The war began on September 1, 1939, when Germany, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, invaded Poland. This act of aggression prompted France and the United Kingdom to declare war on Germany, marking the beginning of the European theater of the war. In the following months and years, Germany swiftly conquered several European countries, including France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark, establishing the Nazi regime's dominance over much of the continent.

While Germany was expanding its control in Europe, Japan was aggressively expanding its empire in the Pacific region. In December 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, leading to the American entry into the war. The conflict in the Pacific witnessed intense battles between the United States and its allies against Japan, including major engagements like the Battle of Midway, Guadalcanal, and Iwo Jima.

Meanwhile, the war in Europe saw significant turning points that shifted the momentum against the Axis powers. The Battle of Stalingrad in 1942-1943 marked a major turning point in the European theater, as Soviet forces successfully defended the city of Stalingrad, inflicting heavy losses on the German army and starting a series of Soviet offensives that gradually pushed the Germans back towards Berlin.

In 1944, the Allies launched a massive amphibious invasion of German-occupied France, known as D-Day, landing troops on the beaches of Normandy. This marked the beginning of a long and bloody campaign to liberate Western Europe from Nazi control. The Allied forces, led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, gradually pushed eastward, engaging in fierce battles such as the Battle of the Bulge and eventually reaching the German border.