted commercial ships mercilessly, while also managing to sink several battleships. Even "neutral" US commercials vessels were being sunk. This continued into 1941, but by spring, the Allies successfully implemented new strategies and technologies to drastically minimize losses. Increasing numbers of destroyers and other battleships were deployed to escort commercial ships. The British also innovated new technology to better detect enemy vessels, while also cracking Nazi naval codes.
Japan Conquers Indochina (Vietnam) from France (1941): With the blessing of Hitler, Japan conquers the French colony of Indochina (Vietnam) from Vichy France.

Japan Conquers Allied Territories in Southeast Asia (1941): Japan also invaded Malaya (UK territory), Singapore (UK), Hong Kong (UK), Philippines (US) and Dutch East Indies (Netherlands). Japan was successful with each of these invasions, occupying each of these Allied possessions.

African Theater (1941):

North Africa: Germans send forces into Libya to help the Italians against the Allied forces out of Egypt. With the aid of the Nazis, the Axis Powers push the Allied forces back into Egypt (primarily UK and Commonwealth forces).

East Africa: British troops retake British Somaliland from the Italians (Horn of Africa, East Africa). They then proceed to conquer the entire Italian colony of East Africa (modern Somalia and Ethiopia), bringing an end to "Italian East Africa", and ending the East Africa campaign of WWII.
**Germany Fails to Capture Moscow (Jan, 1942):** The Battle of Moscow officially ends in January of 1942, but battles would continue in the outskirts of the city, with the Nazi army maintaining a position uncomfortably close to the Soviet capital.

**German Siege of Leningrad Continues (1942):** During 1942, the Soviets attempt multiple offensives against the Nazi army, all of which fail. However, they do manage to undermine the Nazis' progress toward destroying the city, perpetuating the war of attrition.

**Germany Initiates the Battle of Stalingrad, USSR (July, 1942):** A German offensive in an attempt to capture Stalingrad, beginning July 17, 1942. By its completion in 1943, it would become the deadliest battle in human history. The Nazi army penetrated inside the city, engaging in urban warfare with the Soviets.

**USSR Achieves Turning Point Against Germany (1942):** Germany's rapid advance of 1941 did not achieve its goal of quickly forcing the USSR into surrender and submission to Nazi Germany. This bought the Soviets enough time to concentrate their defenses at key flash points, such as Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad. In addition, it forced Germany into a war of attrition, requiring a continual resupply of supplies, equipment and manpower, which was difficult since they were so deep into enemy territory. It was especially difficult in cold-weather months, which was nearly half the year in the strategic parts of the USSR. This would prove to be the turning point of the war, by depleting a substantial portion of the German army and resources.
Germany Directly Occupies Vichy France and Corsica (Nov 11, 1942): After the Allies and Free French Forces conquered French North Africa from Vichy France, Hitler decided to move in and occupy Vichy France and Corsica to prevent Allied forces from simply crossing the Mediterranean to capture Southern France.

Allies Turn the Tide Against Germany in Battle of the Atlantic (1942): During the first half of 1942, U-boats were successful at sinking U.S. vessels off the shore of the eastern U.S. coast. By the second half of the year, the Allies successfully employed convoys, while developing new technologies (such as improved radar and anti-submarine mortars) enabling the effective destruction of large numbers of U-boat submarines, turning the tide toward the favor of the Allies in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Asian/Pacific Theater (1942): At onset of 1942, the Japanese enjoy the upper hand against the Allies (primarily consisting of British and British Commonwealth). They maintain UK, Dutch and French colonies captured in 1941, while gaining ground in Burma. However, they suffer military defeats to the U.S. during the latter half of the year, due in large part to the fact that the Americans manage to break Japanese naval codes.

African Theater (1942):

North Africa: Allied troops defeat the Germans at Alexandria (Egypt), and begin to push them back into Italy-controlled Libya.

Madagascar: Allied troops capture the island off the coast of East Africa from Vichy France.
British India Problems (1942): UK entered their colony of British India into WWII. Their East Indian subjects were eager participants in WWI, but support was mixed for WWII. Many Indians argued that the UK did not deserve their service, based on atrocities against Indian people. However, 2,250,000 volunteered, making it the largest volunteer army in the history of the world. Nonetheless, the Indian National Congress (Indian Independence Movement) simultaneously drafted demands of complete independence, accompanied by non-violent protests throughout the nation.

However, other factions also arose that did not follow this credo, resulting in bombings and other violent acts. The Indian National Army was also created, with the support of enemies of the Allies, particularly Japan. They fought against British and British Indian forces in the jungles of Burma and Bengal, resulting in an Allied victory. It did succeed in sparking mutinies among British Indian soldiers fighting on behalf of the UK, and generated support for the Indian independence movement. Furthermore, the UK was now faced with the realization that their British Indian subjects were no longer reliable as a fighting force when needed. This all contributed to the realization of Indian independence from the UK in 1947.
Allies Gain Control of Africa (1943): British & Commonwealth troops drive German forces out of Libya, into Tunisia. U.S. and Free French Forces invade from the West. The Germans are trapped in Tunisia, being attacked by Allies from all directions. They are forced to surrender on May 13, 1943, with nearly 240,000 prisoners of war.

Allied Invasion of Sicily (July 9-Aug 17, 1943): Primarily carried out by the UK, US and Canadian forces, launched from Tunisia after recently gaining complete control over North Africa. The Allies' objective is to secure safe passage through the Mediterranean Sea.

Mussolini Removed from Power (July 25, 1943): With the war effort rapidly deteriorating, Mussolini is overthrown and imprisoned.
Allied Invasion and Conquest of Mainland Italy (Sept 3-16, 1943): After taking Sicily with surprising ease, the Allies (primarily UK, USA, Canadian forces) determined it was time to strike Italy from the south while it was reeling. Popular support among Italians for the war effort had dropped precipitously by this point, especially after the Allies began to carry out air raids upon Rome. Italians were also dissatisfied with the large numbers of German troops that were now present throughout Italy. Mussolini was overthrown and arrested on July 25, and the new government began to negotiate a surrender with the Allies. This compelled the Nazi troops to change their disposition from a guest armed force to an occupying force. Even as the new Italian government was finalizing an armistice with the Allies, the Allied invasion began, in order to place greater pressure on the Italian government and to drive out the Nazis. The Nazis quickly retreated north, ceding a large portion of Southern Italy.

Italian Social Republic (Republic of Salo) Set Up as Nazi Puppet State (Sept, 1943): The Nazis rescued Mussolini from imprisonment in September, and placed him as the leader of the puppet state covering Northern Italy, after the Allies invaded and gained control over Southern Italy.

Germany Takes Control of Italy-Occupied Areas in Balkans (1943): Once Germany was aware that Italy had negotiated an armistice with the Allies, it moved in to take control of Italy's possessions in the Balkans.
**German Siege of Leningrad (USSR) Falters (1943):** Germans intensify bombing, desperately attempting to bring their invasion to a quick conclusion. However, the Soviets manage to increase the corridor through the Nazi blockade, enabling them to continue holding out. Germany nears the point of being unable to further sustain the attack on Leningrad.

**Germany Withdraws from Battle of Stalingrad (1943):** A large part of the Nazi army is trapped inside the city, engaged in urban warfare, resulting in heavy casualties among the Germans. By February of 1943, they are forced to withdraw, ceding victory to the Soviets, who also suffered immense loss of life. The city itself was nearly decimated.

**German Retreat Out of USSR Begins (1943):** Stalled just short of its primary targets inside Russia, the Germans begin to fall back, since their supply lines were constantly attacked, spreading them thin despite their large numbers. Plus, with the resulting lack of supplies, they were suffering from an increasingly high death toll.
The U.S. and Allies Strengthen Their Position in Asian-Pacific Theater Against Japan (1943): The U.S. gained the upper hand in the Pacific Ocean. Its superior industrial capability allowed it to build up the size of its fleet to outclass that of the Japanese navy. The U.S. also conquered multiple island bases from Japan, tightening the perimeter Japan had established in surrounding Pacific islands to buffer itself. Fighting in China between British/Chinese forces and Japanese forces remained at a stalemate.

Allies Gain the Upper Hand in Battle of the Atlantic (1943): After the winter moratorium in the naval battle, early spring began disastrously for the Allies. The Germans became increasingly aggressive with their U-boat submarine attacks, realizing more success than ever in sinking battleships. May proved to be the turning point, as the full participation of U.S. helped spark a turn-about in fortunes. In addition, the new technologies developed the previous years, such as improved radar and submersive missiles, began to be highly effective in real-world application. By the end of the year, Allied convoys were inflicting greater losses upon the German navy than losses suffered.

Lebanon Independence (1943): The Allies (including Free French Forces) drove German forces out of Lebanon in 1941, fearing that Germany would pressure the subservient Vichy France government into ceding the territory to Nazi ownership. Under international pressure (from fellow Allied nations, especially the U.S.), the Free French Forces recognize Lebanon Independence in 1943. To protect it from the Axis Powers, Lebanon remains under Allied military control until the end of the war.

Portugal Abandons Neutrality to Support Allies (1943): Portugal had tried to remain neutral, but with Nazi Germany at the threshold of the Pyrenees Mountains separating France and Spain, the Nazi threat loomed large. When Germany tried to force Portugal to provide raw materials needed for its war effort, Portugal resisted. Consequently, German U-boats sank a few Portuguese commercial ships. By 1943, Portugal was more than happy to cooperate fully with the Allies, lending air force and naval bases to the UK.
Soviets Drive Germans Out of Russia (1944):
After being mired in a war of attrition deep into the Soviet Union for nearly 3 years, the Nazi offensive is no longer sustainable. When the invasion began in the summer of 1941, Hitler took it for granted that victory would be swift, not preparing a contingency plan for a prolonged battle in harsh, Russian winter conditions. By early 1944, the Germans could not sustain their siege on the USSR any longer, and were forced into an all-out retreat. Suffering from a high loss of life and lack of supplies (due to continued attacks on supply lines), the Nazi army was also severely weakened, making it ripe for pursuing Soviet forces.

Allies Storm Normandy in Northern France (June, 1944): The Allies (UK, USA, Canada) storm the beaches of Normandy on June 6, gaining control of the area.

USSR Red Army Destroys German Army Group Centre (July, 1944):
Destroyed in Belarus in July of 1944. One of three main army groups that carried out Nazi invasion of the USSR. Enables the Soviets to retake Belarus & Ukraine, and to advance into East Poland.
Allies Liberate Paris (August, 1944): Just as the Allies (UK, USA, Canada, Free French Forces) had secured the area around Normandy, Free French Forces insisted on advancing into Paris. The Allies reluctantly agreed to provide support (instead wanting to push east toward Berlin). The campaign began on August 19, with the Germans surrendering Paris August 25.

Allied Invasion and Liberation of Southern France (August, 1944): In August of 1944, the Allies (USA, UK, Canadian, Free French Forces) invaded Southern France from Italy and North Africa, an offensive coordinated with French resistant fighters inside German-occupied France. The Germans put up little resistance on their part, and immediately retreated away from the beaches where the Allies landed, and proceeded to rapidly retreat all the way back to Germany.

Soviets Capture Romania (August, 1944): The Soviets enter Romania in August of 1944. Within days, Romania surrenders, switching to the side of the Allies, ending its coerced inclusion in the Axis alliance.

Allies Drive Nazi Army Out of France, Back to Germany (Aug-Dec, 1944): After liberating Paris in August, the Allies proceeded to advance eastward, liberating the rest of Paris, Luxembourg, Belgium and most of the Netherlands.

Soviets Capture Bulgaria (Sept, 1944): The Soviets enter Bulgaria in September of 1944 and support local antifascist in their struggle against the Germans and local fascists. Bulgaria abruptly changes sides to the Allies.
**USSR Baltic Offensive Against Germans (Sept-Nov, 1944):** By September, the USSR Red Army was poised to mount an offensive to retake the Baltic territories lost to Nazi Germany in 1941. By November, the Soviets had completely driven the Nazi army out of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

**Soviets Conquer East Poland from Germany (Sep-Dec, 1944):** With the destruction of German's Army Group Centre, the Soviets are unable to be repelled as they advance into East Poland. The Red Army conspires with leaders in the Poland capital of Warsaw to revolt against the German occupiers, who still retail possession of West Poland. The Poles proceed as planned, but the Soviets withhold their promised support. As a result, the Nazis carried out a massacre of a large number of the rebels. This would enable the Soviets to secure control of a weakened Poland when the Germans inevitably continued their retreat out of Poland.

**Soviets Enter Yugoslavia (Oct, 1944):** The Soviets enter Yugoslavia in October of 1944, supporting the local antifascist to free their country from Nazi rule within the month.

**Soviets Conquer East Prussia from Germany (Oct, 1944):** USSR Red Army advances into East Prussia (Germany) in October, forcing Hitler to relocate to Berlin.

**Allies Liberate Greece (Oct-Nov, 1944):** U.S., UK and British Commonwealth (former/current British colonies) forces liberate several cities in Greece beginning in October of 1944. Nazi forces are completely evicted from mainland Greece by November, with several Nazi encampments remaining in place on several Greek islands until the end of the war.
Allies Advance in Italy (1944): With the general Italian public viewing the Allies as liberators, the Allied forces (primarily USA, UK, Canadian, Free French) from Southern Italy steadily push the occupying German forces north. The Allies also captured the Italian island of Sardinia. By the end of 1944, the Nazis were nearly evicted from Italy altogether, holding on to a small section in NE Italy.

Prelude to Greek Civil War (Dec, 1944): Late in 1944, it became evident that the German occupiers would soon be leaving, since the USSR Red Army was rapidly advancing from the north. When the Germans withdrew, two primary factions within Greece arose. One was pro-Western, and favored a democratic republic. The other was pro-USSR, and favored a communist government. The first fighting between the two factions broke out in December of 1944. This would serve as a prelude to the Greek Civil War, which would begin in earnest in 1946.

Iceland Independence (1944): Iceland gains independence, after Denmark was no longer able to administer it as a result of being occupied by Nazi German forces since 1940.

Syrian Independence (1944): Syria declared independence from France in 1941 after France was conquered by Nazi Germany. The Vichy France regime (puppet state of Germany) refused to recognize it until 1944, under international pressure to do so.
Allies Defeat Germans in Battle of the Bulge (Jan, 1945): Ending in January of '45 with a resounding German defeat, it opens the floodgates of Allied forces into Germany. The Allies would enter Berlin in late April.

The Germans surrendered to the Western Allies on May 7, 1945.

Yalta Conference (Feb, 1945): The three heads of state of the USSR (Stalin), United Kingdom (Churchill) and the United States (Eisenhower) meet to determine the fate of post-war Europe, as it became clear that an Allied victory was imminent. Points of Agreement:

(1) Division of Germany and Austria into four occupied zones;
(2) German reparations, including slave labor of Nazi soldiers;
(3) New Poland and Germany borders, where the USSR would retain East Poland, and Poland would gain East Germany;
(4) Nazi war criminals prosecuted;
(5) Denazification and demilitarization of Germany.
Austria Conquered, Beginning of 10-Year Allied Occupation (1945): As the Western Allies (UK, USA, French) closed in from the west, and the USSR Red Army closed in from the East, prominent Austrians declared Austria as separate from Germany. As a result, the Allies were far more gentle with their handling of Austria compared to Germany. The Allies occupied Austria for 10 years following the war, giving Austria its complete sovereignty in 1955.

Allies Conquer Remainder of Italy (1945): Allies advance steadily into the Nazi-held NW corner of Italy in the spring of '45. The Nazis negotiate a surrender with the Allies on May 2.

Denmark and Norway Liberated from Germans (1945): With the Allies closing in on its homeland, German troops were forced to withdraw from Norway in 1945. The Soviets drove remaining Nazi forces out of Denmark as well. Both nations were liberated before Germany's surrender in May of '45.

Allies Maintain Advantage in Battle of the Atlantic Until End of War (1945): Battles at sea continue until the surrender of Germany in May of '45. The remainder of Germany's naval fleet is turned over to the Allies upon its surrender in the war.

Finland Expels Germans (April, 1945): After signing a peace treaty with the USSR in September of '44, Finland turns its military focus against the Nazi troops that still remain within its borders, driving the last of the Nazis out of Finland by April of '45. When Germany attacked the USSR in 1941, Finland joined the Axis Powers, since it then shared a common enemy in Russia, which had attempted to invade Finland in 1939. As part of this new alliance, Finland allowed Nazi troops to be stationed on its own land to help with the invasion of the USSR. Despite Nazi attempts to assume control over the Finnish government and its army, Finland remained independent and democratic during the war. It also protected its Jewish population against Nazi persecutions.
Battle of Berlin Begins (April, 1945): The Soviet army enters Berlin in mid-April, just a few weeks before the Western Allies (US, UK, France). Hitler and most of his closest advisors and cabinet members would commit suicide just before the Soviets took complete control of the city.

Nazi Germany Surrenders (May 2, 1945): The Nazis surrendered on May 2, but pockets of resistance continued, primarily as some troops attempted to make their way west to be captured by the Western Allies, who were less harsh in their treatment of captured Germans than the Soviets.

Czechoslovakia Liberated (1945): Soviets drive out the Germans, setting up a provincial Czechoslovakian government in the interim.

Loss of East Germany to Poland (1945): With Poland's urging, the USSR demands a massive territorial transfer of much of East Germany to Poland. Since the Soviets redistributed large amounts of East Poland to Belarus and Ukraine, it insisted that a large portion of German territory was needed to provide Poles with sufficient living space. Furthermore, it was argued that large portions of this land historically belonged to Poland. Finally, the Odor River was determined to be the most sensible border, since it provided a natural boundary, and presented a much shorter boundary than other proposals. The Western Allies (UK, USA, France) objected initially, but finally relented.

Germans Lose East Prussia (1945): The Soviets divide East Prussia between Lithuania, Poland and Russia.
Forced Expulsions of German People (1945): Approximately 14 million Germans living in re-appointed East German territories were forcibly deported to inside the newly-contracted German borders. The Soviet and Poland soldiers that drove them out of the former German lands were often brutal in their treatment of German migrants, committing acts of rape and murder. Up to 2 million Germans were killed or went missing as a result of the forced expulsions. The USSR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia argued the necessity of the forced expulsions based on the following reasons:
1) Belief that ethnically-homogenous nation states would enjoy greater peace,
2) Germans had proven to be a menace,
3) Need to make sufficient space available for those that had been overrun by Germans, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Separation Into West & East Germany (1945): The Allies originally intended to combine all the occupied zones into a single political entity, governed by a council represented by each of the Allied nations (USSR, UK, USA, France). However, differences and distrust between the three Western Allies and the USSR continued to widen after the war. As the Cold War tensions escalated, the willingness to collaborate in Germany diminished. By 1949, it was clear that a unified German state operated under Allied control would not materialize. Therefore, in 1949, the three Western Allies combined their respective occupied territories into "West Germany". The USSR would retain control over their area of occupation, forming "East Germany". Tensions would run high between the two "Germanies", as it served as a pawn between the "Western Powers" and the USSR during the Cold War. Germany would not be reunified until 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
U.S. Defeats Japan (1945): Throughout 1945, the Allies continued to close in on Japan, achieving victory after victory, and moving in closer to the Japanese mainland. When Japan refused to accept Allied terms in July of '45, the U.S. proceeded with plans to use a nuclear bomb to force Japan into submission. Hiroshima was bombed first on August 6, then Nagasaki on August 9, killing roughly 220,000 of primarily civilians. More nuclear bombings were planned in the event that Japan still refused to surrender. Japan announced its surrender on August 15. The U.S. argued that the loss of American and Asian life would have been far greater if the war were to rage on. The contrarian argument is that Japan was near the point of surrender anyway. The justification of these nuclear attacks is a hotly debated controversy to this day.
Dresden 1945
over 90% of the city center destroyed
Dresden 1890
used to be called German Florence
Dresden 1910
A view from the town hall over the Altstadt (old town)
The Bombing of Dresden was a military bombing by the British Royal Air Force (RAF) and the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) and as part of the Allied forces between 13 February and 15 February 1945 in the Second World War. In four raids, altogether 3,600 planes, of which 1,300 were heavy bombers, dropped as many as 650,000 incendiaries, together with 8,000 lb. high-explosive bombs and hundreds of 4,000-pounders, all resulting in the deaths of some 25,000 civilians.\[1\] In all more than 3,900 tons of high-explosive bombs and incendiary devices were dropped on the city, the Baroque capital of the German state of Saxony. The resulting firestorm destroyed 15 square miles (39 square kilometres) of the city centre.\[2\]

A 1953 United States Air Force report written by Joseph W. Angell defended the operation as the justified bombing of a military and industrial target, which was a major rail transportation and communication centre, housing 110 factories and 50,000 workers in support of the Nazi war effort.\[3\] However, several researchers have discovered that not all of the communications infrastructure, such as the bridges, were in fact targeted, nor were the extensive industrial areas outside the city centre.\[4\] It is argued that Dresden was a cultural landmark of little or no military significance, a "Florence on the Elbe" (Elbflorenz), as it was known, and the attacks were indiscriminate area bombing and not proportionate to the commensurate military gains.\[5\][6]
In March 1945, the Nazi regime ordered its press to publish a death toll of 200,000 for the Dresden raids. Death toll estimates as high as 500,000 have been given.[7] An independent investigation commissioned by the city council in 2010 reported a maximum of 25,000 victims.[8]

Dresden was not the only city destroyed by the Allies. The bombing of the larger city of Hamburg in 1943 created one of the greatest firestorms raised by the RAF and USAAF,[9] killing roughly 50,000 civilians in Hamburg and practically destroying the entire city. The Allies also bombed the smaller city of Pforzheim in 1945, killing roughly 18,000 civilians,[10] suggesting that the bombing raids over Dresden were actually not the most severe of World War II. However, they continue to be recognized as one of the many examples of civilian suffering caused by Allied strategic bombing, and have become exposed among the moral causes célèbres of the Second World War.[11] Post-war discussion, popular legends, historical revisionism and Cold War propaganda of the bombing includes debate by commentators, officials and historians as to whether or not the bombing was justified, and whether its outcome constituted a war crime.
• **Bombing of Dresden - Sources:**

[1] Angell, Joseph W. *Historical Analysis of the 14–15 February 1945 Bombings of Dresden*, USAF Historical Division Research Studies Institute, Air University, (1953) The number of bombers and tonnage of bombs are taken from this USAF document written in 1953, which was classified secret until 1978.

• Taylor, Frederick. *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945*. London: Bloomsbury, (2005), gives the figures 1,100 heavy bombers and 4,500 tons.


• Bomber Command Arthur Harris's report, *"Extract from the official account of Bomber Command by Arthur Harris, 1945"*, National Archives, Catalogue ref: AIR 16/487, which says that 1,600 acres (6.5 km²) were destroyed.


• RAPE AS A WAR CRIME:

Some historians, like the British Historian, Antony James Beevor, in his work *Berlin: The Downfall 1945* speaks of atrocities, which, according to the historical consensus prevailing in Germany and the West, were committed by the Red Army against German civilians – in particular, the extremely widespread rape of German women and female Russian forced laborers, both before and after the end of the war. Beevor’s book encountered harsh criticism in Russia and some Russian scholars accused him of “repeating Nazi propaganda, when in fact,” Beevor says, “the bulk of the evidence on the subject came from Soviet sources, especially the NKVD reports in GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), and a wide range of reliable personal accounts.”

For more information on the subject reed Beevor’s article published in Guardian on 20 April 2002 entitled “They raped every German female from eight to eighty.”
London, 1940
after a Nazi bombing
Liverpool, 1940
after a Nazi bombing

The Blitz: British colloquialism for air attacks on UK towns, particularly at night in 1940–1, especially on London, derived from *Blitzkrieg*, lightning war, said to be the preferred German method. Night air attacks meant, however, German acceptance of slow attrition. Towns important for war, like Belfast, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow, Hull, Plymouth, Coventry, suffered but the main ‘Blitz’ descended on London, which was bombed every night but one for over two months. Human casualties were less than feared; damage to buildings greater. The indirect effect of homelessness on war production was greater than the destruction of factories. Death, injury, and homelessness lowered morale; survivors drew strength from self-esteem and comradeship. This was especially true in London where size enabled effective concentration of help for victims. In 1940–1, before the attack on the USSR diverted the German air force, about 42,000 were killed in the UK and more than 50,000 seriously wounded. [from The Oxford Companion to British History | 2002]
Stalingrad before, during, and after WWII
Stalingrad
Russian children’s hideout
Jewish children in concentration camps
Jewish Migrations to Palestine (1945): Jewish migrations to Palestine accelerate due to persecutions in Europe, which continue even after Allies free Jews from Nazis. Jews were believed to be cooperating with communists, as many Jews were attracted to communism. The UK imposes a limit to the number of Jews allowed to settle in Palestine due to protests by Arabs. By 1945, most Jews, and the U.S., support unlimited immigration, and the creation of a Jewish state. As soon as UK pulls out of Palestine in 1948, being helpless to defuse the situation, the Jewish state of Israel is declared. This is immediately followed by an Arab-coalition invasion. The Arab-Israeli War ended in 1949 with an Israeli victory, and the confirmation of Israel as a sovereign state.

Simmering Internal Strife in Greece (1945): Acts of violence seen in 1944 are reduced in 1945. The democratic factions and communist factions sign a peace treaty, attempting to peacefully arrive at a solution. However, the factions only grew further apart, and isolated incidents of violence continued, spurring the full-scale Greek Civil war beginning in 1946.
Expanded Soviet Bloc (1945): The Soviet (Eastern) Bloc was a collection of nations that were militarily and economically tied to (and dominated by) the Soviet Union. After WWII, the USSR was supposed to allow the Eastern European nations it conquered to re-establish their independence as democratic republics. However, they refused to follow through with their promise to fellow Allied nations, and engineered the emergence of communist-style governments in captured nations through intimidation and rigged elections. The Soviet Union chose to pursue its own national agenda, which dictated a vast amount of buffer territory to the west to protect itself from its greatest national security threat. Since 1812, Russia had been invaded on three separate occasions from the west (Napoleonic France, Germany in WWI and Nazi Germany in WWII). By expanding its sphere of influence westward, Russia intended to prevent potential future attacks from a western power.
WWII
AFTERMATH
by Denis Bašić
World War II Military Deaths
(Allies)

- Soviet Union: 65%
- China: 23%
- Yugoslavia: 3%
- United States: 2%
- United Kingdom: 2%
- France: 1%
- Poland: 1%
- Others: 3%

www.StrangeMilitary.com
World War II - visual scale of military deaths by theater, year

Europe:

- **West**
  - Germany, Italy - 0.8 mln.
  - Western Allies - 1.5 mln. (including:
    - Yugoslavia - 0.45
    - UK - 0.37
    - France - 0.22
    - USA - 0.18
    - Canada - 0.04

- **East**
  - Germany, Italy, Romania, Hungary, ROA, UPA - 5.2 mln.
  - USSR, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria - 10.65 mln.

Asia:

- **Pacific**
  - Japan - 0.48 mln.
  - USA - 0.23 mln.

- **Manchuria**
  - Japan - 0.32 mln.
  - USSR - 0.02 mln.

By Sergey Mavrody
Total casualties of WWII for the entire world including the countries not listed here is estimated to be c 61 millions.

Sources:
WWII statistics
WWII casualties