

Considering the period 1933 to 1945, analyze the economic, diplomatic, and military reasons for Germany's defeat in the Second World War.

When Germany was launched on its misinformed crusade by Hitler in 1939, it was believed by the German people that the war would end quickly. The Allies would fold this time around to the invincible might of the Nazi Reich's new, well-constructed, well-oiled war machine, its youthful soldiers as swift as greyhounds, tough as leather, and as hard as Krupp steel. This was not the case despite victories early on in the war. Just as in the time of Napoleon, Britain proved a holdout that Hitler could not defeat despite Germany's best efforts being put forth to combat the British Navy and Royal Air Force. This, as it proved for Napoleon, would prove a key component in Germany's defeat. Among the myriad other reasons why the war for Germany was ultimately a lost cause was that their economic policies were not sustainable for a drawn-out military conflict, their manufacturing capabilities and resources could not match the might of the United States and the Western Allies (or the production of the Soviet Union, for that matter), and they lacked capable allies. Furthermore, they pursued military developments that were not appropriate for combating the mass-produced machinery that the Western Allies employed over the duration of the war.

It is debatable as to whether Germany could have won the Second World War if things were done differently from the start, but it is certain that the survival of Britain was a major factor in assisting with the assurance of inevitable German capitulation. Without the elimination of British power, Germany could not have control over the Atlantic or the Mediterranean, meaning they could not ensure the safety of their supply routes for soldiers fighting Mussolini's botched wars in North Africa, nor could they ensure that supply lines from colonies and allies of Britain and could not be cut off. Just as in the First World War, the presence of British naval and air superiority would prove a deciding factor militarily in sealing the fate of Germany. The Reich wasted significant resources attempting to combat Britain and gain naval and air superiority in the Channel, also going so far as to sink excessive amounts of Reichsmarks into development of long-range rocket weaponry that, though exciting, proved largely ineffective (this refers to the V-1 and V-2 Rocket campaigns). Operation Sealion, the planned invasion of Britain, was not undertaken and would likely have resulted in failure anyways. The survival of Britain meant the survival of the Western Allies, and destroyed the schedule of domination that Nazi Germany had so carefully drawn up. Committing to war against the Soviet Union while Britain remained alive stretched German resources thin as swathes of troops and armour were committed to the Eastern Front, drawing vital material from the Afrika Korps that were necessary if Germany was to have a hope of defeating British forces there. Thus, the mere survival of Britain was one major political and military factor in enabling the defeat of Nazi Germany, giving a sizable distraction and drain on resources that behooved the Soviet Union and the Western Allies later in the war.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, Germany had pursued economic revitalization policies that were frankly unsustainable. Massive rearmament projects and construction projects, such as the development of the new Panzer divisions, Luftwaffe, and Kriegsmarine, and the construction of wonders such as the Autobahn, significantly drained German resources. The reason for the implementation of such policies was that it was necessary to prepare Germany for war, and it was seen as feasible if Germany was to succeed in the war and gain the currency and resources necessary to pay for these projects by subjugating other states. These types of policies, however, were formulated with a short war in mind, which seemed to be the case before German advances were bogged down by Britain's stubbornness. The survival of Britain also meant that advance into Russia would end up hobbled, thus meaning the war would be extended and the acquiring of vital resources would not be possible in a timely fashion. The Caucasus oil fields that were so vital to the continued German war effort, could not be captured due to the thinly-stretched German forces and several military mistakes made on the part of Hitler and his generals. The economic policies of Germany were not designed for the type of conflict that ended up developing, hobbling their wartime capability.

The manufacturing capabilities of the Reich, though ripe with engineering prowess, could not match the Allies. The United States propped the Soviet Union and Great Britain up with Lend-Lease Aid prior to their entry into the war, utilizing the dormant manufacturing energy of the United States to churn out mass-produced weaponry, tanks, and artillery, far faster than Germany could produce or replace their own. For every M4 Sherman tank that was destroyed, three more could replace it and eliminate the Panzer IV that had knocked out the original M4 Sherman. The United States was not alone in adopting this strategy of war; the Soviet Union also adopted a policy of producing as many cheaply built and easy to man tanks and war material as possible utilizing its vast manufacturing resources resultant from Stalinist industrialisation. The German theory of manufacturing was focused on high quality and powerful weaponry, but this was expensive to produce and could only be made in limited quantities due to the scope of the German manufacturing industry, even with subjugated powers' factories to augment it. Furthermore, German tanks such as the Tiger and Panther were prone to malfunction and were hard to train crews for; when tank crews were lost or a tank got bogged down, those resources were absolutely wasted and could not be easily replaced. The sheer industrial might of the allies and the poor manufacturing theory of the Germans with respect to Allied methods and means absolutely crushed Germany in this arena.

Germany also suffered diplomatically and militarily when it came to allies; the only competent allies of theirs, Japan and Finland, being preoccupied with their own endeavours too much to assist with Germany meant that their only feasible friend in the fight was Italy. And Italy proved a poor ally. Despite military reconstruction and development, by the time Italy entered the war in full, their equipment had become outdated and weak, and their manufacturing capabilities meant that they were stuck with what they had. While the Allies in North Africa shifted to larger, heavier, more powerful and cheap to make tanks, the Italians were stuck with weak, light, and dysfunctional weaponry such as the M13/40 tanks. The fact that Germany was forced to assist Italy in the Balkans, Greece, North Africa, and ultimately Italy itself proved a significant drain on German resources.

By the entry of the United States into the Second World War, many factors had decided the fate of Germany. If certain decisions had not been changed early on in the war, it is

generally believed that Germany's defeat was assured. For a myriad of many, many factors, Germany was unable to win. With the survival of Britain, the manufacturing might of the Allies, poor economic policies, and poor allies, Germany's war machine appeared intimidating, but it was really a recipe for disaster. The Reich could not sustain a years long war, much less stand for a thousand years. Especially when combined with poor decisions made by an aging Hitler in worsening health continued to hobble German abilities, and military setbacks helped to seal their fate as the losers of the Second World War.

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