1 Causes of World War II

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 LINKS WITH OUR TIMES

On 9 August 2015, bells tolled in Nagasaki Peace Park in the Japanese city of Nagasaki as Japan and the world marked the 70th anniversary of the dropping of a US atomic bomb on that city in 1945. The exact time of the bomb’s detonation is shown on the base of the statue *Hymn to life* (opposite), which depicts a mother holding her baby, a universal symbol of love and peace.

Approximately 74,000 people died in the Nagasaki bomb blast or from radiation sickness and other after-effects. That bomb followed just three days after the first atomic bomb was dropped on another Japanese city, Hiroshima. On 15 August that year, Japan surrendered and World War II was finally over. As horrific as the death toll from these two atomic bombs was, this was but one of many terrible events in a war that claimed far more lives than any other conflict in human history.

The origins and causes of World War II go back to the months following World War I and, as you will discover in this topic, they are to be found in changes that shaped the world during the inter-war years.

BIG QUESTIONS

As you work through this topic, look for information that will help you to answer these questions:

1. What were the main features of the peace treaties after World War I?
2. What types of economic, social and political changes occurred in the 1920s and 1930s?
3. How did the Great Depression affect the world?
4. Why were fascists able to come to power in the inter-war years?
5. How was world peace threatened in this period?
6. Why did World War II break out in 1939?

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. What threats to world peace exist in our time?
2. What is an economic depression?
3. Are people more likely to follow extremist leaders in times of economic hardship?
4. If a world war did take place in our times, do you think it would be less destructive or even more destructive than World War II?
1.2 Examining the evidence

1.2.1 How do we know about the causes of World War II?

In this topic we will survey some of the big political, economic and social changes that shaped the world and Australia between the end of World War I in 1918 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939. The most significant changes include the growing influence of communism, the unprecedented economic crisis of the Great Depression and the rise of fascism.

We have an enormous number and variety of primary sources for the period often described as the inter-war years, that is, the period of history between World War I and World War II. These sources include those created by governments, the mass media and individuals. When considered together, these sources give historians a comprehensive picture of what it was like to live in the inter-war years and experience the changes that characterised the period.

Official sources

By this period, governments and parliaments were keeping very thorough records of their decisions, policies and debates. Public servants were also required to keep records. So, for most countries, we have official records of matters to do with trade, health, employment, housing, foreign policy, education and every aspect of society for which governments had responsibility. In fact, it is often possible to know more about how political parties and governments made decisions then than about political decision making today. In Australia, for example, the records of Cabinet meetings (top-level meetings of governments) are kept secret for 30 years, and many other countries have similar rules.

Mass media

In most countries there were far more daily newspapers during this period than there are today. Political parties of all kinds also published their own newspapers to spread their views. Back issues of newspapers provide day-to-day reports and images of events of those
times but, as today, they are not always reliable sources. Photography had also become more widely used.

Two new forms of mass media also gained a huge influence during this period. They were radio, which Australians called the ‘wireless’, and film, which many called the ‘flicks’. Film had an enormous influence. By the end of the 1920s, when Australia’s population was just 6.5 million, 2.75 million movie tickets were being sold every week. Around 95 per cent of these movies were American, and they contributed to the spread of American influences. Film also became an important medium for recording world events and social changes. And political parties were quick to recognise that film provided new opportunities for propaganda in an age when many people believed that the camera did not lie.

**Personal records**

Many people who lived through the Great Depression and other events of the inter-war years kept diaries or wrote letters about their experiences. Some wrote and published memoirs, providing first-hand accounts of those times.

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**1.2 Putting It All Together**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why is it often possible to find out more about government decisions in the inter-war years than the present?
2. Why do we have more newspaper sources for this period than for the present?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. If the people in **SOURCE 1** were car owners for the first time in their lives, as almost 20 per cent of Americans were, how do you think they would feel about the age they were living in and about their future prospects?
4. Look closely at **SOURCE 2**. What evidence does it provide of Japanese aggression in China?
5. Study **SOURCE 3** and read **SOURCE 4**.
   a. Describe what you see in **SOURCE 3**.
   b. How useful is **SOURCE 3** as evidence of poverty in the 1930s?
   c. What has happened to the family in **SOURCE 4**?
   d. How would they feel about their situation?
6. Using the four sources in this subtopic, write a short paragraph describing some general features of the changes that took place in the 1920s and 1930s.

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**SOURCE 3**

Three young children with their dolls sharing one bed in a Melbourne slum around 1935

**SOURCE 4**

A charity worker’s account of poverty in the 1930s

The other day a social worker . . . visited a home in an outer suburb . . . The door was opened by a neatly dressed woman who had clearly been weeping . . . she broke down in a distressing manner when she told of her husband’s daily heart-breaking search for work. Two years ago he had lost a steady job . . . Never since has he been able to get anything better than intermittent work — casual jobs which have become fewer as the depression has deepened. In recent months he has walked the streets . . . from early morn till setting sun in a fruitless search for a job of any kind or any duration. His clothing has become shabby, his boots are worn nearly off his feet, and his wife is well-nigh distracted as daily she sees his spirit slowly breaking. The children are hungry, their clothing is threadbare, and the loss of the home is an imminent probability.

From Greig Smith, Secretary, Charity Organisation Society, in the Melbourne Argus, 7 March 1931.
1.3 The peace treaties and the League of Nations

1.3.1 The peace treaties

On 11 November 1918 the German government accepted an armistice, which ended all fighting in World War I. German troops were exhausted and their morale was broken. The army had run out of reserves, many German people were starving and food supplies were low. The Allies had won the war but they now had the task of creating peace. Would they make treaties that took revenge for Allied losses and suffering or would they seek a peace that would last?

Five million Allied troops had died to achieve victory in World War I. Another 13 million had been wounded, many of them permanently disabled. The cost in money was also enormous, and France had suffered the destruction of farmland as well as entire towns and villages. Germany and the other Central Powers had also suffered terribly. They had lost 3.5 million troops and another 8 million were wounded. However, as many people on the Allied side saw it, the Central Powers, especially Germany, had caused the war and should be made to pay.

SOURCE 1 The ruins of the Cloth Hall in Ypres, Belgium, in 1917. This structure was devastated by artillery fire during World War I.

DID YOU KNOW?

Almost 60,000 Australian troops were killed in World War I (almost one in five of those who served overseas). At the Peace Conferences, the Australian delegation, led by Prime Minister ‘Billy’ Hughes, was among those who wanted to make Germany pay heavily.

Armistice agreement to end fighting

Reparations payments as compensation for damage caused

Allies Britain, France and the other states on the winning side in World War I

The Treaty of Versailles

On 28 June 1919, after five months of negotiations, delegates from the Allied countries and Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles. Germany’s National Assembly regarded many of the terms set out in the treaty’s 440 articles as so harsh that at first they had refused to sign. Penalties imposed on Germany included restrictions on the size of its military forces as well as reparations payments to the Allies and loss of territory.
Territorial losses
All German overseas colonies were seized. The provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were returned to France. German territory in the east was given to Poland, and plebiscites were to be held in German East Prussia and Silesia to enable their people to choose between remaining part of Germany or being absorbed into Poland. The German Rhineland was to be occupied for 15 years.

SOURCE 2 A map showing how Europe was changed by the peace treaties

Military and economic terms
Military terms: Germany was permitted to maintain a volunteer army of no more than 100,000. But it was not allowed to use conscription or to possess an air force or submarines. Its navy was to be reduced in size and it was barred from manufacturing or trading in war materials.

Economic terms: Germany’s rich Saar coalfields were to be controlled by France for 15 years. German railway stock and large ships were to be handed over and Germany was to build a further million tonnes of ships for the Allies. Huge quantities of coal, steel and other raw materials were also to be given to the Allies. In addition, Germany was required to pay for all civilian damage suffered by the Allies. Under Clause 231, Germany had to accept blame for causing the war.
The other peace treaties

Each of the other defeated Central Powers was also made to sign a treaty.

- **The Treaty of Saint-Germain** dismantled the Austro-Hungarian Empire and required Austria to pay reparations. The south-western parts of the empire were united with Serbia and Montenegro to form the new nation-state of Yugoslavia.
- **The Treaty of Trianon** took more than 70 per cent of Hungary’s territory to create the new nation-state of Czechoslovakia.
- **The Treaty of Neuilly** transferred parts of Bulgaria’s territory to Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia.
- **The Treaty of Sevres** took away Turkey’s Middle East territories. These states were divided between Britain and France to administer as League of Nations mandates.

1.3.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Explain what you understand each of the following terms to mean: reparations; plebiscites; mandates.
2. Name the four treaties between the Allies and the defeated Central Powers.
3. Explain why Germany’s National Assembly at first refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.
4. Write a short summary or create a graphic organiser to show the military and economic terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
5. What became of Turkey’s Middle Eastern territories under the Treaty of Sevres?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

6. Describe what you see in SOURCE 1 and explain how it helps you to understand why there was strong support for a very harsh treaty with Germany.

7. Using SOURCE 2 as your evidence, describe the territorial losses suffered in Europe by:
   a. Germany
   b. Austria–Hungary
   c. Bulgaria
   d. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, the former Russian Empire).

8. As the USSR was not one of the defeated powers, why do you think its territorial losses (shown in SOURCE 2) were endorsed by the Peace Treaties?

1.3.2 The League of Nations

Germany’s Kaiser had been overthrown in a revolution in November 1918. US president Woodrow Wilson had wanted a more lenient treaty that would have strengthened democracy in Germany and created conditions more likely to preserve peace. France and Britain, however, wanted to weaken Germany and make her pay for their losses. The Treaty of Versailles created intense bitterness in Germany, but one hope for lasting peace was the formation of the League of Nations. It was Wilson’s idea and when it was formed it held promise as a guardian of world peace. Had it worked, it might have made up for the weaknesses of the rest of the peace settlement.

**SOURCE 3** Some Articles from the Covenant of the League of Nations

**Article 8**
The Members recognise the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety.

**Article 10**
The Members of the League undertake to respect, and preserve against external aggression, the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League . . .

**Article 11**
Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the members or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the Whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations.
The League’s main task was to prevent wars. The Covenant of the League was approved at the Versailles Conference in 1919. At first the League had 42 member states, including Australia. It was made up of a General Assembly (of all member states) and a Council. The Assembly met once a year but the Council met more frequently to deal with urgent problems. It consisted of Permanent Members and Non-Permanent Members. The major powers (Britain, France, Italy and Japan) were the Permanent Members. The Non-Permanent Members were elected from the other member states.

The League also had several special organisations. For example, the Permanent Court of Justice was set up to resolve international legal disputes, the Health Organization was formed to combat epidemics and the International Labour Organization was concerned with industrial and economic problems. The peace treaties had given Allied countries, mainly Britain and France, mandates to administer Turkey’s Middle Eastern territories and Germany’s overseas colonies. As these territories were not considered to be colonies that belonged to those countries, the League’s Mandates Commission was set up to ensure that the administering powers carried out their responsibilities.

**Weaknesses of the League**

The League never had the power to achieve its aim of preventing major wars. It could order parties in a conflict to negotiate in the Assembly, where aggressors could be warned. If that failed, the League could take steps such as ordering a trade embargo to hurt the aggressor nation’s economy. The League could threaten military action against an aggressor. But it had no military force of its own and could not compel its members to provide forces. In any case, under the League’s rules, any decision of the Council or Assembly had to be unanimous. So any country could prevent the League taking action to solve a crisis.

A further major weakness was that some important nations were not League members. The US Congress refused to endorse the Treaty of Versailles so the United States did not join the League. Germany was not allowed to join until 1926 and Russia did not join until 1934. Germany and Japan both left in 1933 and Italy quit in 1937. Despite its failure, the League was an important first attempt to design a world organisation to prevent war.

**Faith in the League of Nations**

After the great suffering caused by World War I, there was worldwide public support for the idealistic aims of the League. A League of Nations Union was formed to encourage people to support those aims and to counter the previously held belief that war was glorious. The League of Nations Union had branches in many countries including Australia where its members included politicians from the major political parties. With such support, the organisation was able to have League of Nations ceremonies and ideas introduced into public schools and junior branches formed in those schools. A special League of Nations Day was first observed in Australian schools in 1930. Such activities encouraged great hope that there would never be another world war.
1.3.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Whose idea was the League of Nations?
2. Which major nations were not League members and how would this have weakened the League?
3. Which countries were the Permanent Members of the Council of the League of Nations?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
4. Using the information in this section and **SOURCE 3**:
   a. Describe the main aim of the League of Nations.
   b. Outline three reasons why the League of Nations had little real power to prevent wars.
5. Look closely at **SOURCE 4**.
   a. Describe the way the League of Nations is depicted in this cartoon.
   b. Explain the message of the cartoon.
   c. Given that the League of Nations was a peacekeeping organisation, why is this cartoon ironic?

**SOURCE 5** A League of Nations Union Junior Branch certificate, published in *Education*, the journal of the New South Wales Public School Teachers’ Federation, 15 November 1934

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1.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Which of the sources in this subtopic give you the clearest evidence of why the harsh terms of the peace treaties after World War I were likely to cause further trouble in Europe? Explain your choice.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
2 Supporters of the Treaty of Versailles have argued that it was less harsh than the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which Germany imposed on the Russians when they withdrew from the war. Do you think this fact justified a harsh treaty and how fair and realistic do you think it was to expect Germany to pay huge compensation?
3 Imagine that you are a school student in 1934. Your school has been awarded the certificate (see SOURCE 5) for forming a junior branch of the League of Nations Union. You have been asked to give a short speech explaining why you and your fellow students are proud to be members and why your generation supports the work of the League of Nations for world peace. Write the speech you would give. Be sure that your speech explains the significance of the formation of the League as an attempt to maintain world peace.

1.4 The ‘Roaring Twenties’

1.4.1 New technologies and changing values
During the 1920s, few people realised that forces that would bring another war were already taking shape. The decade of the 1920s has often been described as a carefree time when people put the gloom of the war years behind them. The wealth that some people had and the influence of jazz music, new dance crazes, motion pictures (movies), motorcars, new technologies and mass production all contributed to the decade being called the ‘Roaring Twenties’. However, while for some it was an age of prosperity, confidence and fun, for most people around the world, the 1920s was anything but ‘roaring’.

New technologies created new consumer goods. In the 1920s manufacturing was stimulated by the post-war demand for goods such as telephones, household appliances and cars (see SOURCES 1 and 4). The greatest growth occurred in the United States, where industrial output doubled between 1921 and 1929. How did this happen? In 1913 Henry Ford had introduced the assembly line to manufacture his Model T automobile. Assembly lines made manufacturing much cheaper and led to big increases in production and sales. Other manufacturers soon followed Ford’s example.

Mass-produced goods had to find mass markets so advertising was used to encourage mass consumption. The introduction of hire purchase encouraged people to buy new goods because they no longer had to save up their full cost before buying. As more people bought goods, more jobs were created so even more people had money to spend. By 1929 there was one car for every five Americans; in comparison, there was only one car for every 43 people in Britain and fewer still in most of Europe.

Manufacturing also grew in Australia as British and American companies set up Australian branches. General Electric made toasters, irons and heaters and General Motors and Ford opened motor vehicle assembly plants in Australia in the mid 1920s. For those who could afford it, the consumer age had arrived. However, real wages barely improved in Australia through the 1920s.

Changing values
The mood of the 1920s was expressed in music, fashions and entertainment. Jazz had been created by African Americans. It became widely popular in the US and around the world,
especially through musicians such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. New dances such as the Charleston were performed at music halls and dance clubs. The United States had introduced prohibition in 1920 and it remained illegal to sell alcohol until 1933. But millions of Americans defied the law by drinking in illegal bars called ‘speakeasies’ that were often operated by gangsters.

People also became obsessed by aviation, which combined speed, thrills and novelty. When Bert Hinkler made his record-breaking England to Australia flight, 80 000 people turned out to cheer him as he landed in Melbourne.

Reacting to change

Women were gaining more freedom and independence in this age. Some, called ‘flappers’, shocked conservatives by wearing short dresses, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol in public. But many people were horrified by such changes in values and behaviour. Mixed bathing on beaches, even in neck-to-knee costumes, was seen as another sign of declining morals. Women received most blame for a suspected increase in sexual relations outside marriage. In Australia, churches warned of the evils of alcohol and called for a return to traditional values (see SOURCES 3 and 4).
1.4.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What is an assembly line?
2. Describe the impact in the United States of mass production and hire purchase.
3. Describe the social changes that led to the 1920s being called the ‘Roaring Twenties’.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Look at the appearance of the refrigerator in Source 1. Describe ways in which it differs from a modern refrigerator and explain what differences such an appliance would have made to peoples’ lives.
5. Study Source 2
   a. Describe the aim of this advertisement.
   b. To what aspirations is it appealing?
   c. Explain what this source tells us about new technologies, marketing and consumers in the 1920s.
6. Explain how Sources 3 and 4 can be used as evidence of conflicting values in the 1920s.

1.4.2 The other side of the 1920s

The image of the 1920s as an age of prosperity and excitement ignores the experiences of most people. In the United States, rural workers gained little and African Americans especially suffered poverty and discrimination. Although the US had suffered much less in the war than other Allied nations, there were problems readjusting to peace. Many demobilised soldiers were unemployed while the cost of living doubled in two years. When workers went on strike for better pay they were violently suppressed.

Intolerance in the United States

African Americans, migrants and political radicals experienced the hatred of many white Americans. The Ku Klux Klan grew rapidly in the 1920s. By 1925 this violent racist movement had 5 000 000 members (see Source 5). It incited lynchings and other atrocities against black Americans and preached hatred of blacks, Catholics, Jews, non-English migrants and socialists. There were race riots in many cities.

Source 5 A Ku Klux Klan initiation ceremony during the 1920s
Conservative politicians and the press convinced many Americans that there was a ‘Red’ conspiracy to overthrow the US. In 1919 and 1920 more than 10 000 suspected communists and anarchists were arrested. On 15 April 1920 two men were shot dead in a payroll robbery. Two Italian Americans, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were charged with these murders even though they had sound alibis and there was no evidence against them. Sacco and Vanzetti were found guilty and sentenced to death because they were anarchists. In 1925 another man confessed to being a member of the gang that carried out the killings. Despite this, Sacco and Vanzetti were executed on 23 August 1927. On that day more than 250 000 people protested in Boston.

Division in Europe

After the war there were bitter social divisions in Europe. Many French socialists believed that revolution was near. British society was also deeply divided. No longer the ‘workshop of the world’, Britain experienced widespread poverty and unemployment. In the early 1920s, working-class unrest was violently suppressed. Mounted police attacked hunger marches led by demobilised soldiers. In Ireland British forces conducted a savage campaign against Irish rebels.

Italy came close to a socialist revolution after the war. Demobilised peasant soldiers seized land from wealthy landowners, while in towns and cities workers took over the factories. The rich and the middle classes, who feared that Italy would follow the path of Russia, turned to the fascists to save them. Similar conflicts erupted in Germany and parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Unrest in the colonies

Independence movements grew in many colonies of the European powers immediately after the war. Many revolutionaries were inspired by the example of the Russian Revolution. In the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia) in 1919 the Islamic Union called for independence. In 1920 the Indies Communist Party was formed. It attempted an uprising against the Dutch in 1926–27 but its leaders were hanged and thousands of others were imprisoned. In French Indochina the French Foreign Legion terrorised the people to crush dissent against French rule. But the Legion’s brutality drove many Vietnamese to support movements such as the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, which was formed in 1927 to fight for Vietnam’s independence (see SOURCE 6).

SOURCE 6 An eyewitness description of the behaviour of troops of the French Foreign Legion in Indochina during the 1920s

An unleashed soldiery . . . now terrorises the entire country. They steal, rape, condemn to death, and execute. . . . Legionnaires enter homes, take what catches their fancy, indulge in outrages against women and young girls. For trifles, without proof, men and youths are arrested and shot in cold blood without trial . . . and the region lives under a real reign of military terror . . . If it is with such methods that we intend to pacify the country, we are gravely mistaken.


DID YOU KNOW?

In British India in 1919 an unarmed Indian crowd was fired upon by troops commanded by General Reginald Dyer in the town of Amritsar. In this massacre 372 people were killed and at least 1000 were wounded. In the following years the Indian National Congress became a mass movement dedicated to ending British rule.

1.4.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify the groups in the USA who suffered poverty, intolerance and discrimination during the 1920s.
2. Explain why there was deep division and conflict in Europe and the US during the 1920s.
3. Describe the responses of Dutch, British and French colonial powers to independence movements in their colonies.

4. Why might oppressed groups generally have considered this period to be anything but the ‘Roaring Twenties’?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

5. Study SOURCE 5. Use the internet to prepare a report on the racist activities of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s. Explain how its extreme ideology was similar to that of European fascist movements.
6. Explain how SOURCE 6 provides evidence of reasons why colonised peoples resisted European rule after World War I.
1.5 The Great Depression

1.5.1 The coming of the Great Depression

There are reasons to believe that World War II might not have occurred but for the 1930s depression. Problems had been developing in the world economy since at least the mid 1920s, and in October 1929 the New York stock exchange collapsed (see SOURCE 1). Panicking investors sold shares as prices continued to fall. By the end of December 1929, $40 billion had been wiped off the value of US shares. Many shareholders, stockbrokers and business owners lost everything. The effects of the crash spread rapidly. Millions of people lost their jobs and the world was plunged into its worst crisis since World War I. This was the Great Depression and for many people it was worse than the war.

Two problems arose from the enormous growth in production of goods and prices of shares in the United States during the 1920s. First, companies produced more goods than they could sell, while most Americans were too poor to buy them and many products could not find foreign markets. The second problem was speculation: investors used borrowed money to buy shares, expecting to sell them for quick profits when share prices rose. By the late 1920s this had caused share prices to reach unrealistic levels. When investors lost confidence and rushed to sell shares, their prices collapsed.

The result was a huge fall in demand for goods and services, so production was cut and employees were sacked. As unemployment spread, people spent less and more jobs were lost. Banks closed and poverty spread (see SOURCE 2). Millions of desperate Americans wandered the
country seeking any work they could find. Because the US was the most important centre of the world economy, the Depression quickly spread to other countries.

Germany was hit particularly hard. Its industry depended on foreign loans as did the German government to meet reparations payments. By 1929, the German economy had only just reached its pre-war levels. Foreign loans dried up and German exports collapsed. By 1932, six million Germans were unemployed.

SOURCE 2 An extract from the New Republic by Edmund Wilson, 1933, showing poverty during the Depression

There is not a garbage-dump in Chicago which is not diligently haunted by the hungry. Last summer [in] the hot weather, when the smell was sickening and the flies were thick, there were a hundred people a day coming to one of the dumps. A widow who used to do housework and laundry, but now had no work at all, fed herself and her fourteen-year-old son on garbage. Before she picked up the meat, she would always take off her glasses so that she couldn’t see the maggots.

The Great Depression in Australia

Australians had experienced some of the changes associated with the ‘Roaring Twenties’ such as Hollywood movies, new fashions, and jazz and dance music, but unemployment reached 11 per cent during the decade and there was much industrial conflict, including a police strike in Melbourne in 1923. Australia had not had a booming economy during the 1920s, but it was among the nations that were hardest hit by the Depression.

To understand why Australia was badly affected, it is necessary to look at how the economy was structured. Australia’s prosperity was based on high prices for increasing exports of primary products and the inflow of foreign investment. But Australia owed a large and increasing amount of interest to overseas lenders. Any big fall in exports or in prices for them and any reduction of overseas loan funds would cause problems.

When the Depression struck, world prices of primary products collapsed and loan funds dried up. With loans no longer available to pay for public works and construction projects, many workers lost their jobs. This reduced demand for goods produced in other industries. By 1930 nearly 20 per cent of Australian workers were unemployed and many others had only part-time work. In 1932 unemployment reached almost 30 per cent.

As Australia could no longer borrow to pay for imports and to keep up interest payments on debts, the Australian government raised tariffs to make imports dearer. Australia’s imports fell and exports increased, but prices for them fell so steeply that they barely increased Australia’s earnings.

SOURCE 3 Australian unemployment rates from 1928 to 1939

Dealing with the Depression

Because the Depression was a world problem, Australian governments felt powerless to end it. They thought they should treat their budgets in the same way a family would; when times were hard they should spend less. But as governments cut spending, more workers lost their jobs,
people had less to spend and the situation worsened. At first the United States followed a similar course, but under President Roosevelt’s New Deal the US expanded welfare and funded public works programs that helped the country to recover.

**1.5.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Describe the problems that were caused in the United States by overproduction of goods and by inequality.
2. Draw a mind map showing how each problem associated with the economic crash caused further problems.
3. Explain why the following countries were particularly badly affected by the depression:
   a. Germany
   b. Australia.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

4. Explain what you can tell about the economic crash of October 1929 from SOURCES 1.
5. Describe what SOURCE 2 reveals about the desperation of unemployed Americans in 1932.
6. Referring to SOURCE 3, describe the trends in Australian unemployment between 1928 and 1939.

**1.5.2 Living through the Depression**

Few rich Australians were affected by the Depression, and some of them profited from it. Life went on for Australia’s high society. In contrast, many small farmers were already in debt by 1929 as a result of droughts and falling prices. At first, banks evicted farmers who could not meet loan repayments, but most farmers were saved by government relief and by legislation that froze their debts until conditions improved.

Workers suffered the most. At first governments relied on charities to provide for the unemployed. But charities could not deal with poverty on such a vast scale, and accepting charity was a bitter blow to people’s pride. State governments provided some relief work for the unemployed but it was paid at less than the basic wage (see SOURCE 5). Unemployed workers were further humiliated by having to queue for the dole or sustenance payments, which became known as the ‘susso’. Men tramped the streets in search of work. Many people went hungry and malnourished children sometimes collapsed at school. Some people scavenged scraps from garbage bins. A survey in Melbourne found that almost 10 per cent of children suffered malnutrition and/or preventable diseases by the age of six.

In most cases no government support was provided for rent or clothing, so many faced eviction and homelessness when they could not pay their rent. Families were forced to live in shantytowns built on wasteland (see SOURCES 4 and 7). In these desperate times people banded together to help each other and joined demonstrations to protest against unemployment and evictions. But most felt a terrible sense of helplessness.
Plans to help Australia through the crisis

The most radical plan was proposed by Jack Lang, the Labor premier of New South Wales. Lang wanted a temporary halt to interest payments to British lenders so more help could be given to the unemployed. All other Australian governments rejected this proposal, seeing it as an act of disloyalty to Britain.

Another plan was proposed by Labor federal treasurer E. G. Theodore. He believed that instead of cutting spending, the government should print more money to encourage spending and stimulate industry. This plan was abandoned because the banks were against it.

Instead, through the Melbourne Agreement, the Commonwealth and states agreed with the advice of Sir Otto Niemeyer of the Bank of England that Australian governments had to cut costs and begin to pay back their loans. In June 1931 the Commonwealth and states agreed to cut government spending, including government wages, salaries and pensions. The basic wage was reduced by 10 per cent and rates of interest on government debts were reduced. Taxes were raised to increase revenue. At the same time, the Commonwealth Bank was to provide credit to finance public works and create paid work for the unemployed.

SOURCE 5 Unemployed workers constructing the Yarra Boulevard, known as ‘Susso Drive’, in order to receive sustenance payments during the 1930s Depression

In answer to a three line advertisement offering employment to two girls experienced in bottling and labeling, 200 girls stormed the offices of Mr Knight, toilet preparations agent . . . yesterday morning. Many were well educated and carried references from leading city firms . . . Some told pitiful tales of privations their families have been through owing to unemployment, and almost begged for the position.

From the Sydney Morning Herald, 13 February 1930.

SOURCE 6 A newspaper article describing fierce job competition in 1930

In Australia, improvement came slowly after August 1932, but it had more to do with the recovery of the world economy than with government policies. Even in 1939 nearly 10 per cent of Australian workers were unemployed.

18 Jacaranda History Alive 10 Victorian Curriculum
SOURCE 7 Unemployed workers sheltering in a cave in the Sydney Domain, 25 June 1930

1.5.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Outline the main ideas of the three plans that were suggested to deal with Australia’s economic problems.
2. Explain why some sections of society suffered greatly during the Great Depression while others hardly suffered at all.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Imagine you are a newspaper reporter in the 1930s. Use SOURCES 4, 5, 6 and 7 as your evidence to write a report on problems facing unemployed workers during the Great Depression.

1.5 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1. Working in small groups, use all the sources in this subtopic to write and perform a short play that conveys what people experienced during the Depression. Your script could focus on one aspect such as unemployment and poverty. Create characters based on information gleaned from the sources. Use your imagination to add more detail about their lives before and during the Depression years.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
2. Create a flow diagram to show how overproduction and inequality in the United States contributed to a stockmarket crash there and how the effects spread to other countries causing further consequences.
1.6 Communism — dream or nightmare?

1.6.1 The drift to dictatorship in Russia
In your study of World War I you learned about the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and about how the Bolsheviks expected it to trigger revolutions of workers and peasants in other countries. In the chaos that followed the war there were several attempted revolutions in Europe. These uprisings failed but the Bolshevik Revolution continued to inspire many workers and other disadvantaged groups, especially during the hardships of the Great Depression. However, the system that developed in the USSR was not the workers’ paradise that many revolutionaries had dreamed of.

The Bolshevik Revolution was based on the idea of creating a communist society in which everyone would be equal. At first the Bolshevik government, headed by Lenin, handed control of factories and other businesses to committees of workers and land was given to peasant soviets to redistribute. But when production slumped, the Bolsheviks appointed managers to run enterprises. To hold on to power, the Bolsheviks abolished all other political parties, including other socialist parties. The Bolsheviks had to be ruthless to survive, especially during the Civil War from 1918 in which they fought against armies of White Russians, who were aided by the armed intervention of Britain, France, the United States and Japan.

When the Civil War ended in 1921, the Bolsheviks controlled most of the former Russian Empire. In that year they crushed a revolt by sailors of the Kronstadt Naval Base who demanded an end to one-party rule. These sailors had once been among the Bolsheviks’ strongest supporters. Faced with such discontent, the Bolsheviks took a temporary step backwards, relaxing economic controls. But there was no relaxation of Bolshevik political control.

source 1 A Bolshevik propaganda poster from 1920, titled ‘Comrade Lenin cleans the Earth of scum’.

source 2 Starving children at Samara Camp during the famine in Russia. During the Civil War, under the policy called War Communism, the Bolsheviks seized grain from peasants to feed soldiers and workers. There were terrible famines and many peasant uprisings against the Bolsheviks.
1.6.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Describe the original measures undertaken by the Bolsheviks to give control of production to workers and peasants.
2. Explain why they soon abandoned those measures.
3. Describe how the Bolsheviks treated other political parties.
4. What event prompted the Bolsheviks to relax economic controls?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
5. Look closely at SOURCE 1. Identify the sections of Russian society represented by each of the figures Lenin is sweeping away.
6. Examine SOURCE 2 and explain the policy of War Communism. To what extent does this photograph provide evidence of the harsh consequences of that policy?

1.6.2 Stalin’s dictatorship

In 1924 Lenin died of a stroke. Joseph Stalin was the General Secretary of the Communist Party, as the Bolshevik Party was now called. Stalin used this position to outmanoeuvre his rivals, including Leon Trotsky, who had been the main organiser of the 1917 Revolution. Trotsky was exiled in 1928 and by the end of 1929 Stalin was the USSR’s undisputed dictator.

Under Stalin’s collectivisation policy, peasant farms were combined into huge collective farms between 1929 and 1935. Peasants who resisted were executed or sent to slave labour camps. Thirteen million peasants starved to death as their grain was confiscated and distributed to the cities or exported to fund the growth of manufacturing in 1932–33. In 1928 Stalin launched the first of a series of Five Year Plans to develop industries.

The successes of these plans were achieved by harsh workplace discipline and forced labour by political prisoners. Stalin’s labour camps were soon full of such prisoners as his secret police arrested suspected dissidents.

In the Great Purge from 1936 to 1938, Stalin unleashed a wave of terror in which all of his critics in the Communist Party and several Red Army generals were killed. In a series of show trials, former leading Bolsheviks were forced to confess to crimes such as treason and sabotage. Russia was now a state in which people’s lives were controlled by terror, strict censorship and propaganda that portrayed Stalin almost as god.

Communism and anti-communism

Despite the horrors of Stalin’s rule, the idea of communist revolution continued to find supporters in capitalist countries where workers were exploited and oppressed. It also inspired fear and hatred among people who dreaded any kind of working-class revolt. The ideas of communism and anti-communism would influence almost every political conflict for decades.

1.6.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. How did Stalin rise to power?
2. Explain the main features of the collectivisation of agriculture.
3. Describe the methods used by Stalin to eliminate his rivals, real and potential.
4. Create a timeline of developments in post-revolution Russia to show the drift to dictatorship and the consolidation of Stalin’s rule.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
5. Describe the way that Stalin is portrayed in SOURCE 3 and discuss how Soviet citizens who had pinned their hopes on the revolution might have felt about such propaganda.
1.6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1 USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

1 SOURCES 1 and 2 conjure up very different images of life under Lenin.

a Which source makes its point most effectively and why?

b What other types of sources would help a historian arrive at a more balanced assessment of life under Lenin?

2 IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Some historians have observed that, while the Bolsheviks had claimed to be establishing a society that would be based on equality and democracy, under Stalin’s rule Soviet society became as unequal as it had been under the Tsars and power had become even more concentrated. How much had really changed in the former Russian Empire?

1.7 The rise of fascism

1.7.1 The nature of fascism

The Great Depression caused mass unemployment, poverty and misery around the world. But in the longer term it had even worse consequences. It led to the rise of fascism, which would present the greatest threat to human rights and world peace in the inter-war years. This extremist movement arose from the deep social divisions that followed World War I, but it gained most backing during the Depression years of the early 1930s. Support came not from those who suffered most in the Depression but from those who feared that communist or socialist workers might seize power.

Fascist movements developed in many countries in the 1920s and 1930s. While they aimed to appeal to all social classes, fascists found most support among middle-class people who feared the influence of socialism and communism. Although there were significant local differences, fascist movements shared many common characteristics (see SOURCE 1).

1.7.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Among which social class did fascism find the most support?

2 What fears drove many members of that class to support fascism?

SOURCE 1 Main features of fascism

- Opposition to individual liberties, believing that a strong state was more important
- Intense nationalism, often with the desire for the nation to expand its territory
- Glorification of war and violence as means of achieving their aims
- Contempt for parliamentary democracy, believing that dictators should rule
- Support for imperialism, believing that some nations had the right to rule others
- Racism, believing that some races were superior to others
- Violent opposition to communism and socialism, particularly because communists and socialists were internationalists who argued that workers’ real interests were based on social class rather than nationality

Significant fascist movements arose in the inter-war years in many European countries, including Italy, Austria, Hungary, Finland, France, Belgium, Spain, Romania and Britain. There were also fascist or extreme right movements in the United States and in Australia.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

3 How would you classify SOURCE 1? Is it a historical source? Explain.

4 Referring to SOURCE 1, write a brief description of the main features of fascism.
1.7.2 Fascism in Italy

Italy was the first country in which fascists gained power. During World War I there had been heavy fighting in Italy’s own territory. The war’s end brought rising prices, high unemployment and nationalist resentment that Italy did not gain more from the peace treaties. Italy experienced great social conflict after the war. Its strong communist movement was inspired to follow the example of the Bolsheviks in Russia and *foment* a revolution.

However, by 1919 fascism was also a powerful movement in Italy. Italian fascist thugs, called ‘blackshirts’, fought trade unionists, socialists and communists in street battles. Fascists bashed their political opponents and burned the offices of newspapers that dared to criticise them. They gained support from the middle classes and the rich by violently breaking up strikes. In 1922 their leader, Benito Mussolini (see SOURCE 6), organised a fascist march on the capital, Rome. The Italian king regarded Mussolini as an ally against the communists and socialists and invited him to become prime minister.

Once Mussolini was in power, he suspended elections and banned other political parties. Mussolini was now a dictator. As Il Duce (the leader) he turned Italy into the world’s first fascist state. Workers’ rights were destroyed while employers were protected. Mussolini dreamed of re-creating the might of ancient Rome. Fascists controlled the mass media and the education system and they used them to *indoctrinate* a generation.

**SOURCE 2** In ancient Rome, the annually elected leader carried a bundle of sticks wrapped around an axe. It was called the fasces and it symbolised strength and power. Mussolini revived it in 1919 as the symbol of Italian fascism.

**SOURCE 3** Education was used as a powerful tool of indoctrination in fascist Italy. This extract from a compulsory textbook issued to eight-year-olds argues the need for blind obedience and loyalty to the leader.

The eyes of the Duce are on every one of you. No one can say what is the meaning of that look on his face. It is an eagle opening its wings and rising into space. It is a flame that searches out your heart to light there a fire. Who can resist that burning eye, darting out its arrows? But do not be afraid; for you those arrows will change into rays of joy. A child, who, even while not refusing to obey, asks ‘Why?’, is like a bayonet made of milk… ‘You must obey because you must,’ said Mussolini, when explaining the reasons for obedience.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Although all fascist movements were racist, Italian fascism was not anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) until it came under the influence of German Nazism. When Mussolini first seized power, his Fascist Party had wealthy Jewish Italians among its supporters and members.

1.7.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What factors in Italy after World War 1 created conditions for change?
2. Who were ‘blackshirts’ and how did they behave?
3. What means did fascists in Italy use to influence Italian society?
4. Describe the tactics used by Mussolini to gain power in Italy.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

5. Describe the Italian fascist symbol in SOURCE 2 and identify reasons why Italian fascists would have chosen a symbol from ancient Rome.
6. Analyse SOURCE 3 using the following questions:
   a. Who would have produced the textbook from which this extract is taken?
   b. For what readers was it intended?
   c. Why was such material produced?
   d. What beliefs and values was it attempting to instil?
   e. How effective might it have been as propaganda in a situation where fascists also controlled the mass media?
1.7.3 Fascism in Australia
Extreme right-wing movements in Australia included the King and Empire Alliance, which was launched in Melbourne in 1920 by conservative politicians, businessmen and ex-servicemen. Its intention appears to have been to seize power if a Labor government tried to introduce socialism. Similar groups in the 1920s included the Melbourne-based White Guard and the Sane Democracy League. During the Depression era, more such organisations emerged in Australia and several of them had secret armies formed to fight any threat of socialism.

The New Guard movement
The best known and largest of these Australian groups was the New Guard. It was formed in 1931 and at its height had 36000 members. It was strongly influenced by fascist movements in Europe, and it attracted many middle-class supporters. Its leader, Eric Campbell, was an admirer of Mussolini. The New Guard fought street battles with Labor and Communist supporters. At the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, a mounted New Guard member, Frances De Groot, succeeded in cutting the ribbon ahead of Labor premier Jack Lang. Slashing the ribbon with his sword, he declared the bridge open ‘in the name of the decent and respectable people of NSW’. De Groot had fought with the 15th Hussars on the Western Front in World War I, when he earned his sword. De Groot’s upstaging of Lang at the ceremony was not only a security blunder, but it gave the New Guard strong publicity.

The New Guard even planned to overthrow the Lang government in New South Wales. An armed revolt was avoided when the New South Wales governor dismissed Lang from office in May 1932. However, support for such extremist movements declined quickly as Australia recovered from the Depression.

SOURCE 5 Frances De Groot, on horseback and in military uniform, uses his sword to cut the ribbon at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932.
1.7.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Name some right-wing movements active in Australia in the 1920s.
2. Which social classes in Australia were attracted to these movements?
3. Why did support decline after the Depression?
4. In what way did the New Guard gain attention?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

5. From the late 1930s, Eric Campbell denied that his New Guard had been a fascist movement. Explain how SOURCE 5 could be used as evidence to refute his claim.

   a. Why do you think De Groot chose to do what he did? Consider his own words to help you with your answer.
   b. What aspects of this image might be considered frightening or alarming to a member of the Australian public at that time if they saw it in a newspaper?

7. Would you expect to see images like SOURCES 4 and 5 in Australia today? Why or why not?

1.7.4 Fascism in Germany and Spain

The most significant result of the rise of fascism was felt in Germany. At the end of World War I the country was bitterly divided. Following the abdication of the Kaiser, Germany became a democratic republic. However, the German Spartacists (communists) wanted to follow the Bolsheviks’ example and found a socialist republic based on workers’ soviets. The moderate socialists wanted to reform Germany through parliamentary democracy.

The republic was first threatened when the left attempted a Bolshevik-style revolution in 1919. But a much greater danger came from the extreme right. Fascist groups, composed mostly of ex-soldiers, blamed Germany’s defeat and humiliation on socialists, communists and Jews. The government used groups of fascist ex-soldiers, called Freikorps, armed with artillery, machine guns, grenades and flame-throwers, to crush the Spartacist uprisings of 1919.

In March 1920, these fascist ex-soldiers tried to seize power in the Kapp Putsch, but they were thwarted by resistance from the German socialist trade unions. The next fascist attempt to seize power was made by Adolf Hitler, who had become the leader of the National Socialist German Workers’ (Nazi) Party in 1921. Hitler first attempted to seize power in the Munich Putsch of 1923. The putsch was defeated. Hitler’s rise was then delayed by growing German prosperity during the late 1920s. Hitler consolidated his position in the party, building up his private armies and refining terror tactics and propaganda. Eventually, the Nazi rise to power was made possible by the Great Depression. In just ten turbulent years following the Munich Putsch, Hitler’s Nazis were to gain control of Germany and lead the country towards another world war.

Fascism in Spain

Fascists also gained power in Spain. In 1936, General Francisco Franco and other Spanish military leaders started a rebellion against Spain’s democratically elected republican government. In the three-year-long Spanish Civil War, Franco was supported by the Spanish fascists (Falange), the wealthy Spanish landowners, the leaders of the Catholic Church, Spanish monarchists and, most importantly, by forces from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The German Luftwaffe (air force) used Spain to test the tactics they would later use in World War II.

SOURCE 6 Mussolini (left), giving the fascist salute, with Adolf Hitler on a visit to Germany in 1937. The swastika (on Hitler’s sleeve) was adopted as the symbol of Nazism.

putsch  an attempt to seize political power by force
The Spanish Republic received some aid from the Soviet Union and Mexico and from idealistic international volunteers (see SOURCE 7), including about 60 Australians. However, Franco triumphed. This was partly because of the assistance provided by Hitler and Mussolini and partly because the Western democracies turned a blind eye to fascist aggression while preventing much aid from reaching the Spanish Republic. With Franco’s victory in 1939, Spain became another fascist dictatorship.

SOURCE 7  A group of British anti-fascist volunteers who fought in Spain in 1936

Tom Mann Centuria Islesia Antifascista. From the collection of the Noel Butlin Archive Centre.

1.7.4 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Describe two unsuccessful attempts by German fascists to seize power in the 1920s.
2. With whose assistance did fascism triumph in Spain by 1939?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. Describe the dress of both fascist leaders in SOURCE 6 and explain what aspect of their ideology would have led them to wear military-style outfits.
4. Study SOURCE 7 and hold a small group discussion to explore reasons why volunteers went to Spain to fight fascism in the 1930s.

1.7 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
1. Why did fascism appeal to people during the 1920s and 1930s? If similar economic conditions existed today, do you believe that fascist movements could gain popularity? Explain.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
2. Using the sources and other information in this section, evaluate the historical significance of the rise of fascism. In your answer you should consider: its influence at the time, how many people and countries were affected, and its consequences.
1.8 The Nazis take power in Germany

1.8.1 The Dolchstosslegende and economic woes

The main cause of World War II was aggression by the Nazi regime that controlled Germany from 1933 to 1945. This fascist party, headed by Adolf Hitler, led Germany into war in 1939. But how did it gain power? Three factors in particular helped the rise of the Nazis: resentment against the Treaty of Versailles; the myth that Germany had been betrayed; and the Great Depression.

Many Germans bitterly resented the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles and its humiliating clause blaming Germany for the war. German right-wingers reacted with the Dolchstosslegende, the ‘stab in the back’ myth. It held that Germany had not been defeated but was betrayed by the ‘November criminals’, the democratic socialists who created the republic, signed the armistice and accepted the hated treaty. This myth undermined the Weimar Republic from the beginning.

The impact of the 1930s Depression

In the early 1920s Germany suffered hyperinflation, which wiped out the value of its currency (see SOURCE 1). However, from 1924 to 1929 the government managed to improve Germany’s finances and international relations. Under the 1924 Dawes Plan, reparations payments were spread over a longer period and Germany was given loans to help rebuild its economy. Under the Locarno Treaty of 1925, Germany accepted its western borders set by the Treaty of Versailles, and in 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. However, as the Great Depression spread through industrialised countries from 1929, Germany was most severely affected. As foreign loans dried up, investment fell and by 1932 six million Germans were unemployed.

1.8.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Explain the meaning of the German term Dolchstosslegende.
2. Why was this legend so damaging to democratic government in Germany?
3. Describe how Germany’s economy had improved before the 1930s Great Depression.

SOURCE 1 During the hyperinflation of the early 1920s, German Deutschmarks lost so much of their value that, as shown here, they were used as waste paper, insulation and fuel for heating. Middle-class people saw their savings wiped out.

1.8.2 The fall of democratic government

When the Depression hit, Germany had a coalition government headed by the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The SPD wanted to raise taxes on the rich to maintain payments to the unemployed. The non-socialist parties opposed this, so the coalition split and the government

DID YOU KNOW?

In September 1918 General Ludendorff, the virtual military dictator of Germany, persuaded the Kaiser to transfer power to a civilian government and demand that it seek an armistice. Germany’s military leaders then shifted the blame for the nation’s defeat and humiliation from the military and the old order to the new democratic government.
collapsed. President Hindenburg used the crisis to appoint an authoritarian Centre Party government that lacked support in the Reichstag. When elections were held in September 1930, moderate parties lost ground. The Communist Party increased its percentage of votes from 10.6 to 13.1, but the Nazi Party climbed from just 2.6 to 18.3 per cent.

Hindenburg still refused to appoint a government that had majority support, so new elections were scheduled for 27 July 1932. Before the elections the Nazis’ paramilitary wing, the Sturmabteilung (known as the SA), launched a wave of street violence against the left-wing parties. In the elections the Nazis gained 37.3 per cent of the vote to become the largest party in the Reichstag. Following a Reichstag vote of no confidence in the government, further elections were held in November. Although the Nazi vote fell by 4 per cent, on 30 January 1933 Hindenburg invited Hitler to become Chancellor (prime minister) of a right-wing coalition government. In less than two months Germany would be transformed into a Nazi dictatorship.

### Nazi ideology and tactics

How did the Nazis get so far? In 1921 Hitler had become their first president, and the SA was created to terrorise socialists and communists. By 1923 the party had support from several army officers. The basic ideas of Nazi ideology were:

- only the strong survive
- the hated communism is regarded as a Jewish ideology
- the Germanic master race must defeat its racial enemies, especially the Jews
- Germany must gain Lebensraum (living room) for its expanding population by taking land from non-Aryan races
- the Führerprinzip (leader principle) dictates that all opposition must be crushed and there must be total obedience to the leader

After a failed attempt to seize power in 1923, Hitler focused on building support. The Hitler Youth was founded in 1926 to indoctrinate young Germans. The Nazis gained supporters through public spectacles such as the Nuremberg rallies, through the support of influential individuals such as Alfred Hugenberg, who controlled 700 newspapers, and through propaganda blaming Germany’s problems on communists.
and Jews. Joseph Goebbels was appointed to head the Nazi propaganda unit in 1929. He organised the party’s election campaigns and won over many middle-class voters, who turned from other conservative parties to the Nazis out of fear of communism.

1.8.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**
1. Identify the main ideas of Nazi ideology and display them in a graphic organiser.
2. Describe the tactics used by the Nazis to gain power.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
3. Use SOURCE 2 to work out which parties gained votes and which lost votes between 1928 and 1932. Explain the reasons for these changes.
4. Analyse SOURCE 3 as an example of Nazi propaganda.
   a. Consider its use of persuasive techniques.
   b. Evaluate why or why not the poster would appeal to middle-class voters.

1.8.3 Consolidating power

A month after Hitler became Chancellor, the Reichstag was severely damaged by fire and the Nazis stirred up fears of a communist uprising. Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to issue a Decree for the Protection of People and State. This allowed for imprisonment without trial and abolition of freedom of the press, speech and assembly. During the weeks preceding the March 1933 elections, the Nazis used the decree to restrict campaigning by other parties. Despite their intimidation of voters, the Nazis won only 43.9 per cent of the vote, so they formed a coalition with the small Nationalist Party and barred the Communists from taking the seats they had won.

The Enabling Act of 23 March 1933 gave Hitler dictatorial powers and gave his government the power to make laws and change the Constitution as it wished. In the Reichstag, only the SPD had the courage to vote against the Act.

**Nazification of Germany**

By 1934 the Nazis controlled German social, political, economic and cultural life.
- Nazi courts were established to try ‘political criminals’.
- Anti-Nazis and Jews were forced out of jobs in the civil service.
- Trade unions were abolished and the German Labour Front was established to control workers.
- ‘Un-German’ books were publicly burned.
- Like the Communist Party, the SPD was banned. Other parties dissolved themselves.
- German communists, socialists and other anti-Nazis were sent to concentration camps.
- Education was made a tool of Nazi propaganda.
- The Nazis organised attacks against Jews and Jewish property and a boycott of Jewish businesses, and banned Jews from the civil service and professions.
- Under the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jews lost their German citizenship and political rights. Marriage and sexual relations between Jews and Aryans were banned.
- To prepare for war, Hitler needed the support of the army leaders so he eliminated Ernst Röhm and other SA leaders, who wanted the regular army to be amalgamated with the SA under SA leadership. On the ‘Night of the Long Knives’, 30 June 1934, Hitler used the other Nazi paramilitary force, the SS, to murder around 180 leading SA members and more than 200 other political opponents. To justify this, Hitler claimed that the SA was planning an uprising. The murders created a close relationship between the Nazi regime and the army, and led to the dominance of the SS in the Nazi state.
- When Hindenburg died on 2 August 1934, Hitler assumed total power as *Führer* (absolute ruler) of Germany. He became commander-in-chief and all soldiers were required to take a personal oath of loyalty to him.
Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:

**Causes of World War II**

### 1.8.3 Activities

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Describe methods used by the Nazis to eliminate their opponents between 1933 and 1934.
2. Explain why Hitler was willing to murder members of his own party.
3. What anti-Jewish measures did the Nazis adopt in 1934 and 1935?
4. Create a timeline of events from 1919 to 1934 that contributed to Germany becoming a Nazi dictatorship.

#### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

5. Study **SOURCE 4** and explain how the Nazis used slogans, film and public rallies as part of their tactics to take over Germany.
6. Use the internet and other resources to find out what happened on **Kristallnacht** (the ‘Night of the Broken Glass’), 7 November 1938.
1.9 Japanese militarism

1.9.1 Japanese imperialism

Fascist regimes in Germany and Italy would soon threaten world peace. However, peace was already threatened by militarism and extreme nationalism in Japan. World War II began in 1939, but for the Chinese people the war began with a Japanese invasion in 1931 and expanded with a further invasion in 1937. This was the beginning of Japan’s attempt to create an Asia-Pacific empire.

Since the late nineteenth century Japan had wanted to follow the European powers’ example by creating an empire. In the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) Japan invaded Korea and took Formosa (modern Taiwan) and the Ryuku Islands from China. In the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) Japan gained control of much of Manchuria. Then, in 1910, Japan annexed Korea. During World War I Japan sided with the Allies to gain Germany’s territorial rights in China and German colonies in the north Pacific.

Aggression in Manchuria

The Great Depression contributed to the rise of Japanese militarism, as economic hardship led to growing support for the military and nationalists who wanted Japan to gain colonies for raw materials and export markets. Japan’s military soon had more power than its civilian government. When the Japanese prime minister opposed an aggressive foreign policy in 1930 he was shot by an extreme nationalist.

In the following year an explosion on the Japanese-owned South Manchurian railway line was used as a pretext for an invasion of Manchuria. By early 1932 the Japanese military, acting against instructions from Japan’s government, had occupied all of Manchuria, changed its name to Manchukuo and claimed it was not part of China. In the same year, the Japanese bombed Shanghai and occupied parts of northern China. China protested to the League of Nations, but when it censured Japan in 1933 the Japanese withdrew from the League. Because they were more concerned with threats to peace in Europe, the Western powers and the League took no effective action.
1.9.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Explain how the Great Depression led to the rise of militarism in Japan.
2. Describe how the Japanese military dealt with Japanese political leaders who opposed them.
3. What pretext did the Japanese military use to invade Manchuria?
   a. How did Japan counter China’s objections to their invasion?
   b. Why was the League of Nations opposition to Japan’s actions ineffective?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Use SOURCE 1 to identify the sites of Japanese aggressive imperialism from 1894 to 1933.
   Why might Japan have chosen these areas as targets for imperialist expansion?

1.9.2 Fascist alliances and the second Sino-Japanese War

Japanese ultra-nationalist societies had much in common with European fascists. They encouraged fanatical devotion to military values and to the emperor, who was considered to be divine. These societies were violently nationalist, racist, anti-communist and anti-democratic. They assassinated their political opponents or frightened them into silence. In 1932 a new Japanese prime minister was assassinated for speaking out against the military. By 1937 Japanese schoolchildren were being indoctrinated in fascist values and forced to take part in military training.

SOURCE 2 A Japanese soldier about to behead a Chinese prisoner during the massacre known as the ‘Rape of Nanjing’. This photograph is one of several that were preserved by a Chinese employee of a photo studio.

DID YOU KNOW?
On 12 December 1937 Japanese aircraft deliberately sank a US gunboat that was escorting oil tankers in China. Japan apologised for this ‘accident’ and paid compensation. The US did not retaliate.

To access videos, interactivities, discussion widgets, image galleries, weblinks and more, go to www.jacplus.com.au
The Axis and the invasion of China

Japan and Germany became allies through the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1936. When Italy joined the pact in 1937, these three powers were united in the Rome–Berlin–Tokyo Axis.

Source 3 This photo, taken in Nanjing in 1937, shows Japanese soldiers watching as Chinese civilian prisoners are placed in a pit to be buried alive.

In July 1937 Japan launched a full-scale attack against China, quickly taking the cities of Beijing, Guangzhou and Nanjing. The Chinese Communists and Nationalists had been fighting a civil war since 1927, but in 1937 they agreed to an armistice to enable them to form a united front. For the next eight years they fought back against the Japanese from their country’s vast interior.

The Rape of Nanjing

The most appalling Japanese atrocities took place in the Chinese city of Nanjing (formerly called Nanking). There, between December 1937 and January 1938, the Japanese slaughtered between 200,000 and 300,000 Chinese civilians and prisoners of war. There were mass rapes of Chinese women and other atrocities including burying or burning people alive and using prisoners for bayonet practice.

1.9.2 Activities

Check your understanding

1 Identify and describe the similarities between Japanese extreme militarism and European fascism.
2 World War II is usually described as taking place between 1939 and 1945, but when did it begin for China?

Using historical sources as evidence

3 Source 4 is described as an “eye-witness description”.
   a Does this make it more or less reliable as a historical source?
   b How might its validity be questioned by a historian?
1.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**
1. For many decades after World War II, Japanese nationalists continued to deny that the Rape of Nanjing took place. Explain how the evidence in SOURCES 2, 3 and 4 provides proof of Japanese atrocities.

**DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**
2. The Western powers condemned Japanese aggression but took no effective action against it. Imagine you are a Western newspaper journalist in 1937. Write an article supported by SOURCES 1, 2 and 3 to convince your readers that action should be taken.

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### 1.10 The road to war in Europe

#### 1.10.1 Aggression and appeasement

Germany, Italy and Japan all threatened world peace, and in 1936–37 the danger increased when they became allies. The world’s best hope for preserving peace was the League of Nations, but it proved to be ineffective. By 1939 the world was once more on the brink of war.

Hitler wanted alliances with Britain (as a fellow Aryan nation) and Italy (as a fellow fascist nation). The main foreign policy aims of Nazi Germany were to:

- overturn the Treaty of Versailles and reclaim territory lost under the treaty
- take territory from the Slavic ‘racial inferiors’ of the Soviet Union
- destroy world communism
- control sources of raw materials for Germany’s economy and for rearmament
- unite all German people in the Third Reich.

Mussolini also wanted to gain territory. In the 1920s Italy had established control over Albania and waged military campaigns to assert control over two of its North African colonies — Somalia and Libya. Until 1936, however, Italy and Germany were potential enemies. Mussolini saw Germany as a danger to Austria’s independence and therefore to the stability of Italy’s northern frontier. In April 1935 Italy joined Britain and France in protesting against German rearmament in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles.

**Italy invades Abyssinia**

Mussolini ordered Italian military attacks on Abyssinia in October 1935. Italy used poison gas and extremely brutal tactics to overcome the poorly armed Abyssinians. Italian forces captured the capital, Addis Ababa, in May 1936, but the Abyssinians continued to wage a guerrilla war.

As a League member, Abyssinia demanded action against Italy. In November 1935 the League voted for economic sanctions (no arms sales to Italy and a ban on importing Italian goods) to force an Italian withdrawal. But in December Britain and France made a secret agreement to hand part of Abyssinia to Italy. Public outrage forced them to abandon this agreement. However, the League’s sanctions were ineffective because Germany, Japan and the United States did not support them and because oil was not embargoed. With Britain and France supporting League sanctions, Mussolini moved closer to Hitler.

**Appeasement**

After the terrible human cost of World War I, there was very little support in the Western democracies for risking another war by standing up to fascist aggression. The United States could not be counted on for support because it had adopted an isolationist foreign policy to avoid being drawn into Europe’s conflicts. Also, there was much sympathy for fascism among many British conservatives, who saw Hitler as a bulwark against communism. France feared to take a stand without British support so the Western democracies followed a policy of appeasement. This meant giving in to Japan, Germany and Italy, hoping they would be satisfied and war would be avoided.

**Steps in appeasement**

The Western democracies took no effective action against several German breaches of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles:

- In March 1935 Hitler announced that Germany had an air force and was reintroducing conscription. Britain and France protested but did nothing more.
• In June 1935 the Anglo-German Naval Agreement allowed Germany a navy 35 per cent the size of Britain’s Royal Navy.
• In March 1936 Britain and France failed to act when Hitler marched 20,000 troops into the demilitarised Rhineland.

**Uniting the fascists**
The Spanish Civil War (see spread 1.6) brought Germany and Italy together as allies. Many British conservatives also sympathised with General Franco’s fascists in Spain. Britain and France failed to aid the elected Spanish Republic and even denied it the right to buy arms to defend itself.

From 1934 the Soviet Union had adopted a policy of building **United Fronts** with the Western democracies against fascist aggression. After Germany and Italy sent military aid to Franco, the

**SOURCE 1** Aggression by Fascist powers in the 1930s
Soviets sent aid to the Spanish Republic. But by the end of 1938, when it was clear that Britain was willing to accept a pro-fascist victory in Spain, the Soviet Union abandoned Spain and the aim of building an alliance with the democracies. The defeat of the Spanish Republic meant the end of any hope of a united front against fascism, the strengthening of the fascist alliance and encouragement of further aggression.

1.10.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Describe the aims of German and Italian foreign policies.
2. Identify and list the reasons Italy changed from opposing German rearmament to becoming Germany’s ally.
3. Explain the motives for appeasement in
   a. Britain
   b. France.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Use SOURCE 1 to locate and list the sites of fascist aggression in the 1930s.

1.10.2 The final steps to war

At the Hossbach Conference of November 1937, Hitler told his generals to prepare for a major war in the mid 1940s. Between 1938 and 1939 Germany and Italy committed more acts of aggression. The Treaty of Versailles banned any Anschluss (union) of Germany and Austria, but on 12 March 1938 the German army invaded Austria and received a warm welcome. Germany then annexed Austria. In April Britain recognised the enlarged Germany.

Hitler used false claims that Germans were being persecuted in Czechoslovakia to destroy that country in 1938–39. When Czechoslovakia was created in 1919 it included the mainly German population of the Sudetenland. From March 1938 Hitler encouraged Sudeten Germans to cause unrest. In October 1938 at the Munich Conference, after Hitler had prepared for war, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to Hitler’s demand for immediate control of the Sudetenland. In March 1939, in breach of the Munich Agreement, Hitler invaded and dismembered what remained of Czechoslovakia.

SOURCE 2  Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in 1938

SOURCE 3  A Sudeten woman tearfully salutes Hitler as he rides through territory taken from Czechoslovakia under the Munich Agreement
It may well be that Germany still has some grievances which would be all the better for . . . discussion. But if, instead of entering into discussion, instead of going into friendly conference, instead of recognising that there are, after all, two sides to most questions, the attitude of Germany is to be, 'We will take whatever our military strength will permit us to take, and we will not negotiate with our military inferiors', there is obviously an end to all law and order among the nations, and the absorption of Poland would lead to attacks upon other smaller European countries, upon one ground or another, until a vast dominion of force has been established . . . the British and French Governments have given their pledge to Poland and to several other European countries . . . those pledges will be honoured.

We in Australia are involved, because the destruction or defeat of Great Britain would be the destruction or defeat of the British Empire, and leave us with a precarious tenure on our own independence.

Britain and France now saw that appeasement had failed and resolved to resist any further Nazi aggression. When Hitler demanded territory from Lithuania and Poland at the end of March 1939, Britain and France gave guarantees to Poland of aid against aggression. In April Italy annexed Albania and in May Germany and Italy signed the Pact of Steel, promising military support if either of them was at war.

**World War II begins**

On 23 August 1939, after failing to make progress towards a military alliance with Britain and France, the Soviet Union did a complete about-face, signing a non-aggression pact with Hitler. The pact provided for a secret carve-up of Poland and the Baltic states. The Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, thought this pact removed the danger of being isolated in a war against Germany.

Germany could now invade western Poland without risking Soviet opposition. On 1 September 1939 the German invasion of Poland began. Britain responded by declaring war on Germany on 3 September. Hitler was surprised that this invasion provoked Britain and France into declaring war. He had wanted a war of conquest in eastern Europe. Instead he had provoked a war with the western European powers.

**SOURCE 4** From a speech by Australian prime minister Robert Menzies, in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 August 1939

**SOURCE 5** This composite photograph was made soon after the 1938 Munich Conference. It shows the four leaders who signed the Munich Agreement playing cards. They are from left to right: Hitler; Edouard Daladier, the French president; Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister; and Mussolini.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

From 1923 the **dominions** of the British Empire had the right to decide their own foreign policies. This was recognised in British law under the Statute of Westminster in 1931. But while Canada, Ireland and South Africa took up this independence, Australia continued to defer to Britain on matters of foreign policy. Australia supported appeasement because it feared that Britain would be unable to defend Australia if war broke out in both Europe and the Pacific.

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1.10.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Explain why the annexation of Austria was an act of aggression even though most Austrians welcomed it.
2. How did Britain and France betray Czechoslovakia at the Munich Conference?
3. Make a timeline of steps towards war in Europe from 1935 to 1939.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Explain why Stalin (pictured in SOURCE 2) wanted a united front with the Western democracies. Why did he finally settle on a pact with Hitler?
5. Suggest two possible reasons for the tears of the woman in SOURCE 3.
6. A composite photograph is an image made up of several photographs. What do you think the creator of the composite photograph in SOURCE 5 was saying about the role of these four leaders in the 1938 agreement that destroyed Czechoslovakia? Consider the following questions in your response:
   a. Why are the leaders depicted as card players?
   b. Which leaders have laid their cards on the table?
   c. Which leaders are still holding their cards?
   d. What do each of the actions listed above symbolise?

1.10 Putting it All Together

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1. Using SOURCE 4 and other information in this subtopic, explain why appeasement failed to prevent war.

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
2. Make a list of sources and other information from this subtopic that would support an argument that appeasement should be regarded as a significant cause of World War II.

1.11 SkillBuilder: Analysing cause and effect with graphic organisers

What are graphic organisers and how can they be used to analyse cause and effect?
A graphic organiser is a visual or diagrammatic way of representing facts and concepts, for example, an analysis of historical causes and effects.

Go to your learnON course to access:
- An explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- A step-by-step process to develop the skill, with an example (Show me)
- An activity to allow you to practise the skill (Let me do it)
- Questions to test your application of the skill (Applying skills)
1.12 Review

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

i. revising and checking your historical knowledge

ii. demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

Go to your learnON course to access:

- A key chronology of events relevant to the topic
- A summary of the key knowledge presented in the topic
- A ‘Big Questions’ activity
- A multiple choice topic test
- Short answer or extended writing responses

on Resources

Interactivity
Causes of World War II timeline
Use this interactivity to create a visual timeline of the key events in the causes of World War II.