**How did the Great Depression Lead to WWII**

The Great Depression (1929-1939) describes a period of the global economic recession that first began in the United States and soon spread all over the world. Over this period, economic conditions in the U.S., the Western World, and Asia grew worse as businesses closed their operations, people lost jobs, and debts went unrepaid. The allied countries, as well as Germany, struggled to meet their debt obligation to the U.S. following World War I (Kennedy, 2017). With the dwindling economic conditions and mounting pressure by the citizens on their respective governments to stabilize the economy, a stage was set for the emergence of alternative political voices and systems of governance. Even though the Great Depression did not single-handedly lead to World War II, the desperate economic environment it had created encouraged the emergence and acceptance of extreme forms of political leadership in some of the countries, which ultimately degenerated into a war.

**Demand for Alternative Leadership and Militarization**

The Great Depression created an environment for Adolf Hitler to emerge and impose himself as a suitable political and economic leader in Germany. Just as in America and other regions of the world, the deteriorating economic conditions in the 1930s negatively impacted the German population. German citizens were not only angry with the political leadership but also hopeless about what the future held. They were in dire need of a political leader to take them out of the dwindling economic conditions. This, in turn, made them more welcoming to extreme political ideologies, including fascism, for as long as it held the promise of pulling them out of the terrible economic condition (Johnson, 2022). Hitler, taking advantage of people’s economic desperation, advanced his antisemitic and anticommunist rhetoric by partly attributing Depression to the Jewish population. In 1933 Hitler was elected German leader, promising to restore Germany’s power and wealth. After all, what the people needed at that moment was a “savior” who could get them out of the depressing economic condition (The Great Depression). Whereas Great Depression did not single-handedly contribute to Hitler’s emergence, the deteriorating economic conditions made the people more welcoming to his ideologies.

In Japan, the Great Depression led to Japan’s militarism which played a huge role in World War II. As economic conditions in Japan turned from bad to worse in the early 1930s, the Japanese increasingly lost faith in their government. The people turned to the army, thus giving rise to the politics of militarism and conquest. This led to the Japanese army invading China in search of minerals and resources, which were direly needed for ramping up the domestic production of goods. This militarism invasion led China to seek help from the League of Nations. However, Japan ignored the warning of the League of Nations and continued with its occupation of China and Korea. The military conquest and occupation of surrounding neighbors did not stop with China as Japan went further to invade Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia (FCPS HS Social Studies, 2014)). These expansionary maneuvers made the United States concerned, especially for its territories in Asia. Japan, feeling threatened by the US military, attacked Pearl Harbor, which officially set a stage for World War II in Asia.

**Domestic Support for Extreme Leadership**

Following the Versailles Treaty that required Germany to pay for the damages caused by World War I, the new Weimar Republic underwent an intense period of inflation during the 1920s. As a measure to cushion citizens from direct taxations for war reparations, Germany reached out to the U.S. and borrowed millions of dollars. At the onset of the Great Depression, Germany fell under intense pressure and economic hardship as even the United States placed demands for it to honor its debt obligation (“The Great Depression”, n.d.). The economic situation in Germany went from bad to worse, creating a deeper resentment among German citizens against the U.S. and the allied forces. Hitler’s promise of restoring Germany’s political wealth and power was thus a welcome idea, as German citizens needed a strong leader. This gave the Nazi regime immense local support, emboldening Hitler to secretly carry on with his militarization agenda – which, of course, was a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Eventually, Hitler capitalized on his domestic support and military power to invade Poland – triggering WWII (Johnson, 2022). Therefore, whereas Hitler’s personality and political ideologies informed his quest to expand and conquer surrounding countries, the support he received from German citizens made it easy for him to proceed with the agenda. The deteriorating economic conditions for the German citizens and Hitler’s promise of restoring Germany’s power and wealth made him a viable leader for the Germans.

**Conclusion**

The Great Depression created an environment for leaders with extreme ideologies to arise and take over the leadership of their nations. Whereas the dwindling economy did not lead to World War II, the environment of suffering it created made it easy for leaders such as Adolf Hitler to emerge and advance their ideologies with the support of the citizens. Also, conquest ideologies to restore the economic fortunes of countries affected by the Great Depression saw countries such as Japan and Germany militarizing and conquering the neighboring countries.

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