



# **A Concise History of the Second World War: Its Origin, Battles and Consequences**

*Richard Z Freemann Jr.*

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In the history of human existence, no conflict has cratered the earth, its people and their ways of living like World War II. The battles that blazed across the globe from the late 1930s until 1945 caused more than sixty million deaths. Almost every corner of society heard gunfire. Nations were destroyed, others founded, and some reconfigured. Philosophies of government were tested and frequently found lacking. Reputations were won and lost. Tyranny was commonplace. Some, but not all tyrants were toppled. For many decades now, civilization has shuddered at the brutal impact of this war.

This writing aspires to present the tale of World War II in a concise yet digestible fashion, and to stimulate the reader to delve further into its history. Consider questions such as these:

When, where and how did the combatants face the challenges of this brutal conflict? Who sided with whom, why, and what help did each participant furnish?

Who evidenced courage and when did cowardice prevail?

Where were the military successes and blunders?

Were the techniques of war ethically appropriate?

How, why and when did the fighting end?

What were the intended and unintended consequences of World War II?

Where did the loss of life strike hardest?

What were the economic and social tolls and achievements?

What of lasting value has civilization gleaned from the conflict?

In addition to the “What, Where and When” of war, it is appropriate to consider what forces and flaws contributed to the war’s emergence. The following may be found in almost any war, but all were abundant in World War II:

Ambition for increased food supplies and natural resources.

Hunger for territorial gains.

Retribution for perceived wrongs.

Expressions of nationalism.

Critical alliances and failed compacts.

Troubled economies.

Expanding and contracting political power.

Isolationism

A contest between theories of government, e.g., Communism versus capitalism.


Efforts to eradicate ethnic groups.

Totalitarian regimes.

This book begins with a review of the events and circumstances that gave birth to the conflict. Then comes a discussion of the war's action in every significant theater of combat – North Africa, Europe, the Soviet Union, Southeast Asia, the Pacific islands and Japan. The history is presented not in conventional prose, but in nuggets of information designed to provide substance without extended length.

In any book on World War II, the author faces a challenge. Should all events be presented in pure chronological order, or is the material more comprehensible if divided in some logical way? I have elected to separate the events of the war into two parts – the European/North African battlegrounds and the conflicts in the Pacific theater. While this approach has the disadvantage of bifurcating the time line of events, hopefully it offers the advantage of an improved understanding of action in each major war locale.

The writing closes with a discussion of the human and economic costs of the conflict, an evaluation of the intended and unintended consequences of World War II, and ethical questions the war has brought to the surface. 19 photos, 16 maps, sources.

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