**What were the main causes of WWII?**

There were 10 main causes of WWII.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cause** | **Explanation** |
| 1. **Treaty of Versailles** | After WW1, Germany was forced to sign the **Treaty of Versailles** which severely punished Germany.  Germans greatly **resented** this.  Terms included:  1. Germany had to sign a **war guilt clause** accepting full responsibility for WWI.  2. They had to pay £6.6 billion in **reparations**.  3. They could not enter the **Rhineland**.  4. They lost the **Polish Corridor**.  5. The German army was reduced to **100,000**.  6. Union with Austria (**Anschluss**) was forbidden. |
| 2. Hitler’s foreign policy aims | Hitler wanted to make Germany great again, but this aim was bound to disturb peace in Europe because it meant taking over **non-German** territory.  Hitler’s FP had 3 main aims;  1. Unite all German speaking people to form a greater Germany (**Grossdeutchland**).  2. **Abolish** the Treaty of Versailles.  3. Obtain **lebensraum** (living space) in Eastern Europe for his greater Germany. |
| 3. Hitler’s actions | As soon as Hitler came to power, he began to **destroy** the Treaty of Versailles.  1935 -> **rearmament** began.  1936 -> Hitler **remilitarised** the Rhineland.  1938 -> Hitler united Germany and Austria (**Anschluss**). |
| 4. **The Munich Conference** | Hitler laid claim to the **Sudetenland** (the German speaking part of **Czechoslovakia**).  Czechoslovakia refused to hand over the Sudetenland.  Britain (Chamberlain), France (Daladier) and Italy (Mussolini) met Hitler at the **Munich Conference** (1938) to sort the issue out.  Czechoslovakia was not invited.  The Czechs were **forced** to hand the Sudetenland over.  Chamberlain came home claiming he had achieved ***‘peace in our time’*** but 6 months later Hitler took over the rest of Czechoslovakia.  Hitler could **no longer claim** to be uniting all German speaking people as he was **not welcomed** in the rest of Czechoslovakia as he had been in the Sudetenland, Austria and the Rhineland. |
| 5. **Weakness** of the League of Nations | The **League of Nations** was set up after WWI to promote international co-operation and achieve international peace.  But they **failed to stop** Hitler, Japan or Mussolini from expanding beyond their borders.  The League had a number of **weaknesses**:  1. **America** did not join.  2. All decisions had to be **unanimous**.  3. The League had **no army** to protect weak countries. |
| 6. Policy of **appeasement** | Britain and France gave into Hitler’s demands because they followed a policy called **appeasement**.  They believed that if they gave into Hitler’s demands then they would **prevent** war. |
| 7. **Nazi-Soviet Pact** | Fascists (Nazis) and communists hated each other but in 1939 Hitler and Stalin **surprised** the world when they signed the **Nazi-Soviet Pact**.  They agreed to:  1. A 10-year **non-aggression pact** (which Hitler later broke).  2. To **divide Poland** between themselves.  This Pact meant that Hitler could **invade Poland** without risking war on his Eastern side.  The Nazi-Soviet Pact also gave Stalin time to **build up his army** after it had been **severely damaged** by his purges and show trials. |
| 8. The Polish Corridor | **The Polish Corridor** separated Germany from one of her provinces, **East Prussia**.  Hitler demanded the return of the **Polish Corridor**, but Poland **refused**.  Britain and France supported Poland, but Hitler believed that they were too far away to actually help Poland.  On 1 Sept 1939, **Hitler invaded Poland**.  Two days later, on **3 Sept 1939**, Britain and France **declared war** on Germany. |
| 9. Japanese **aggression** in the East | Japan **expanded in China** in the 1930s.  The League of Nations failed to stop this.  Japan also invaded **Indo-China** (Vietnam).  The US imposed **economic sanctions** on Japan.  Japan decided the destroy the US Pacific Fleet at **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii.  This attack in December 1941 brought the US into the War. |
| 10. American **isolation** | America did **not** join the League of Nations after WWI.  Even though America was the most powerful country in the world, she hoped to stay **isolated** and away from any future conflict.  America was forced to take action because of **Japanese expansion** in Asia. |