

The End of WW2 in Europe and the Asia-Pacific

- Key Developments: WWII in Europe, 1939-1945
 - Introduction
 - Overview
 - **Key Developments: WWII in Europe, 1939-1945 - Blitzkrieg**
 - **Key Developments: WWII in Europe, 1939-1945 - Changing fortunes for Germany**
- Fall of France, 1940
 - **Fall of France**
- Battle of Britain, 1940
 - Battle of Britain
- Operation Barbarossa, 1941
- **Operation Overlord: D-Day, 1944**
- Key Developments: WWII in the Asia-Pacific
- Strengths of the Allies
- Victory in Europe
- Turning Points in History
- WWII in Asia-Pacific
 - Introduction
 - Overview
 - Attack on Pearl Harbour, 1941
 - Battle of Midway, 1942
 - Defeat of Japan and the Atomic Bomb
 - Island-hopping
 - The Atomic Bombings, August 1945
- Historical Interpretations

Key Developments: WWII in Europe, 1939-1945

Introduction

World War 2 began...

- **Europe:** in **September 1939** with the German invasion of Poland
- **Asia-Pacific:** Japan began its expansion in China in **1937**
- By the time the United States joined the war in the Asia-Pacific in **1941**, it had become a **total war** with fighting on land, at sea and in the air.
 - Total war:
 - War with no limits on weapons used and resources mobilised
 - No differentiation between military and civilian targets
 - Historians estimate that around **75 million people**, mostly civilians, died during the war. Thus, it is considered the most devastating conflict in history.

Overview

September 1939: Invasion of Poland

- Germany invades Poland was divided between Germany and the USSR by the end of the month

May and June 1940

- Germany began a six-week “Lightning War” or Blitzkrieg. This results in the **conquest of Belgium, France and the Netherlands.**

July 1940

- Germany began intensive bombing, known as the Blitz, in the **Battle of Britain.**

July 1941

- German invaded the USSR in

Operation Barbarossa

- This used up the main German forces and drew aircraft away from the Battle of the Atlantic.
- It also drew land forces away from other theatres of war.

August 1942–February 1943: The USSR counterattacked German forces at Stalingrad.

- The Siege of Stalingrad was one of the deadliest battles in history.
- This battle, where the German forces were defeated by the USSR, is regarded as a turning point in WWII.

July–August 1943: Battle of Kursk

- Germany launched an attack on the Soviet city of Kursk
- Resulted in one of the largest tank battles in history. Soviet forces were able to halt and counter German attacks.

June 1944:

- The Allies launched **Operation Overlord**, also known as D-Day. Allied troops landed in Normandy (in France) and began a slow advance across France and towards Germany.

April 1945:

- **The Allies enters Berlin** and Hitler committed suicide thereafter.

May 1945:

- **Germany surrenders**

Key Developments: WWII in Europe, 1939-1945 - Blitzkrieg

-
- Germany quickly extended its control into Europe in the early phases of the war
 - E.g. Shortly after occupying Poland, Germany invaded and occupied Norway, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands and France by 1940.
 - This was largely due to its successful use of blitzkrieg, which means “lightning war”.
 - Blitzkrieg was a swift and focused attack using mobile forces, such as armoured tanks and air support, to overwhelm the enemies
 - Germany used blitzkrieg tactics because its economy lacked important resources such as copper, rubber and oil, and could not support long drawn-out campaigns, military stalemates and trench warfare.
 - In trench warfare, troops attack and defend from trenches that are dug into the ground. This type of warfare often resulted in stalemates between both sides, which would prolong the war and lead to a high number of deaths.
 - While blitzkrieg brought Germany a lot of initial success, the situation would change.

Key Developments: WWII in Europe, 1939-1945 - Changing fortunes for Germany

- In June 1941, Germany declared war on the USSR.
 - The USSR proved to be a formidable foe, pressuring the Germans from the Eastern Front
 - In military terms, a front refers to the area of conflict between opposing armies engaged in battle.
- To make matters worse, the United States entered the war in late 1941 and bolstered the Allied forces from the Western Front.
- In June 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy (in France) and invaded Germany on March 1945.

Fall of France, 1940

Fall of France

- In May 1940, the Germans attacked France.
 - The French had a larger army and air force
 - They were further supported by the British Expeditionary Force and Royal Air Force (RAF).
 - Despite this, the French were unable to resist German attack.
- By late May, the British and French were surrounded and facing total defeat.
 - They retreated to the Channel coast in the region around the port of Dunkirk. The Allied armies were highly vulnerable and could have been destroyed.
 - However, some of Hitler’s generals felt that there was a need to slow down to consolidate the German forces to not leave themselves vulnerable to attacks. Thus, Hitler ordered the German forces to stop.
- France surrendered and fell into the hands of Germany in June. It was a massive victory for Germany and revenge for its defeat in 1918.
 - Hitler was delighted when he heard the news of the victory as he had previously fought in the German army against the French during WWI.

Battle of Britain, 1940

Battle of Britain

- Having defeated France, Hitler turned his attention to Britain.
- The German air force (Luftwaffe) carried out large-scale attacks against Britain's RAF to achieve air superiority.
- This lasted from September 1940 to May 1941, although bombing continued throughout the war.
 - The Germans later turned to British cities, bombing them in a campaign known as the Blitz.
- The Blitz caused huge losses of life and great damage to houses, docks, warehouses and factories.
 - Despite the losses, the British kept a grim willingness to carry on with the war effort and did not surrender to the Germans.

Operation Barbarossa, 1941

- Hitler and Stalin had signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939, agreeing not to go to war and to split Poland between the two of them.
 - However, this agreement would not last.
 - Hitler had always wanted to destroy communism and expand Germany's territory into Eastern Europe and the USSR.
 - Occupying the USSR would also give Germany access to the USSR's vast resources such as oil.
- In June 1941, Germany launched Operation Barbarossa.
- Initially, Germany seemed successful. Stalin was on the verge of abandoning Moscow in September 1941.
- However, the Germans were not able to overwhelm the USSR fast enough, and the harsh winter halted the German advance.
 - Stalin used that time to reorganise the Soviet war effort.
 - Coupled with the extensive resources provided by the US Lend-Lease scheme, the reorganisation enabled the USSR to turn around and put up a strong resistance against the Germans on the Eastern Front.
 - E.g. Around 90 percent of German casualties in WWII were on the Eastern Front against the USSR.

Operation Overlord: D-Day, 1944

- As the Germans and the Soviets were engaged in various major battles, the Allies sought to liberate France.
 - However, the Germans had been in France since 1940 and had strong fortifications. i.e. [the Atlantic Wall](#)
- It was a high-risk undertaking, but the start of Operation Overlord, also known as D-Day, was nonetheless fixed for 6 June 1944.
 - On this day, the combined Allied forces landed on the heavily fortified coasts of France's Normandy region.

Key Developments: WWII in the Asia-Pacific

Strengths of the Allies

Victory in Europe

- By 1944, it was clear that Germany was on verge of losing the war in Europe.
 - The Soviets were able to stop the German advance, and they also reversed their fortunes with a huge victory in Stalingrad in early 1943.
 - Operation Overlord had opened a second front that Germany could ill afford
- Although Germany fought back hard
 - E.g. They carried out a counterattack in December 1944 through the Ardennes Forest (located in the southeast of Belgium), they were steadily driven back.
 - E.g. They put some remarkable new equipment into action, including guided missiles and jet aircraft, but none of them could stop the Allies' advance.
- The Germans were forced to retreat, and by January 1945, the Soviet troops had encircled Berlin.
 - Hitler withdrew to his underground bunker, where he continued meeting his military generals and close subordinates such as Goering, Himmler and Goebbels to give orders to them.
- On 30 April 1945, facing imminent defeat by the Allies, Hitler committed suicide.
- After much fighting, the US and British forces met up with Soviet forces at the River Elbe in Germany, and the war in Europe was over when Germany formally surrendered on 8 May 1945.

Turning Points in History

A Why to Weigh Factors

- A turning point in History would involve a shift in the nature of change. This could be in terms of the:
 - **Pace of Change:** things could start developing at a much faster pace, or slow down to a crawl; or
 - **Direction of Change:** developments could shift from mostly negative to mostly positive, or vice versa, for example.

WWII in Asia-Pacific

Introduction

In the Asia-Pacific, Japan had been aggressive in its expansion since its invasion of Manchuria in 1931

Japan

Overview

1. July 1937: Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China, occupying cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan and Nanjing, after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident
 2. September 1940: Occupation of French Indochina by the Japanese after the fall of France.
 3. December 1941: Japan disabled much of the US fleet at Pearl Harbour when it launched a surprise attack.
 1. Simultaneously, Japan launched attacks on Malaya, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies
 2. The United States declared war on Japan
 4. January-May 1942: Japan completed its invasion of Malay, the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines.
 5. June 1942: The American fleet destroyed four Japanese aircraft carriers and 300 aircraft in the Battle of Midway and all their experienced aircraft carrier pilots die.
 6. August 1942-June 1945: The US forces pushed back the Japanese forces island by island despite fierce resistance in a campaign of island-hopping
 7. August 1945
 1. The USSR declares war on Japan and invades Japanese-occupied Manchuria
 2. Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
 3. Japan surrenders unconditionally thereafter.
- Japan was initially successful after attacking Pearl Harbour in the United States in December 1941.
 - By the start of 1942, Japan had occupied many territories in the Asia-Pacific including Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines.
 - While the United States had formally entered WWII in 1941, the Allies had agreed to prioritise the defeat of Germany.
 - Nevertheless, the Allies continued to resist the Japanese and from May 1942, the Japanese were gradually driven out of the territories they had conquered.
 - When Germany finally surrendered in May 1945, Japan faced the Allies alone and would eventually be defeated by September 1945.

Attack on Pearl Harbour, 1941

- Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941:
 - It was a devastating attack that ended in near total success for the Japanese
 - US intelligence failed to warn the US forces, and Japanese planes from aircraft carriers achieved almost complete surprise against the American forces.
- The attack lasted around 90 minutes
 - 2000 military personnel lost
- Three days after Pearl Harbour, Japanese forces sank the most powerful British battleships in the Pacific region, the Prince of Wales and the Repulse.
 - As a result...
 - “There were no British or American capital ships in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific. Over this vast expanse of waters, Japan was supreme and everywhere we were weak and naked.”
- However, in the long run, Pearl Harbour did not prove to be as decisive as the Japanese thought
 - The United States was able to recover quickly within a few months and retaliate

against Japan

- The outrage over the surprise attack allowed US President Roosevelt to rally the country. The United States was now probably more united and organised than it has ever been to declare war on Japan.
- Now the country's huge resources were directed towards the war
 - E.g. The US shipyards quickly constructed new ships, especially aircraft carriers
- On a tactical level, there was also some comfort for the US navy, as its aircraft carriers during the attack.
 - Japan had made a massive error: they failed to hunt down and destroy the carriers, which the United States continued to use throughout 1942.
 - This meant that Japan did not gain control of the Pacific as they had hoped.

Battle of Midway, 1942

- The decisive battle came at Midway in June 1942
 - During this battle, the Japanese lost four of their Japanese carriers and nearly three-quarters of their experienced pilots
 - This negatively affected their naval and air defence capabilities for the rest of the war
 - Furthermore, Japan remained weakened as it could not match the output of the US shipyards and aircraft factories.

Defeat of Japan and the Atomic Bomb

Island-hopping

- After the battle of Midway, the United States and its allies gradually drove the Japanese back across the Pacific from the territories they had taken. They used a strategy known as **island-hopping**
 - The US island-hopping strategy led to several key victories between 1942 and 1945, such as in the battle to regain the Philippines, which continued to weaken the Japanese military
 - Japan's resources became severely overstretched and it was not able to defend the entire empire.
 - The Japanese fought frantically for each island in the Pacific and each territory in China and Burma
- In April 1945 British and US forces took the island of Okinawa
 - The Allies had to kill or capture every one of the 100,000 Japanese soldiers defending the island - none of them would surrender
 - Allied ships had also been badly damaged by Japanese kamikaze suicide bombers, who crashed their planes deliberately into them.
 - These attacks were used as a last resort by the Japanese
 - Although Japan was being pushed back, it came at great cost for the Allies

The Atomic Bombings, August 1945

- By May 1945, the United States was confident of winning the war eventually.
 - Nonetheless, after Roosevelt's death in April 1945, the new president, Harry Truman, was faced with the prospect of a year or more of heavy casualties. US

troops would have to beat back the Japanese island by island, and then invade Japan itself.

- However, there was an alternative. An international team of scientists in the United States, working on what was known as the Manhattan Project, had just perfected the world's first atomic bomb
- In the end, Truman decided to use the bombs without warning.
 - He accepted military advice to drop two bombs in quick succession. This was to convince the Japanese that the United States had a large stockpile of the weapons, which it did not.
- On 6 August 1945, the American bomber, Enola Gay, dropped a five-ton atomic bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy"
- Both instances of dropping the atomic bombs caused appalling damage and horrific casualties, and reduced the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to ruins.
 - They also left a legacy of cancer and other radiation-related diseases among the survivors.

	Hiroshima	Nagasaki
Total Population	255,000	195,000
Dead	66,000	39,000
Injured	69,000	25,000
Total Casualties	135,000	64,000

Historical Interpretations

- Historians can have different interpretations of the past, even though they may be examining the same historical event or period.
- **Factors can Explain Differences in Historical Interpretations**
 - These factors include:
 - Differences in the questions historians ask about the past
 - The different sources that historians can draw upon to help them reach their interpretations and
 - Differences in the way historians make sense and meaning of the past
- To make sense of differing interpretations and decide which are acceptable, and which one we prefer, you can consider the following:
 - What claims are being made in the interpretations?
 - What evidence is being used to support these claims?
 - What the context in which these interpretations were made is?

Historical Interpretations

- E.g. of such differences...



Few actions in war are morally justifiable. All a commander or political leader can hope to assess is whether a particular course of action is likely to reduce the loss of life. Faced with the Japanese refusal to surrender, President Truman had little choice.

His decision was mainly based on the estimate of half a million Allied casualties likely to be caused by invading the home islands of Japan. There was also the likely death rate from starvation for Allied PoWs and civilians as the war dragged on well into 1946.

What Truman did not know, and which has only been established quite recently, is that the Imperial Japanese Army could never contemplate surrender, having forced all their men to fight to the death since the start of the war. Japanese documents apparently indicate their army was prepared to accept up to 28 million civilian deaths.

Antony Beevor, a historian, writing in 2015 in a history magazine

Why did the Allies win WW2?

Strengths of the Allies

Importance of the United States - Economic and Military Strengths of the United States (Europe and the Asia-Pacific)

Example and Explanation

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States' vast resources were mobilised within a short time. Its people, factories, shipyards, farms and even Hollywood and the movie industry joined in the war effort. For example, by 1944, the United States was producing almost half of the weapons being made globally – more than twice the production of Germany and Japan combined. In total, between 1941 and 1945, US factories produced 250,000 aircraft, 90,000 tanks, 350 naval destroyers, 200 submarines and 5,600 merchant ships.

Link

This massive production derived from American economic strength translated into military strength as it supplied it and the other Allied powers with a vast amount of military equipment and other resources essential for the war effort. Resources that the Axis powers simply could not match, thus giving the Allies a overwhelming advantage that allowed them to win the war

Importance of the United States - Battle of the Atlantic (Europe)

Example and Explanation

Control of the Atlantic was vital to the Allied war effort as it was only control of the shipping routes across the Atlantic that vital American supplies could shipped to to Britain and to the USSR. This control was only achieved through a bitter struggle and at a high cost by the Allies. German submarines (U-boats) were very effective early in the Battle of the Atlantic. In 1940, the Germans sank over 1,000 ships, a quarter of Britain's merchant fleet. In 1941, 1,300 Allied ships were lost, and in 1942, 1,661 ships. As a result, in January 1943, the British navy had only two months' supply of oil left. The tide began to turn through 1943. British intelligence was able to break the secret codes used by the U-boats. This allowed the Allied convoys to steer clear of the U-boats, hence ensuring Britain and the USSR had the resources to fend off the Axis powers. New weapons and tactics were also developed to counter the U-boats.

Link

This victory allowed the much needed American supplies to reach Britain and to the USSR, allowing them to continue the fight against the Axis that would ultimately conclude in an Allied victory in World War 2.

Importance of the United States - Island-Hopping Strategy in the Asia-Pacific (The Asia-Pacific)

Example and Explanation

To avoid a potentially lengthy and costly campaign against the Japanese forces which had dug themselves into island strongholds across the vast empire they had built from 1937-1941, the Allies came up with the strategy of island-hopping. It involved using air attacks and submarines to isolate Japanese-held areas, instead of trying to capture them. The Allies would then conquer the islands, which were poorly defended, and use them to further cut off ships that supplied the well-defended islands. The idea was to cut off some areas from their supplies of food, ammunition and other essentials.

Link

This approach proved to be successful. It allowed the Allies to incur fewer casualties and come within striking distance of Japan itself in just a few years. It thus contributed to Allied victory in World War 2.

Importance of the United States - Use of the Atomic Bomb (The Asia-Pacific)

Example and Explanation

Faced with the strong resistance of the Japanese forces, the United States decided to use its newly developed atomic bombs without warning. On 6 August 1945, the American bomber, Enola Gay, dropped a five-ton atomic bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy", over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Following this, on 9 August, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb, nicknamed "Fat Man", over the city of Nagasaki. In total, the two atomic bombings killed more than 100,000 people and injured another 100,000.

Link

The devastation brought about by the two atomic bombs was one of the key reasons for Japan's surrender, securing Allied victory in World War 2.

Importance of Britain - British resistance to German invasion (Europe)

Example and Explanation

A key factor in the defeat of the Axis powers was Britain's ability to resist the German invasion in 1940–1941. During the Battle of Britain, Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) had excellent fighter aircraft such as the Supermarine Spitfire, and the Hawker Hurricane British aircraft were as good as the Germans'. Additionally, the factories were able to keep producing more of such aircraft to replace their losses. Moreover, the British had the new technology of radar which could be used to detect and locate incoming enemy aircraft. Fighting over home ground also gave the British the advantage of tapping large reserves of spare parts for repair work and using less fuel for its war production.

Link

Thanks to these advantages, the British were able to win the Battle of Britain and prevent a German invasion of their country. This allowed Britain to become a substantial military base

for the Allies. A base that made the D-Day landings of 1944 and the Allied bombing campaigns against Germany possible. Campaigns that ultimately led to the defeat of Germany.

Importance of Britain - British resistance to the Japanese (The Asia Pacific)

Example and Explanation

The British Empire was a major source of the manpower and resources that opposed the Japanese in the Asia-Pacific. The armies and navies of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and around 120,000 African troops from British colonies fought alongside US troops against the Japanese. The British Empire forces also included the immense manpower and resources of India. India provided over 2.5 million men and women and a staggering 80 percent of its wealth to the Allied war effort. Although Indian troops fought in North Africa and Europe as well, the majority fought in Asia against the Japanese.

Link

Thus the British represented a major component of the manpower and resources opposed to the Japanese in the Asia-Pacific. They thus played a vital part in the effort to defeat the Japanese and securing an Allied victory in World War 2.

Importance of the USSR - Reorganisation and resistance (Europe)

Example and Explanation (Reorganisation)

When the German advance was halted by the Russian winter in late 1941, Stalin and his military leaders used this time to reform the Red Army completely. They copied many of the tactics and ideas used by the Germans and added some of their own. For example, the Red Army created specialist tank armies and air forces. At the same time, harsh discipline was enforced, such as, Order 227 of July 1942 which ordered the Soviet Army to fight and die for every bit of Russian soil.

Link (Reorganisation)

By taking such steps to reorganize the Red Army, the USSR was able to improve its ability to fight the Germans. An ability that ultimately allowed them to turn the tide and not only push the invaders out of their country but to launch a counterattack that saw them invading and occupying parts of Germany itself, securing victory in World War 2.

Example and Explanation (Resistance)

The Soviet Union suffered heavy losses in the early phases of the German invasion. However, it nevertheless continued to fiercely resist. The Germans had advanced again in 1942 towards the city of Stalingrad. Here, the Soviets held them in a fierce battle and, despite suffering heavy casualties, were eventually able to encircle the Germans, forcing them to surrender.

Link (Resistance)

This victory raised the morale of the Soviets as they began to drive the Germans back. A counterattack that led to them not only pushing the invaders out of their country but

invading and occupying parts of Germany itself, securing victory in World War 2..

Importance of the USSR - Resources and Production: The Soviet War Economy (Europe)

Example and Explanation (Measures taken by the USSR)

To ensure production kept up with the high demand needed by the Red Army in its fight against the Germans, the Soviets enacted harsh measures. For example, adults in the USSR received no food unless they worked in some way for the war effort. This applied to men and women – half of the Soviet workforce was female. Forced labour was also used and the secret police kept close control of the population.

Link (Measures taken by the USSR)

These measures allowed the Soviet Red Army to not only continue to oppose the invading Germans but also steadily grow in strength. Strength that ultimately allowed it to turn the tide and not only push the invaders out of the Soviet Union but to launch a counterattack that saw them invading and occupying parts of Germany itself, securing victory in World War 2.

Example and Explanation (Role of the USSR's allies)

The USSR's allies also made important contributions to the campaign. Britain and the United States supplied vast amounts of food, raw materials and industrial equipment via shipping routes despite the U-boat threat from Germany. The United States provided the USSR with over 500,000 motor vehicles and 1,900 locomotives and half of its supply of rubber tyres and copper.

Link (Role of the USSR's allies)

This aid allowed the Soviet Red Army to not only continue to oppose the invading Germans but also steadily grow in strength. Strength that ultimately allowed it to turn the tide and not only push the invaders out of the Soviet Union but to launch a counterattack that saw them invading and occupying parts of Germany itself, securing victory in WW2.

Importance of the USSR - Entry to the Asia-Pacific (The Asia Pacific)

Example and Explanation

As agreed at the Tehran Conference and Yalta Conference, the USSR entered the war against Japan three months after the defeat of Germany. Despite being part of the Allied forces, the USSR did not take part in the war against Japan in the Asia-Pacific until 1945. This was because Japan and the USSR had signed the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in 1941 which was to be upheld for five years. On 8 August 1945, the Soviets declared war against Japan and launched their invasion simultaneously on three fronts of Manchuria.

Link

The Soviets were able to defeat the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and occupy northern Korea, which contributed to Japan's decision to surrender to the Allied forces.

Weaknesses of the Axis Powers

Germany's Military Weaknesses - Hitler's Mistakes (Europe)

Example and Explanation

The Germans made several critical errors in their campaigns, largely due to an inefficient command structure. German commanders constantly had to report back to Hitler, who regularly intervened in military decisions. One example of such is his declaration of war on the United States. Hitler erroneously decided to declare war on the United States four days after the Pearl Harbor attack, despite having no obligation to do so under the terms of the Tripartite Pact signed with Japan and Italy. This move essentially brought the United States, which had been neutral, into the European theatre of war. Germany would now have to contend with the immense amount of resources and military might brought about by the United States, one of the most industrialised countries in the world.

Link

While Hitler may have been a shrewd politician, he had never been a senior military commander. He had little military command experience at the highest level. Thus, the mistakes he made as a result of this inexperience contributed to the Axis defeat in World War 2.

Germany's Military Weaknesses - The Two-Front War (Europe)

Example and Explanation

In WWI, Germany had tried to avoid a war on two fronts – against Russia in the east and against Britain and France in the west. In 1940, Hitler successfully fought a single-front war against Britain and France, but he failed to defeat Britain. When he invaded the USSR in 1941, he placed Germany in a two-front war. This prevented him from concentrating his efforts and resources on a single front. It could even be argued that Germany was fighting on three fronts if we consider the Allied bombing campaign. Besides, Germany was not just facing Britain on the Western Front, but the United States for most of the war.

Link

Thus by allowing the war to become a two-front war, the Germans put themselves in the position of being gradually worn down by the Allied forces. This strongly contributed to the Allied victory in World War 2.

Germany's Military Weaknesses - Poor Planning (Europe)

Explanation and Link (Naval Warfare)

Germany suffered from poor planning in regards to its navy. While the Germans' use of U-boats was highly effective, their use of surface ships was less so. They put too many resources into building giant battleships, such as Bismarck and Tirpitz, and failed to build aircraft carriers.

Link (Naval Warfare)

These weaknesses in its navy led Germany to defeat and the Battle of the Atlantic, which meant it was unable to cut off Britain and the Soviet Union from the vital supply of American resources shipped across the ocean. This failure ultimately contributed to its defeat in World War 2.

Explanation and Link (Air Power)

Germany suffered from poor planning in regards to its air force. From 1942 to 1945, the RAF and the US Air Force bombed Germany relentlessly. The Germans never developed heavy bombers like the RAF's Lancaster or the US' B-17, which could do severe damage to towns and cities. German bombers were too small and could not carry enough bombs. Also, in the Battle of Britain, the RAF had the advantage of radar, which the Germans had not invested in. The RAF also had plenty of fuel, ammunition and spare parts. On the other hand, shortages in these resources plagued the Luftwaffe.

Link (Air Power)

These weaknesses in its air force put it a major disadvantage against the Allies that it could not overcome, ultimately contributed to its defeat in World War 2.

Japan's Military Weaknesses - Inter-Service Rivalry (The Asia-Pacific)

Example and Explanation

The Japanese army and navy had a long-term conflict with each other since the Meiji period. In the 1930s, both services of the Japanese military had different strategic goals and ideas for how they wanted to seize territories to obtain resources to sustain Japan's economy. When the war broke out, the rivalry between the army and navy prevented both groups from sharing resources and exchanging military intelligence, much less coordinate their attacks and defences against the Allies. For example, in 1942, when the navy asked the army to provide troop support for an invasion of Australia, the army refused. Furthermore, the army remained unresponsive throughout the Pacific War and was late to recognise the threat of the US counteroffensive in late 1942.

Link

This rivalry prevented the Japanese from making the best use of its resources, putting it a disadvantage and thus contributing to their defeat by the Allies.

Japan's Military Weaknesses - Overstretched Empire (The Asia-Pacific)

Example and Explanation

The Japanese were unable to effectively leverage the empire they had expanded from 1931 to 1941. The Japanese empire was very spread out. In many areas, rail and road communications were poor, so it was difficult to deliver raw materials and workers efficiently to the places where they were needed.

Link

This inability to effectively allocate its resources due to its size meant that the Japanese empire was a disadvantage and thus contributing to its defeat by the Allies.

Japan's Military Weaknesses - Poor Planning (The Asia-Pacific)

Example and Explanation

The Japanese failed to understand that the war at sea had changed by 1941. Air power, in the form of aircraft based on carriers, was now far more important than traditional naval power like battleships. Therefore, while the Japanese damaged US battleships during the attack on Pearl Harbor, they did not destroy any US aircraft carriers, as they were not located at the base. This outcome allowed the US Navy to recover from the attack quickly.

Link

This failure to recognize that the nature of naval warfare had changed and adapt to a focus on carrier based combat meant that the Japanese empire was a disadvantage and thus contributing to its defeat by the Allies.

Japan's Military Weaknesses - Lack of Local Support (The Asia-Pacific)

Examples and Explanation

The Japanese were unable to make the best use of their empire because of how brutally they had treated the peoples they conquered. They looted the resources of the conquered lands. They also abused the locals and forced thousands into slave labour. This resulted in millions of civilian deaths under Japanese rule. As a result, the conquered peoples began to resist in any way they could against the Japanese. For example, in Vietnam, the nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh led the Viet Minh in a guerrilla campaign which gradually wore down the Japanese.

Link

This lack of local support within its empire meant that the Japanese could not effectively extract the resources it needed from its the territory it controlled. That said lack of support also often led to outright resistance also drained Japanese military forces as they would be required to be redeployed to suppress such forces. This thus caused the Japanese Japanese empire was put at a disadvantage and contributed to its defeat by the Allies.

Case Study of the Vietnam War, 1954 - 1975

Vietnam before WW2

- The modern state of Vietnam was part of the French-ruled area known as Indochina
 - It was conquered and controlled by the French Empire progressively between 1862 and 1904.
- As part of French rule...
 - Local forms of government were replaced with French systems of governance, led by French officials
 - Western education and healthcare
- French rule was largely characterised by....
 - Resource exploitation
 - Heavy local taxes
 - A colonial monopoly on the trade of salt, opium, rice and alcohol.
- Thus, there were several attempts to rebel and overthrow French rule from the 1890s to the 1940s.
 - However, none of them succeeded.

Vietnam during WW2

- After WWII broke out in Europe in 1939, France was defeated by Germany a year later in 1940.
- Japan, which was an ally of Germany, wanted access to French Indochina for its resources and strategic position.
 - As a result, Japanese forces invaded the northern region of French Indochina in September 1940 before coming to an armistice and agreement with the French Indochina colonial government.
- The French colonial government was aligned with Vichy France.
 - Vichy France was the new government set up after the defeat of France in 1940, and was aligned to Nazi Germany.
 - Vichy France allowed the Japanese to station troops in Indochina.
 - The French colonial government was often reduced to a puppet of the Japanese during this period.
- French colonial rule and the subsequent Japanese rule in French Indochina were both harsh.
- As a result, various groups emerged to resist French and Japanese rule.
- The most important of these resistance groups was the Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh.
 - The Viet Minh, short for the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh), was a nationalist movement that aimed to achieve independence.
 - It was an umbrella movement made up of two main groups:
 - Non-communists who simply wanted to drive the Japanese out of Vietnam in favour of self-rule
 - Communists who wanted to establish an independent communist state in Vietnam.

- During WWII, the Viet Minh received money, weapons and supplies from the United States, the USSR and the Guomindang (GMD) government in China.
 - Even though the GMD government in China was anti-communist, they supported the Viet Minh against the common enemy that was Japan.