



# Indian Soldiers in Italy: World War II

## Why in News

The Indian Chief of Army Staff (COAS) will inaugurate an **Indian Army Memorial in the Cassino town of Italy** during an official visit to the U.K. and Italy.

- The memorial commemorates over **3,100 Commonwealth servicemen** who took part in the effort to **liberate Italy** in [World War II \(1939-1945\)](#).
- **900 Indian soldiers were also commemorated** on this memorial.

## Key Points

- **Indian Army in Italy:**
  - Three infantry divisions of the Indian Army took part in the Italian campaign. These were the **4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisions**.
    - The **first one to land in the country was the 8 Indian Infantry Division** that saw action in Iraq and Iran when the British invaded these countries in 1941.
    - The **second one arrived was the 4 Indian Division that came to Italy from North Africa in December 1943**. In 1944, it was deployed in Cassino.
    - The **third, which is the 10 Indian Division, was formed in 1941 in Ahmednagar** and moved to Italy in 1944.
  - Men from the **Punjab, and Indian plains, coped with the extremely hostile conditions experienced in Italy**.
    - Even the **Gurkhas from Nepal struggled with the heavy and persistent rain, and freezing nights** in the Italian mountains.
  - All three Divisions performed well in the Italian Campaign and were **highly respected by the Allied and Axis commanders alike**.
- **Indian Troops in WWII:**
  - The **Indian Army was the largest volunteer force during WWII**, with over **2.5 million (more than 20 lakh) Indians participating**.
  - These troops **fought the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) as part of the Allies**. They came from different source organizations such as:
    - **Indian Army:**
      - In the first half of the 1940s, **India was still under the British rule and the Indian Army fought in both world wars**. It comprised both Indian and European soldiers.
    - **East India Company Army and the British Army:**
      - Apart from the Indian army there was the **East India Company Army that also recruited both Indian and European soldiers** and the **British Army, which was also present in India**.

## World War II

- **About:**
  - It was a conflict that **involved virtually every part of the world** during the years 1939-45.
  - It **ended six years and one day after Germany's invasion of Poland on 1<sup>st</sup>**

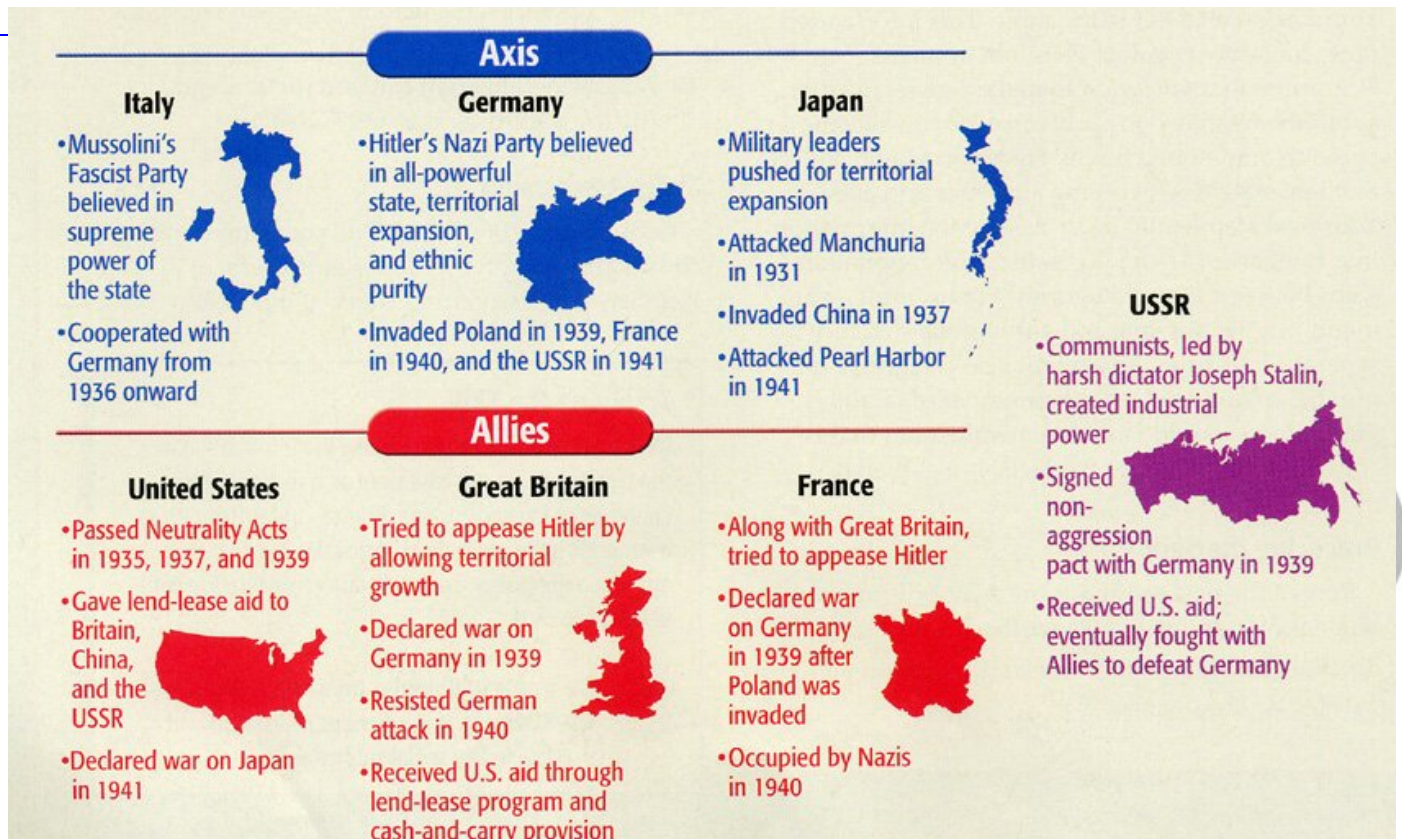
**September, 1939, sparked the 20<sup>th</sup> century's second global conflict.**

- By the time it concluded on the deck of an American warship on 2nd September, 1945, **WW II had claimed the lives of an estimated 60-80 million people, approximately 3% of the world's population.**
- The **vast majority of those who died were civilians, including 6 million Jews killed in Nazi concentration camps** during the Holocaust.

▪ **Principal Belligerents:**

- **Axis powers**—Germany, Italy, and Japan.
- **Allies**—France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China.

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▪ **Causes of War:**

- The impact of the Treaty of Versailles following [World War I \(1914-18\)](#).
- The worldwide economic depression.
- The rise of militarism in Germany and Japan.
- The failure of the [League of Nations](#).

**Italy in World War II**

- Under Benito Mussolini, Italy had joined Nazi Germany in 1936 and in 1940 it entered WWII **against the Allies.**
- In **1943, Mussolini was overthrown and instead, Italy declared war on Germany.**
- The **invasion of Italy by the Allies coincided with an armistice** that was made **with the Italians.**
- For two years during WWII, **Italy became one of the war's most "exhausting campaigns" because they were facing a skilled and resolute enemy.**

**Source: IE**

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