

Spain



1920s: From 1920 to 1926, Spain fought to preserve their colonies in northern Morocco during the Rif War. While Spain would eventually win the war, it was a polarizing subject for Spaniards, who objected to military spending and the loss of life in Morocco as too high of a price to pay for a colony. When King Alfonso XIII did not return to comfort families of soldiers lost during the Battle of Annual, one of the worst military defeats in Spanish history, his critics staged protests in Barcelona. In 1923, soldiers shipping out to Morocco mutinied while General Miguel Primo de Rivera staged a military coup, removing King Alfonso XIII's authority on September 13, 1923. Alfonso XIII was kept as a king in name only, in exchange for supporting the new government. Spain would be ruled as a military dictatorship until 1930.

1930s: Economic problems and general public disapproval plagued Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, and he resigned in 1930. King Alfonso XIII was not reinstated; the Second Spanish Republic was formed and sent the king into exile. The Republic would take on many reforms in an attempt to modernize the government, but these reforms were suspended when the new administration came in after the 1933 elections. Rebellions staged by anarchist and socialist groups fractured the government further, and elections were held again in 1936. The Popular Front Party, backed by socialist, communist, and left-wing Republican groups, came into power and immediately clashed with the Nationalists, made up of members of the Falange, the fascist party of leader General Francisco Franco. Germany and Italy aided Franco with an abundance of planes, tanks, and arms, while the Soviet Union aided the Republican side. The assassination of political opponents and violent skirmishes evolved into the Spanish Civil War, which was won by the Nationalists in 1939. General Franco took power as dictator and established a fascist government, aiming to use Germany and Italy as a model to establish a modern Spain that would once again be a world power.

1940s: While World War II raged across Europe, General Franco purged his political opponents on a large scale. Between 1939 and 1943, many were exiled while thousands more died. Adolf Hitler remained on friendly terms with Franco after the Spanish Civil War, and actively courted Franco to join him in his cause. To the relief of the Western Allies, however, Franco remained non-belligerent. Franco knew Hitler's ambitions well, and his decision to steer clear of German political influence benefited Spain by avoiding the devastations of another war. Although Spanish politics was characterized by isolationism between 1943 and 1955, after that period Spain quickly emerged as an influential European nation again. Franco held dictatorial powers until his death in Nov 1975. King Juan Carlos I took power after Franco's death, and restored Spanish monarchy in 1978 as a constitutional monarchy.

Italy

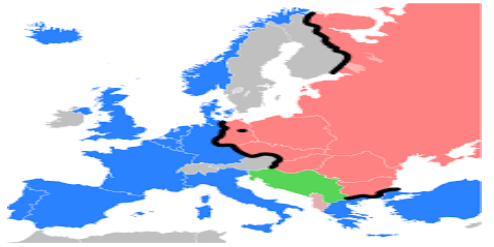


1920s: Benito Mussolini, an Italian World War I veteran who dreamed of returning Italy to the glory of the Roman Empire, established the nationalist *Fasci di Combattimento*, on March 23, 1919. Commonly known as the Fascist Party, Mussolini's new right-wing organization advocated Italian nationalism, had black shirts for uniforms, and launched a program of terrorism and intimidation against its leftist opponents. In October 1922, Mussolini led the Fascists on a march on Rome, where King Emmanuel III (who did not trust the Italian Parliament) asked him to form a new government. Initially, Mussolini cooperated with the Italian parliament, but aided by his brutal police organization he soon became the effective dictator of Italy. In January 1925 a Fascist state was officially proclaimed, with Mussolini as *Il Duce*, or "The Leader."

1930s: By conquering Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Albania, Mussolini made Italy dominant in the Mediterranean. However, these military campaigns left his armed forces exhausted and ended all hope of alliance with the Western democracies. National poverty, resource deficiencies, and scientific-industrial weakness, combined with inflexible commanders, plagued the Italian forces. Mussolini created an innovative, Fascist-minded Air Force that performed well over Ethiopia and Spain, but lagged technologically after 1935. Mussolini lacked the understanding and power to solve these problems. Wishful thinking, megalomania, and Fascist ideology gradually overwhelmed Mussolini's common sense.

1940s: Despite Italians' anti-German attitudes, Mussolini allied himself with Adolf Hitler in May 1939. The alliance got off to a rocky start, as Hitler started World War II in September 1939 and only gave one week's warning to the Italians. Inadequately prepared, Mussolini was forced to declare neutrality. Hitler persuaded Mussolini to intervene in the Mediterranean and North Africa from June through October 1940. In July 1943, the failure of the Italian war effort and the imminent Allied invasion of the Italian mainland led to a rebellion within the Fascist Party. After the fall of Palermo on July 24, the Fascist Grand Council rejected Hitler's policies dictated through Mussolini, and *Il Duce* was arrested. In September, Italy surrendered unconditionally to the Allies; however, German commandos freed Mussolini and made him the puppet leader of German-controlled northern Italy eight days later. After the collapse of Nazi Germany in April 1945, Mussolini was captured and executed by firing squad after a brief court-martial. His body was brought to Milan and hung by the feet in a public square for all the world to see.

USSR



1920s: In 1922, the Soviet Union was founded under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and his Communist party. While Lenin was establishing his control over Russia, Joseph Stalin was quickly moving up the Communist ranks, becoming general of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. This role enabled him to grow political support by appointing his allies into government jobs. After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin quickly took power of the Communist party and became dictator of the Soviet Union by the end of the 1920s.

1930s: After seizing power, Stalin introduces five-year plans to industrialize the Soviet Union, with the goal of becoming the world's foremost industrial superpower. His plans centered on total government control- one example included the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture. The government took control of farms, but the farmers who refused to cooperate with Stalin's orders were shot or exiled as punishment. The collectivization also led to widespread famine across the Soviet Union. Stalin expanded the powers of the street police, encouraged citizens to spy on one another and had millions of people killed or sent to the Gulag system of forced labor camps. During the second half of the 1930s, Stalin instituted the Great Purge, designed to rid Soviet society from those he considered a threat. Stalin built a cult of personality around himself- cities were renamed in his honor, Soviet history books were rewritten to give him a more prominent role in the revolution, and his name became part of the Soviet national anthem.

1940s: Before World War II, the Soviet Union annexed territories to build up the Communist empire while the German Nazis captured territories to expand their "*lebensraum*" or living space. Stalin and Hitler both sign the German Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, in which they agreed to divide Poland, not invade each other, and not aid other countries that invade either Germany or the Soviet Union. When Hitler broke the pact in 1941 and invaded the Soviet Union, Stalin worked with Allied leaders but never abandoned his vision for a Soviet Empire. After the end of the war, Stalin invaded many Eastern European nations, forming an Iron Curtain that separated the Soviet Union from anything of Western influence. In 1949, he led the Soviets into the nuclear age by exploding an atomic bomb. In 1950, he gave North Korea's communist leader Kim Il Sung permission to invade South Korea, an event that triggered the Korean War.

Japan



1920s: Japanese militarism, the idea that maintaining a strong military should be the primary focus of political and social life in Japan, first came to prominence during the Meiji Restoration, a time when the government had emerged from more than 500 years of wars between rival shoguns. In 1925, Japan passed universal male suffrage, granting the right to vote to all male Japanese citizens of legal age, and democratic reforms to promote peace after World War I took priority. However, a plunging economy, extreme nationalism, and a series of political assassinations led to weakened democratic ideals and a resurgence in the belief that all of Japan's foreign and domestic problems could be fixed by the military. Politicians who resisted military policies were branded as unpatriotic through propaganda and voted out of office, allowing militarists to fully take over the government.

1930s: Japan enjoyed many lucrative trade deals with the United States, but the Great Depression caused a worldwide economic freefall, and Japanese products suddenly became unaffordable luxury items that were no longer being purchased. Factories shut down, unemployment soared, and militarists used the economy as an opportunity to demand expansion into new territories that would provide natural resources to help industrialize the nation. Japan invaded Manchuria in north China and set up a puppet government, which allowed for the harvesting of natural resources like coal and iron. This was seen as an integral step for Japan to establish themselves as a world power, but when their aggressive actions were condemned by the League of Nations, they withdrew their membership. In 1936, Japan became allies with Germany and Italy; they would later become known as the Axis Powers.

1940s: In October 1941, Hideki Tojo became Prime Minister of Japan after a decade of building up Japan's military strength as well as his own personal power base. Although he was unable to build a dictatorship like Hitler and Mussolini due to the government power retained by Emperor Hirohito, Japan's victorious invasions of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were attributed to his personal strength. In response to these acts of aggression, the United States placed embargoes and trade sanctions in the belief that without access to money and goods, and especially essential supplies like oil, Japan would have to rein in its expansionism. Instead, the Japanese became more belligerent, and carried out attacks on US forces stationed at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The hostile relations between the two nations ceased to exist, and the United States officially joined World War II on December 8.