

To what extent did the  
great depression  
cause world war ii?



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The statement ' The Great Depression caused World War II is in reality accurate, however only to a limited degree. The Great Depression is known as one of the most tragic economic effects that took place in America during the years 1929 to 1939. After the stock market crash in October 1929, Wall Street was sent into panic and because of this, millions of investors were wiped out.[1]Despite the fact that many accept that the Great Depression only made a part in the lead up the World War II, there are many reasons as to why it was a main impact that brought about this tragic event known as World War II.

The downfall in economy was one of the many factors caused by the Great Depression, which led up to World War II. Studies show that during the first five years of depression, the economy shrank more than 50% with 650 banks failing.[2]Over the next several years, consumer spending and investment dropped, causing steep declines in industrial output and employment as failing companies laid off workers. By 1933, when the Great Depression reached its lowest point, around 15 million Americans were unemployed and nearly half the country's banks had failed. The failure of so many banks, combined with a general and nationwide loss of confidence in the economy, led to much-reduced levels of spending and demand and hence of production, thus aggravating the downward spiral. At this time, when economies were at a low it had created the perfect condition for conflicts. By the mid 1930's, conditions began to slowly improve but total recovery was not accomplished until the end of the decade.[3]This is a long period for people to suffer in such a harsh environment.

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Towards the end of the Great Depression, an exceeding amount of dictators had the power to rise. The people of Germany, Italy and Japan were tired of the constant suffering and wanted to be able to follow leaders who could promise to bring their country to the greatness it once established. Multiple citizens began to call for governments to attempt to fix the problems everyone was facing. Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Benito Mussolini promised all a better life with a bright future however once they recognized the power they were longing for they became dictators and ruled their countries by force. The political leaders had total control over the way people lived and the decisions they made throughout their lives.[4]They took freedom of speech and religion away from the people who disagreed with the dictatorship. As a result of this, many people were sent to concentration camps. Between 1920 and 1930, authoritarian governments adopted two different types of political systems. These were known as communism and fascism. Dictators began to use the ideas behind communism and fascism as a way to justify the reasoning behind their actions to continue to maintain the power they began to hold.

To argue this statement, many other influences had the ability to contribute to the statement that the Great Depression caused World War II. When World War I had ended, the nations of Europe did everything they could to stop another war from arising. In an attempt to further this from occurring, they hoped that the peace would be kept through an " appeasement".[5]This meant the focus was to keep both Hitler and Germany happy by meeting the demands he wished for. Unfortunately, the policy of the agreed appeasement backfired which caused Hitler to become bolder and more time

to build up the army he always dreamed of. The terms following from the ‘Treaty of Versailles’ was so harsh that many Germans found it insulting that they had the hold responsibility for the war. With no surprise in the years to come, Germany had formed many extremist groups and parties that would soon about bring a second world war.[6]

In conclusion, it is evident that there are many reasons as to why The Great Depression had multiple effects that resulted in the outcome of World War II. The downfall in economy meant that economies where at the lowest point which created a more high chance in conflict rising. Nevertheless, during this time multiple dictators were given multiple opportunities to rise to power and become leaders that would eventually control the lives of many citizens. Therefore, it can clearly be stated and proven accurate that to a large extent the Great Depression caused World War II.

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