

Second World War: Causes, Development and Consequences

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Abstract. *World War II (1939–1945) is considered the most destructive and large-scale armed conflict in human history. Spanning Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, the war resulted in millions of deaths, huge economic losses, and a fundamental reshaping of the international system. This study examines the causes of World War II, the main events that occurred during the conflict, and its political, economic, and social impacts on the world. The study shows that the war was not just a military struggle, but also led to significant changes in international relations, technology, economics, and human rights. The main causes of the war were the failure of the international order that emerged after World War I, economic crises, extreme nationalism, and the expansionist policies of totalitarian regimes. In particular, the aggressive actions of Nazi Germany led by Adolf Hitler and the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations in maintaining peace made a global conflict inevitable. The military operations that took place during the war, especially the decisive moments such as the Battle of Stalingrad and the Normandy landings, paved the way for the victory of the Allied forces. The consequences of the conflict were not limited to the military sphere, but also profoundly changed political and economic structures; great powers such as Nazi Germany, Italy, and Imperial Japan collapsed, and many states were subjected to various political regimes. Although the creation of the United Nations formed a new platform for maintaining peace, the ideological competition between the United States and the USSR led to the beginning of the "Cold War". This war, which accelerated technological innovations and launched the atomic age, also determined that the principles of human rights, international law, and global cooperation became the main pillars of the modern world.*

Keywords: *Second World war, Germany, Hitler, allied powers, Axis powers, cold war*

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İkinci dünya müharibəsi: səbəbləri, inkişafı və nəticələri

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Xülasə. *İkinci Dünya müharibəsi (1939–1945) bəşər tarixinin ən dağıdıcı və genişmiqyaslı silahlı münaqişəsi hesab olunur. Avropa, Asiya, Afrika və Sakit okean regionlarını əhatə edən bu müharibə milyonlarla insanın ölümü, nəhəng iqtisadi itkilər və beynəlxalq sistemin köklü şəkildə yenidən formalaşması ilə nəticələnmişdir. Bu tədqiqat İkinci Dünya müharibəsinin səbəblərini, münaqişə zamanı baş verən əsas hadisələri və dünyaya siyasi, iqtisadi və sosial təsirlərini araşdırır.*

Tədqiqat göstərir ki, müharibə sadəcə hərbi mübarizə deyil, həm də beynəlxalq münasibətlərdə, texnologiyada, iqtisadiyyatda və insan hüquqlarında əhəmiyyətli dəyişikliklərə səbəb olub. Müharibənin əsas səbəbləri Birinci Dünya müharibəsindən sonra yaranan beynəlxalq düzənin uğursuzluğu, iqtisadi böhranlar, həddindən artıq millətçilik və totalitar rejimlərin ekspansionist siyasəti olmuşdur. Xüsusilə, Adolf Hitlerin rəhbərlik etdiyi nasist Almaniyasının təcavüzkar addımları və Millətlər Liqasının sülhü qorumaqda qeyri-effektivliyi dünya miqyaslı münaqişəni qaçılmaz etmişdir. Müharibə dövründə baş verən hərbi əməliyyatlar, xüsusən Stalingrad döyüşü və Normandiya desantu kimi həlledici məqamlar müttəfiq qüvvələrin qələbəsinə yol açmışdır. Münaqişənin nəticələri təkcə hərbi sahə ilə məhdudlaşmamış, həm də siyasi və iqtisadi strukturları dərinlən dəyişmişdir; nasist Almaniyası, İtaliya və Yaponiya imperiyası kimi böyük güclər süqut etmiş, bir çox dövlətlər isə müxtəlif siyasi rejimlərə məruz qalmışdır. Birləşmiş Millətlər Təşkilatının yaradılması sülhü qorumaq üçün yeni bir platforma formalaşdırsa da, ABŞ və SSRİ arasında ideoloji rəqabət “soyuq müharibə” dövrünün başlanğıcına səbəb olmuşdur. Texnoloji yenilikləri sürətləndirən və atom dövrünü başlanan bu müharibə, həmçinin insan hüquqları, beynəlxalq hüquq və global əməkdaşlıq prinsiplərinin müasir dünya üçün əsas sütunlara çevrilməsini şərtləndirmişdir.

Açar sözlər: *İkinci Dünya müharibəsi, Almaniya, Hitler, müttəfiq dövlətlər, Ox dövlətləri, soyuq müharibə*

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Introduction

The Second World War began on September 1, 1939, with Germany's invasion of Poland, and ended on September 2, 1945, with Japan's surrender. Approximately 70 to 85 million people lost their lives during the war, representing a significant portion of the world's population. Its effects were not limited to the battlefields but profoundly altered the political and economic structure of the world. The failure of the international order established after the First World War, economic crises, and the rise of extreme nationalist policies were among the main causes of the war. In particular, the Nazi ideology and expansionist policies under Adolf Hitler in Germany played a decisive role in its outbreak.

Methods

In this research work, the historical-comparative and analytical approach was chosen as the main methodological basis. In order to objectively assess the geopolitical changes that occurred during and after the Second World War, the collapsing regimes, as well as the status of puppet states, archival documents, international treaties and primary sources were analyzed. During the research, the cause-and-effect relationships between the military consequences of the war and its political-ideological consequences were revealed using the method of systematic analysis. At the same time, the principle of chronological sequence was given priority in order to study the transformation process of the regions (especially the Caucasus and Eastern Europe). The information obtained through the critical analysis of scientific sources and academic literature was summarized in a comparative manner. The methodology of the work also used the geopolitical approach to comprehensively examine the interests of global powers and their impact on small states. Finally, based on the synthesis of all these methods, conclusions were drawn about the impact of the war on the global balance of power and the modern system of international relations.

Results

Causes of the Second World war *Effects of the treaty of Versailles*

Signed in 1919 after the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles imposed heavy economic and political burdens on Germany. Forced reparations, military restrictions, and territorial losses created widespread dissatisfaction. This environment paved the way for the Nazi Party's rise to power (Applebaun, 2003; Beevor, 2012).

Economic depression

The Great Depression, beginning in 1929, severely shook the global economy. Rising unemployment and instability fueled radical political movements. In Germany, economic hardship facilitated Hitler's ascent to power.

Rise of totalitarian regimes

In the 1930s, Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, and militarism in Japan gained strength. These regimes pursued expansionist foreign policies, demanding territories from neighboring states. The lack of effective international response opened the path to war.

Failure of the League of Nations

Established after the First World War to preserve peace, the League of Nations proved ineffective in curbing aggressive policies. Germany, Italy, and Japan faced no meaningful sanctions for their actions.

The transition to the Cold War

World War II served as the primary setting where the Cold War was born and took shape. During the war, two major powers—the USA and the Soviet Union (USSR)—stood united against their common enemy, Nazi Germany. Once Germany was defeated, however, they were left to confront their own ideological and geopolitical differences; the conflict shifted from active military fronts to a war of intelligence and espionage. "Spy-soldiers" emerged, a phenomenon that even became the subject of famous American films during this period. The rivalry between the two global powers never escalated into a direct hot war. Nevertheless, it ushered in the Cold War era—spanning the years 1947 to 1991—which was characterized by spheres of influence, a nuclear arms race, and proxy wars. The world entered a new era. Although Germany had been defeated in war twice in succession, the Russians were unable to celebrate a complete victory.

Development of the War European Front

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, triggering declarations of war from Britain and France. Soon after, Germany occupied Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. In 1941, Germany's attack on the Soviet Union—known as Operation Barbarossa—initially seemed successful but faltered due to Soviet resistance and harsh winter conditions.

Pacific Front

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, bringing America into the war. This escalated the conflict into a truly global struggle, with intense battles across the Pacific Ocean.

Turning Points

One of the most significant turning points was the Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943), where Soviet forces defeated the Germans, halting their advance. In 1944, the Allied Normandy landings began the liberation of Western Europe, forcing Germany to fight on two fronts.

Consequences of the WarHuman Losses

The Second World War is regarded as one of history's greatest human tragedies. Millions of soldiers and civilians perished. The Holocaust, carried out by Nazi Germany, systematically murdered around six million Jews.

Economic Consequences

The war devastated much of Europe and Asia, destroying industries, infrastructure, and cities. Postwar recovery required extensive aid programs.

Establishment of the United Nations

In 1945, the United Nations was founded to safeguard peace and prevent future global conflicts, fostering cooperation among states.

Beginning of the Cold War

After the war, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers. Their ideological and political rivalry marked the start of the Cold War.

Regimes or states that collapsed during World War II

World War II (1939–1945) was a period of immense destruction that fundamentally altered not only borders and regimes but also the global balance of power. We will revisit the dusty and blood-stained shelves of history by examining—categorized by type—the states and puppet regimes that were wiped off the map, underwent regime changes, or collapsed under occupation as a result of the war. The greatest challenge facing the peoples of the Caucasus is their position, squeezed between Europe and Russia. Although the Tsarist regime was on the verge of collapse in 1920, the system re-emerged 71 years later, once again wielding an iron fist. Russia's most significant asset in winning these conflicts has been its use of the populations within former Soviet states; by leveraging the military might and oil of the Azerbaijanis, as well as various forms of assistance from the Kazakh and Turkmen peoples, Russia has managed to secure victories without committing its own citizens to direct combat.

Proxy wars between the United States and Russia played out first in Georgia and subsequently in Ukraine. Europe sided with Ukraine, thereby positioning itself against Russia. Meanwhile, NATO posed a threat to Russia by continuously expanding its membership. This European bloc formation compelled the peoples of the Caucasus to choose sides as well.

1. Collapsed Major Axis Powers and Regimes

With the defeat of the Axis bloc, the alliance's principal actors—along with their forms of government—collapsed entirely.

Nazi Germany (Third Reich – 1933–1945): The Nazi regime led by Adolf Hitler. It officially ended in May 1945 with Germany's unconditional surrender and the fall of Berlin. Following the war, the German state was dissolved, and its territory was divided into four occupation zones among the USA, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France.

Fascist Italy and the Italian Social Republic (1922–1943 / 1943–1945): Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime collapsed in 1943 following the Allied landing in Sicily and the King's dismissal of Mussolini, marking the end of an era. The Italian Social Republic (Republic of Salò)—established in the north as a German puppet state—was completely destroyed and erased from the stage of history when Partisans seized control in April 1945.

Empire of Japan (1868–1945): It surrendered in August 1945 following the dropping of atomic bombs and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. The imperial regime, rooted in ultranationalism and a military junta, came to an end; the country fell under US-led occupation and was transformed into a

pacifist constitutional monarchy with a merely symbolic role. This transition was precipitated by history's most powerful bomb—an attack that devastated the global ecosystem.

2. Independent States Erased from the Map and Annexed

The countries that were directly occupied by other states and lost their sovereignty during the early years of the war are, respectively:

The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania): Pursuant to the secret protocols of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, they were occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940 and subsequently annexed, becoming constituent republics of the USSR. They regained their independence only upon the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, emerging as states that—despite their small size—hold great strategic importance.

Tannu Tuva (Tuva People's Republic): Situated between the USSR and Mongolia, this independent socialist republic was incorporated directly into the territory of the Soviet Union in 1944—either voluntarily or under Soviet pressure—and designated as an "oblast" (region). Consequently, it became a Turkic state reduced to the status of an autonomous region.

Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941): Occupied by Germany, Italy, and their allies in April 1941, the country was completely fragmented. At the end of the war, communist partisans led by Josip Broz Tito seized power; the Kingdom regime was abolished, and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established in its place.

3. Puppet and Collaborationist States Established and Subsequently Dissolved After the War

Entities established by occupying powers (particularly Germany and Japan) to facilitate their own administration, which ceased to exist upon the conclusion of the war:

Manchukuo (1932–1945): A puppet state established by Japan in northern China (Manchuria), with the deposed Chinese Emperor Puyi installed as its head. It was dismantled in 1945 when the Soviet Red Army entered the region, bringing an end to the turmoil.

Vichy France (French State – 1940–1944): A collaborationist regime established in the south under the leadership of Philippe Pétain following France's defeat by Germany. It collapsed in 1944 due to the Normandy landings and the Allied advance, giving way to the Free France government.

Independent State of Croatia (NDH – 1941–1945): A collaborationist regime established under the leadership of the fascist Ustaše organization following the Nazi dismantling of Yugoslavia; it was completely eliminated by Tito's forces in May 1945 (Gilbert, 1989; Goowdin, 1994).

Slovak Republic (1939–1945): The Jozef Tiso administration, established as a satellite state of Nazi Germany following the breakup of Czechoslovakia, came to an end within the framework of a reunited Czechoslovakia at the close of the war.

4. Countries That Underwent Regime Change and Joined the Eastern Block

Countries that, despite preserving their territorial integrity, saw their monarchist or right-wing regimes overthrown and were transformed into communist satellite states under the occupation and influence of the USSR at the end of the war:

The Kingdoms of Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary: Having entered the war on the side of the Axis, these countries were captured by the Red Army between 1944 and 1945. Their monarchies and

conservative governments were abolished, and Soviet-style Socialist People's Republics were established (Kershaw, 2007; Keegan, 1989).

Poland: Partitioned between Germany and the USSR at the beginning of the war, Poland was handed over—following the conflict—not to the Allied-backed, London-based government-in-exile, but to the Moscow-backed communist administration. Its territory was shifted westward (at the expense of Germany).

Technological and Scientific Advances

The war accelerated innovations such as radar, jet engines, and rocket technology. The use of atomic bombs in its final stage heralded the nuclear age.

Discussion

The course of World War II and the realities that emerged after its end led to profound geopolitical transformations on a global as well as regional scale. The new political map created by the war in the Eurasian space accelerated the decline of imperial regimes, the collapse of puppet states, and the process of reshaping regions (Evans, 2008). Especially in the Caucasus region, the interests of great powers and geopolitical changes conditioned the emergence of new realities (Weinberg, 1994). At the same time, the struggles for sovereignty in the areas covering the Balkans, the Baltic states, and the Turkic world, demographic and administrative changes were an important part of the post-war period (Hastings, 2011). The Eastern Bloc, which was formed as the culmination of these complex processes, laid the foundation for a new stage in the system of international legal and political relations. The theme of war has had a significant impact on fiction (Cəfərov və b., 2026; Məmmədova, 2024).

Conclusion

The Second World War was not only a military struggle but also a political, economic, and ideological confrontation. Its causes highlight the dangers of economic crises, extreme nationalism, and weak international institutions. Learning from these historical experiences remains crucial for preserving peace today. The postwar emphasis on human rights, international law, and global cooperation shaped the modern world.

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