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Indian Soldiers in Italy: World War II

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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 **4th, 8th and 10th 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**.

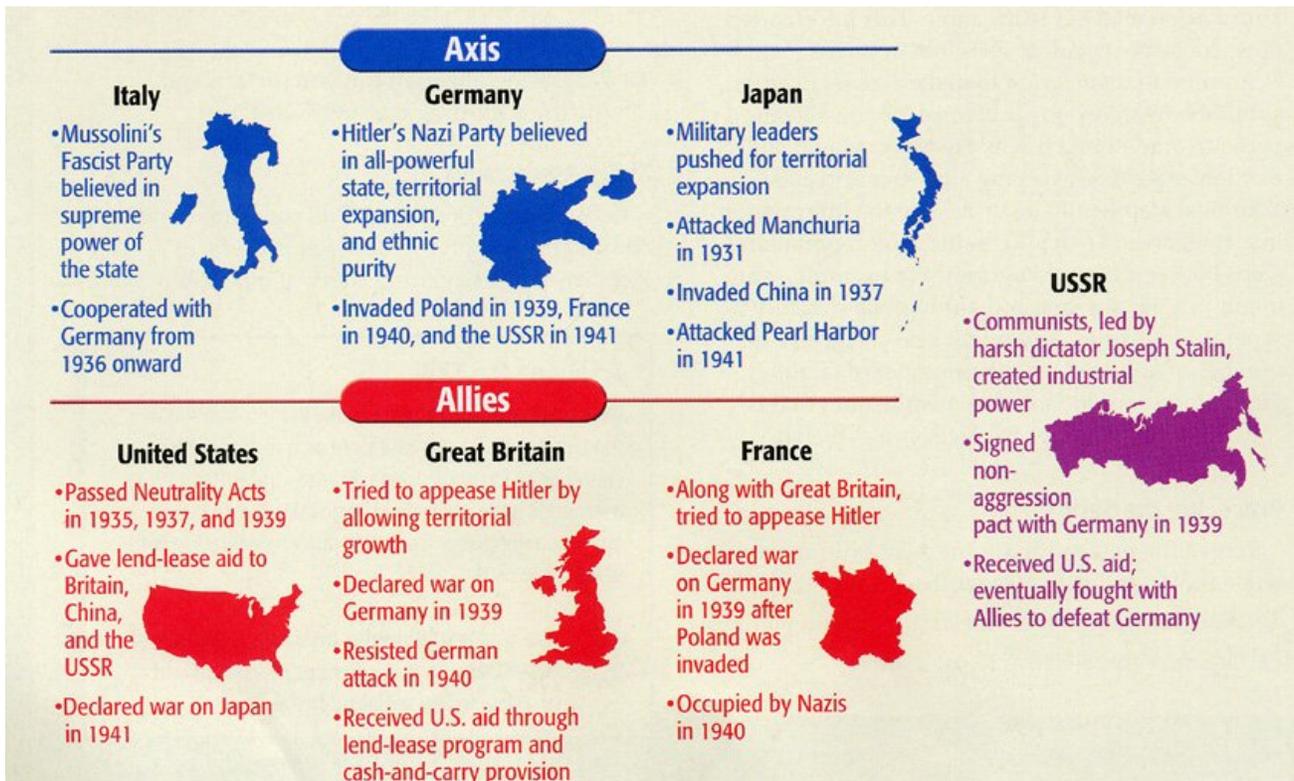
World War II

- **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 1st September, 1939, sparked the 20th 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.



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