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◆ The Treaty of Versailles and German Resentment

Signed in 1919, the Treaty of Versailles imposed severe punishment on Germany after World War 1. It demanded that Germany accept full responsibility for the war, pay large reparations, and surrender key territories such as Alsace-Lorraine. The treaty also limited Germany's military power. These harsh conditions bred deep resentment, contributing to a national desire for revenge and renewal.

◆ Global Economic Depression and Political Instability

The 1929 stock market crash in the United States triggered a global economic downturn. Countries like Germany faced mass unemployment, inflation, and loss of public confidence in democratic governments. As economic conditions worsened, extremist parties gained influence. This created fertile ground for fascist leaders to rise, promising stability, jobs, and national pride.

◆ Adolf Hitler's Rise and Expansionist Goals

Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and later consolidated power as Führer. His ideology, rooted in racial purity and anti-communism, aimed to restore Germany's former glory. Hitler defied the Treaty of Versailles by rearming Germany and occupying the Rhineland. His long-term objective was to build a vast empire (Lebensraum) in Eastern Europe, starting with Austria and Czechoslovakia.

◆ Failures of the League of Nations

Established after World War 1, the League of Nations was meant to prevent future wars. However, it lacked the authority and military means to enforce decisions. When Italy invaded Ethiopia and Japan attacked Manchuria, the League failed to intervene effectively. These failures demonstrated the League's weakness and emboldened aggressor

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nations.

◆ Appeasement by Britain and France

In the 1930s, Britain and France adopted a policy of appeasement, allowing Hitler to make territorial advances to avoid another war. The 1938 Munich Agreement permitted Germany to annex the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. This signaled to Hitler that he could expand without resistance, further encouraging his ambitions.

◆ Axis Powers and Militarism

Germany, Italy, and Japan formed the Axis alliance, sharing interests in expansion and authoritarian rule. Each began increasing its military strength. Germany rebuilt its army, navy, and air force; Japan expanded its navy and invaded parts of China; Italy pursued African conquests. This arms buildup destabilized global peace.

◆ Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact

In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, agreeing not to attack each other and secretly dividing Eastern Europe between them. This pact cleared the way for Hitler to invade Poland without fearing Soviet retaliation.

◆ Invasion of Poland and Outbreak of War

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland using blitzkrieg tactics—fast, overwhelming attacks combining tanks and aircraft. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. This marked the beginning of World War 2.

◆ Japanese Imperialism in the Pacific

In Asia, Japan aggressively expanded its empire, driven by a need for raw materials and land. It occupied Manchuria in 1931, launched

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full-scale war on China in 1937, and sought dominance over the Pacific. Japan's growing threat later led to the involvement of the United States in the war.

◆ Italian Fascism and Expansion

Under Mussolini, Italy pursued its imperial ambitions by invading Ethiopia and Albania. Mussolini aligned Italy with Nazi Germany, hoping to build a new Roman Empire. Italian fascism, characterized by strict nationalism and suppression of opposition, contributed to the war's spread across continents.

◇ Conclusion

World War 2 was not triggered by a single cause but by a series of interconnected events. Economic hardship, political failures, aggressive ideologies, and international inaction allowed militaristic regimes to dominate. These factors combined to create one of the most destructive wars in human history.