

# 80<sup>th</sup> Year of Hiroshima Day

On 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945, the US dropped “Little Boy” on Hiroshima and “Fat Man” on Nagasaki, killing thousands instantly, causing massive destruction and long-term radiation effects, and leading to Japan’s surrender in World War II.

## World War II

World War II (1939–1945) was the most extensive and lethal war in human history, involving over 30 nations grouped broadly into two rival military coalitions, the Allied Powers (including France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China) and the Axis Powers (primarily Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan). Nearly 100 million people were directly mobilized for military service, industry, and war production. Civilian and military deaths are estimated between 70 and 85 million, representing roughly 3% of the global population at the time. Unlike World War I, which was largely centered in Europe, WWII spread across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, making it a truly global war.

## Key Causes of World War II

### 1. Treaty of Versailles (1919)

The post-WWI settlement imposed punitive measures on Germany, including loss of territory, severe military restrictions, war guilt acceptance, and heavy reparations. These measures humiliated Germany, bred resentment, and contributed to the rise of extremist nationalism and revanchist ambitions.

### 2. Failure of the League of Nations

The League, created to prevent wars, lacked authority and enforcement mechanisms. Its inability to stop Japan’s invasion of Manchuria (1931) and Italy’s conquest of Abyssinia/Ethiopia (1935) showed dictators that aggressive expansion could occur without major consequences.

### 3. Economic Crisis and the Great Depression (1929)

The collapse of global trade and mass unemployment destabilized political systems. In Germany, hyperinflation and the withdrawal of US loans deepened hardship, paving the way for authoritarian regimes and militarization. Japan also turned to imperial expansion to secure resources.

### 4. Rise of Fascism and Nazism

Fascism under Benito Mussolini in Italy glorified nationalism, militarism, and authoritarian rule. Nazism under Adolf Hitler combined fascist ideology with extreme racial theories, advocating Aryan supremacy, anti-Semitism, overturning the Treaty of Versailles, and acquiring *Lebensraum* (“living space”) in Eastern Europe.

### 5. Policy of Appeasement

Britain and France, wary of another devastating war, allowed Hitler to repeatedly breach the Treaty of Versailles, including the remilitarization of the Rhineland (1936) and annexation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia (1938). Even after Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia in 1939, they avoided direct military confrontation until Poland was invaded.

### 6. Invasion of Poland (1 September 1939)

Germany’s invasion, enabled by the secret Nazi-Soviet Pact to divide Poland, finally prompted Britain and France to declare war on Germany, marking the formal outbreak of WWII.

## 7. Japanese Expansion and Pearl Harbor (1941)

Japan's desire to dominate Asia and the Pacific led to the invasion of Southeast Asia and the attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, bringing the United States into the war and globalizing the conflict.

## Key Events of World War II

### 1. Start of the War & Nazi–Soviet Pact (1939)

Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to a non-aggression pact that secretly divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. This enabled Germany to invade Poland without fearing Soviet interference, prompting declarations of war by Britain and France.

### 2. Phoney War (1939–1940)

A period of minimal fighting on the Western Front despite formal declarations of war. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union fought and defeated Finland in the Winter War (1939–1940). Germany also seized Denmark and Norway in early 1940.

### 3. Fall of France & Blitzkrieg Tactics (1940)

German forces bypassed the heavily fortified Maginot Line via Belgium, using fast, coordinated attacks combining tanks, aircraft, and infantry—known as *Blitzkrieg*. France surrendered in June 1940, and a German-controlled Vichy regime was established.

### 4. Battle of Britain (July–September 1940)

The German Luftwaffe launched sustained bombing raids, but Britain's Royal Air Force, aided by radar technology and high morale, repelled the attacks. This was Hitler's first major military failure.

### 5. Operation Barbarossa (1941)

Germany broke the Nazi–Soviet Pact by invading the USSR in June 1941, achieving early gains but becoming bogged down in winter conditions. The failure to capture Moscow marked a turning point.

### 6. US Entry into the War (December 1941)

Japan's Pearl Harbor attack led the US to declare war on Japan; Germany and Italy responded by declaring war on the US, transforming the war into a fully global conflict.

### 7. Turning Points (1942–1943)

The US Navy's victory at the Battle of Midway (June 1942) crippled Japanese naval power. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad (February 1943) halted German advances in the East. Allied victories in North Africa paved the way for the invasion of Southern Europe.

## Key Consequences of World War II

### 1. Human Cost

An estimated 70–85 million deaths, including soldiers and civilians. The Holocaust saw the planned extermination of six million Jews, along with millions of other targeted groups.

### 2. Emergence of the Cold War

The defeat of Axis powers led to Germany's division into occupation zones. The Soviet Union gained control over Eastern Europe, while the US emerged as the leading Western power, setting the stage for ideological and geopolitical rivalry.

### 3. Establishment of the United Nations (1945)

The UN was formed to promote peace, security, and international cooperation, replacing the failed League of Nations.

### 4. Economic Recovery

The US launched the Marshall Plan (1948) to rebuild Western Europe's war-ravaged economies and prevent the spread of communism.

## **5. Nuclear Arms Race**

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki introduced nuclear warfare, leading to a strategic arms race during the Cold War.

## **6. Decolonization Movements**

European colonial powers, weakened by the war, faced intensified demands for independence in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

## **7. Impact on India**

Economic strain from war financing led to inflation, high taxes, and shortages. The Bengal famine of 1943, partly caused by wartime policies, killed millions. The Indian National Army (INA) under Subhas Chandra Bose inspired nationalist sentiment. Returning Indian soldiers, exposed to global political freedoms, became more politically assertive, contributing to India's independence in 1947.

## **India's Response to World War II**

### **1. Unilateral Declaration of War**

As a British colony, India was automatically committed to WWII when Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939 without consulting Indian political leaders.

### **2. Massive Military Contribution**

Over 2.5 million Indian soldiers volunteered, making it the largest volunteer force in history. Indian troops served in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, participating in major campaigns such as the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy and the Burma Campaign.

### **3. Role of the Indian National Army (INA)**

Formed initially from Indian POWs captured by Japan, and later led by Subhas Chandra Bose, the INA allied with Japan to attempt liberation of India through military action in Southeast Asia.

### **4. Congress Opposition**

The Indian National Congress protested India's involuntary involvement, resigning from provincial ministries in 1939 and demanding that any war support be conditional on a clear British commitment to post-war independence.

### **5. Conditional Support by Other Groups**

The Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, and other groups extended conditional cooperation to the British, seeing the war as a strategic opportunity to advance their political objectives.

### **6. Gandhi's Position**

Gandhi initially advocated non-violent support for the Allied cause against fascism, but shifted to a stronger demand for independence during the war years, culminating in the Quit India Movement of 1942.

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