

## Postwar Europe

In both human suffering and economic terms, the cost of World War I was immense. The Great War left every major European country nearly bankrupt. In addition, Europe's domination in world affairs declined after the war.

**Unstable New Democracies** The war's end saw the sudden rise of new democracies. From 1914 to 1918, Europe's last absolute rulers had been overthrown. The first of the new governments was formed in Russia in 1917. The Provisional Government, as it was called, hoped to establish constitutional and democratic rule. However, within months it had fallen to a Communist dictatorship. Even so, for the first time, most European nations had democratic governments.

Many citizens of the new democracies had little experience with representative government. For generations, kings and emperors had ruled Germany and the new nations formed from Austria-Hungary. Even in France and Italy, whose parliaments had existed before World War I, the large number of political parties made effective government difficult. Some countries had a dozen or more political groups. In these countries, it was almost impossible for one party to win enough support to govern effectively. When no single party won a majority, a **coalition government**, or temporary alliance of several parties, was needed to form a parliamentary majority. Because the parties disagreed on so many policies, coalitions seldom lasted very long.

Frequent changes in government made it hard for democratic countries to develop strong leadership and move toward long-term goals. The weaknesses of a coalition government became a major problem in times of crisis. Voters in several countries were then willing to sacrifice democratic government for strong, authoritarian leadership.

## The Weimar Republic

Germany's new democratic government was set up in 1919. Known as the **Weimar** (WY•MAHR) **Republic**, it was named after the city where the national assembly met. The Weimar Republic had serious weaknesses from the start. First, Germany lacked a strong democratic tradition. Furthermore, postwar Germany had several major political parties and many minor ones. Worst of all, millions of Germans blamed the Weimar government, not their wartime leaders, for the country's defeat and postwar humiliation caused by the Versailles Treaty.

### Reading Check

**Make Inferences**  
Why were coalition governments ineffective after the war ended?

**Inflation Causes Crisis in Germany** Germany also faced enormous economic problems that had begun during the war. Unlike Britain and France, Germany had not greatly increased its wartime taxes. To pay the expenses of the war, the Germans had simply printed money. After Germany's defeat, this paper money steadily lost its value. Burdened with war debt and heavy reparations payments to the Allies, Germany printed even more money. As a result, the value of the mark, as Germany's currency was called, fell sharply. Severe and high inflation, or hyperinflation, set in. Germans needed more and more money to buy even the most basic goods. For example, in Berlin a loaf of bread cost less than a mark in 1918, more than 160 marks in 1922, and some 200 billion marks by late 1923. People took wheelbarrows full of money to buy food. As a result, many Germans questioned the value of their new democratic government.

**Attempts at Economic Stability** Germany recovered from the 1923 inflation thanks largely to the work of an international committee. The committee was headed by Charles Dawes, an American banker. The Dawes Plan provided for a \$200 million loan from American banks to stabilize German currency and strengthen its economy. The plan also set a more realistic schedule for Germany's reparations payments.

Put into effect in 1924, the Dawes Plan helped slow inflation. As the German economy began to recover, it attracted more loans and investments from the United States. By 1929, German factories were producing as much as they had before the war.

German children use stacks of paper money, which had lost much of its value, as building blocks during the 1923 inflation.





# Fascism Rises in Europe

## The Big Idea

In response to political turmoil and economic crises, Italy and Germany turned to totalitarian dictators.

## Why It Matters Now

These dictators changed the course of history, and the world is still recovering from their abuse of power.

## Key Terms and People

fascism  
Benito Mussolini  
Adolf Hitler  
Nazism  
*Mein Kampf*  
*lebensraum*

## Setting the Stage

Many democracies, including the United States, Britain, and France, remained strong despite the economic crisis caused by the Great Depression. However, millions of people lost faith in democratic government and became open to new economic movements and ideologies to stimulate the economy such as socialism and communism. These movements and ideologies were in conflict with those of democratic societies.

Some turned to an extreme system of government called **fascism** (FASH•ihz•uhm), a new, militant political movement that emphasized loyalty to the state and obedience to its leader. Fascists promised to revive the economy, punish those responsible for hard times, and restore order and national pride. Their message attracted many people who felt frustrated and angered by the peace treaties that followed World War I and the Great Depression.

## Fascism's Rise in Italy

Unlike communism, fascism had no clearly defined theory or program. Nevertheless, most fascists shared several ideas. They preached an extreme form of nationalism, or loyalty to one's country. Fascists believed that nations must struggle—peaceful states were doomed to be conquered. They pledged loyalty to an authoritarian leader who guided and brought order to the state. In each nation, fascists wore uniforms of a certain color, used special salutes, and held mass rallies.

## Fascism

Fascism is a political movement that promotes an extreme form of nationalism and militarism. It also includes a denial of individual rights and dictatorial one-party rule. Nazism was the fascist movement that developed in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. It included a belief in the racial superiority of the German people. The fascists in Italy were led by Benito Mussolini.



### Interpret Charts

**1. Analyze** Which political, cultural, and economic characteristics helped make fascism an authoritarian system?

**2. Make Inferences** What characteristics of fascism might make it attractive to people during times of crisis such as the Great Depression?

In some ways, fascism was similar to communism. Both systems were ruled by dictators who allowed only their own political party (one-party rule). Both denied individual rights. In both, the state was supreme. Neither practiced any kind of democracy. However, unlike communists, fascists did not seek a classless society. Rather, they believed that each class had its place and function. In most cases, fascist parties were made up of aristocrats and industrialists, war veterans, and the lower middle class. Also, fascists were nationalists, but communists were internationalists, hoping to unite workers worldwide.

**Mussolini Takes Control** Fascism’s rise in Italy was fueled by bitter disappointment over the failure to win large territorial gains at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Rising inflation and unemployment also contributed to widespread social unrest. To growing numbers of Italians, their democratic government seemed helpless to deal with the country’s problems. They wanted a leader who would take action.

A newspaper editor and politician named **Benito Mussolini** boldly promised to rescue Italy by reviving its economy and rebuilding its armed forces. He vowed to give Italy strong leadership. Mussolini had founded the Fascist Party in 1919. As economic conditions worsened, his popularity rapidly increased. Finally, Mussolini publicly criticized Italy’s government. Groups of fascists wearing black shirts attacked communists and socialists on the streets. Because Mussolini played on the fear of a workers’ revolt, he began to win support from the middle classes, the aristocracy, and industrial leaders.

In October 1922, about 30,000 fascists marched on Rome. They demanded that King Victor Emmanuel III put Mussolini in charge of the government. The king decided that Mussolini was the best hope for his dynasty to survive. After widespread violence and a threatened uprising, Mussolini took power “legally.”

#### BIOGRAPHY

### *Benito Mussolini* (1883–1945)

Because Mussolini was of modest height, he usually chose a location for his speeches where he towered above the crowds—often a balcony high above a public square. He then roused audiences with his emotional speeches and theatrical gestures and body movements.

Vowing to lead Italy “back to her ways of ancient greatness,” Mussolini peppered his speeches with aggressive words such as *war* and *power*.



**Reading Check**  
Summarize  
What promises did  
Mussolini make to the  
Italian people?

**Il Duce's Leadership** Mussolini was now *Il Duce* (ihl-DOO•chay), or the leader. He abolished democracy and outlawed all political parties except the Fascist Party. He used terror and violence to enforce his policies. Secret police jailed his opponents. Government censors forced radio stations and publications to broadcast or publish only fascist doctrines. Mussolini outlawed strikes. He sought to control the economy by allying the fascists with the industrialists and large landowners. However, Mussolini never had the total control achieved by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union or Adolf Hitler in Germany.

## BIOGRAPHY

### *Adolf Hitler* (1889–1945)

Like Mussolini, Hitler could manipulate huge audiences with his fiery oratory. Making speeches was crucial to Hitler. He believed: "All great world-shaking events have been brought about . . . by the spoken word!"

Because he appeared awkward and unimposing, Hitler rehearsed his speeches. Usually he began a speech in a normal voice. Suddenly, he spoke louder as his anger grew. His voice rose to a screech, and his hands flailed the air. Then he would stop, smooth his hair, and look quite calm.



## Hitler Rises to Power in Germany

When Mussolini became dictator of Italy in the mid-1920s, **Adolf Hitler** was a little-known political leader whose early life had been marked by disappointment. When World War I broke out, Hitler found a new beginning. He volunteered for the German army and was twice awarded the Iron Cross, a medal for bravery.

**The Rise of the Nazis** At the end of the war, Hitler settled in Munich. In 1919, he joined a tiny right-wing political group. This group shared his belief that Germany had to overturn the Treaty of Versailles and combat communism. The group later named itself the National Socialist German Workers' Party, called Nazi for short. Its policies formed the German brand of fascism known as **Nazism**. The party adopted the swastika, or hooked cross, as its symbol. The Nazis also set up a private militia called the storm troopers or Brown Shirts.

Within a short time, Hitler's success as an organizer and speaker led him to be chosen *der Führer* (duhr-FYUR-uhr), or the leader, of the Nazi party. Inspired by Mussolini's march on Rome, Hitler and the Nazis plotted to seize power in Munich in 1923. The attempt failed, and Hitler was arrested. He was tried for treason but was sentenced to only five years in prison. He served less than nine months.

While in jail, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*). This book set forth his beliefs and his goals for Germany. Hitler asserted that the Germans, whom he incorrectly called "Aryans," were a "master race." He declared that non-Aryan "races," such as Jews, Slavs, and Gypsies, were inferior. He called the Versailles Treaty an outrage and vowed to regain German lands.

After leaving prison in 1924, Hitler revived the Nazi Party. Most Germans ignored him and his angry message until the Great Depression ended the nation's brief postwar recovery. The economic effects of the Great Depression helped Hitler's cause, as the German people were also desperate for a strong leader who would improve their lives. When American loans stopped, the German economy collapsed. Civil unrest broke out. Frightened and confused, Germans now turned to Hitler, hoping for security and firm leadership. Hitler also declared that Germany was overcrowded and needed more *lebensraum*, or living space. He promised to get that space through imperialism, by rebuilding Germany's military and conquering eastern Europe and Russia.

## Hitler Becomes Chancellor

The Nazis had become the largest political party by 1932. Conservative leaders mistakenly believed they could control Hitler and use him for their purposes. In January 1933, they advised President Paul von Hindenburg to name Hitler chancellor. Thus Hitler came to power legally.

Once in office, Hitler called for new elections, hoping to win a parliamentary majority. Six days before the election, a fire destroyed the Reichstag building, where the parliament met. The Nazis blamed the communists. By stirring up fear of the communists, the Nazis and their allies won by a slim majority.

### Reading Check

Make Inferences

Why did Germans at first support Hitler?

### Vocabulary

**chancellor** the prime minister or president in certain countries

## DOCUMENT-BASED INVESTIGATION Historical Source

### A Prediction About Hitler

Soon after Hitler came to power, General Erich Ludendorff, a former ally of Hitler's, wrote to Hindenburg:

#### Analyze Historical Sources

How do you think Ludendorff made such an accurate prediction?

*"By naming Hitler as Reichschancellor, you have delivered up our holy Fatherland to one of the greatest [rabblers] of all time. I solemnly [predict] that this accursed man will plunge our Reich into the abyss and bring our nation into inconceivable misery."*

—Erich Ludendorff,  
letter to President Hindenburg,  
February 1, 1933

At a 1933 rally in Nuremberg, Germany, storm troopers carried flags bearing the swastika.



Hitler used his new power to turn Germany into a totalitarian state. He banned all other political parties and had opponents arrested. Meanwhile, an elite, black-uniformed unit called the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, or protection squad) was created. It was loyal only to Hitler. In 1934, the SS arrested and murdered hundreds of Hitler's enemies. This brutal action and the terror applied by the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police, shocked most Germans into total obedience.

The Nazis quickly took command of the economy, including transportation and technology. New laws banned strikes, dissolved independent labor unions, and gave the government authority over business and labor. Hitler put millions of Germans to work. They constructed factories, built highways, manufactured weapons, and served in the military. As a result, the number of unemployed dropped from about 6 million to 1.5 million in 1936.

**The Führer Is Supreme** Hitler wanted more than just economic and political power—he wanted control over every aspect of German life. To shape public opinion and to win praise for his leadership, Hitler, like Mussolini, turned the press, radio, literature, painting, and film into propaganda tools. Books that did not conform to Nazi beliefs were burned in huge bonfires. Churches were forbidden to criticize the Nazis or the government. Schoolchildren had to join the Hitler Youth (for boys) or the League of German Girls. Hitler believed that continuous struggle brought victory to the strong. He twisted the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche to support his use of brute force.

**Hitler Makes War on the Jews** Hatred of Jews, or anti-Semitism, was a key part of Nazi ideology and had a long, unfortunate tradition in Europe. So-called “scientific” racism, which focused on the belief that Jews were inferior to the Aryan race, both mentally and physically, emerged in Germany in the 19th century, notably among Social Darwinists. Although Jews were less than 1 percent of the population, the Nazis used them as scapegoats for all of Germany’s troubles since the war. This led to a wave of anti-Semitism across Germany. Beginning in 1933, the Nazis passed laws depriving Jews of most of their rights. Violence against Jews mounted. On the night of November 9, 1938, Nazi mobs attacked Jews in their homes and on the streets and destroyed thousands of Jewish-owned buildings. This rampage, called *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass), signaled the real start of the process of eliminating the Jews from German life. Hitler’s “Final Solution” plan was to eliminate and exterminate the Jewish population in Europe, which later became known as the Holocaust (*Shoah* in Hebrew). Eventually, six million Jews perished during the Holocaust.

### Reading Check

#### Summarize

How did Hitler create a totalitarian state?

## Global Patterns

### Fascism in Argentina

Juan Perón served as Argentina’s president from 1946 to 1955 and again in 1973 and 1974. The two years he spent in Europe before World War II greatly influenced his strong-man rule.

A career army officer, Perón went to Italy in 1939 for military training. He then served at the Argentine embassy in Rome. A visit to Berlin gave Perón a chance to see Nazi Germany. The ability of Hitler and Mussolini to manipulate their citizens impressed Perón.

When Perón himself gained power, he patterned his military dictatorship on that of the European fascists.



### Other Countries Fall to Dictators

While fascists took power in Italy and Germany, the nations formed in eastern Europe after World War I were also falling to dictators. In Hungary in 1919, after a brief Communist regime, military forces and wealthy landowners joined to make Admiral Miklós Horthy the first European postwar dictator. In Poland, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski (pihl•SOOT•skee) seized power in 1926. In Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, kings turned to strong-man rule. They suspended constitutions and silenced foes. In 1935, only one democracy, Czechoslovakia, remained in eastern Europe.

Only in European nations with strong democratic traditions—Britain, France, and the Scandinavian countries—did democracy survive. With no democratic experience and severe economic problems, many Europeans saw dictatorship as the only way to prevent instability.

By the mid-1930s, the powerful nations of the world were split into two antagonistic camps—democratic and totalitarian. And to gain their ends, the fascist dictatorships had indicated a willingness to use military aggression. Although all of these dictatorships restricted civil rights, none asserted control with the brutality of the Russian Communists or the Nazis.

### Reading Check

**Analyze Causes**  
Why do you think that many countries in Europe were falling to dictators?

## Lesson 3 Assessment

1. **Organize Information** Do you think Hitler and Mussolini were more alike or different? Create a table to show your response.

	Rise	Goals
Hitler		
Mussolini		

2. **Key Terms and People** For each key term or person in the lesson, write a sentence explaining its significance.
3. **Analyze Effects** What factors led to the rise of fascism in Italy?
4. **Summarize** How did Hitler maintain power, and what was his plan to eliminate the Jews?
5. **Make Inferences** Why did the leadership of Italy and Germany fall to dictators?
6. **Compare and Contrast** What techniques did Hitler and Mussolini use to appear powerful to their listeners?



# Aggressors Invade Nations

## The Big Idea

As Germany, Italy, and Japan conquered other countries, the rest of the world did nothing to stop them.

## Why It Matters Now

Many nations today take a more active and collective role in world affairs, as in the United Nations.

## Key Terms and People

Hirohito  
appeasement  
Axis Powers  
Francisco Franco  
isolationism  
Third Reich  
Munich Conference

## Setting the Stage

By the mid-1930s, Germany and Italy seemed bent on military conquest. The major democracies—Britain, France, and the United States—were distracted by economic problems at home and longed to remain at peace. With the world moving toward war, many nations pinned their hopes for peace on the League of Nations. As fascism spread in Europe, however, a powerful nation in Asia moved toward a similar system. Following a period of reform and progress in the 1920s, Japan fell under military rule.

## Japan Seeks an Empire

During the 1920s, the Japanese government became more democratic. In 1922, Japan signed an international treaty agreeing to respect China's borders. In 1928, it signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact renouncing war. Japan's parliamentary system had several weaknesses, however. Its constitution put strict limits on the powers of the prime minister and the cabinet. Most importantly, civilian leaders had little control over the armed forces. Military leaders reported only to the emperor.

**Militarists Take Control of Japan** As long as Japan remained prosperous, the civilian government kept power. But when the Great Depression struck in 1929, many Japanese blamed the government. Military leaders gained support and soon won control of the country. Unlike the Fascists in Europe, the militarists in Japan did not try to establish a new system of government. They wanted to restore traditional control of the government to the military. Instead of a forceful leader like Mussolini or Hitler, the militarists made the emperor the symbol of state power, but had total control over all aspects of life in the country, including the government, economy, and transportation.

Keeping Emperor **Hirohito** as head of state won popular support for the army leaders who ruled in his name. Like Hitler and Mussolini, Japan's militarists were extreme nationalists. They wanted to solve the country's economic problems, which stemmed from the depression that was being felt around the world. Japan's population was growing, and more resources and land were needed. The Japanese militarists chose imperialism, or foreign expansion, as the solution to their problem. They planned a Pacific empire that included a conquered China. The empire would provide Japan with raw materials and markets for its goods. It would also give Japan room for its rising population. Nationalism, combined with militarism, drove the Japanese to turn their eyes westward to China, their traditional political and economic rival.

**Japan Invades Manchuria** Japanese businesses had invested heavily in China's northeast province, Manchuria. It was an area rich in iron and coal. In 1931, the Japanese army seized Manchuria, despite objections from the Japanese parliament. The army then set up a puppet government. Japanese engineers and technicians began arriving in large numbers to build mines and factories.

The Japanese attack on Manchuria was the first direct challenge to the League of Nations. In the early 1930s, the League's members included all major democracies except the United States. The League also included the three countries that posed the greatest threat to peace—Germany, Japan, and Italy. When Japan seized Manchuria, many League members vigorously protested. Japan ignored the protests and withdrew from the League in 1933.

**Japan Invades China** Four years later, a border incident touched off a full-scale war between Japan and China. Japanese forces swept into northern China. Despite having a million soldiers, China's army led by Jiang Jieshi was no match for the better equipped and trained Japanese.

Beijing and other northern cities as well as the capital, Nanjing, fell to the Japanese in 1937. Japanese troops killed tens of thousands of captured soldiers and civilians in what became known by the Chinese as the "Rape of Nanjing."

Forced to retreat westward, Jiang Jieshi set up a new capital at Chongqing. At the same time, Chinese guerrillas led by China's Communist leader, Mao Zedong, continued to fight the Japanese in the conquered area.



A Chinese city burns after a devastating Japanese attack.

### Reading Check

#### Make Inferences

What was the major weakness of the League of Nations?