

# The Road to World War II



# World War I Recap

- Who?
  - Central Powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary
  - Allied Powers: U.S., England, France, Russia, Italy (switched sides during the war)
- Why were they fighting?
  - Underlying problems included: fighting over who would control colonies in Africa, each nation thought they were better than the other, they were all allied with other nations, and they all had built up big militaries.



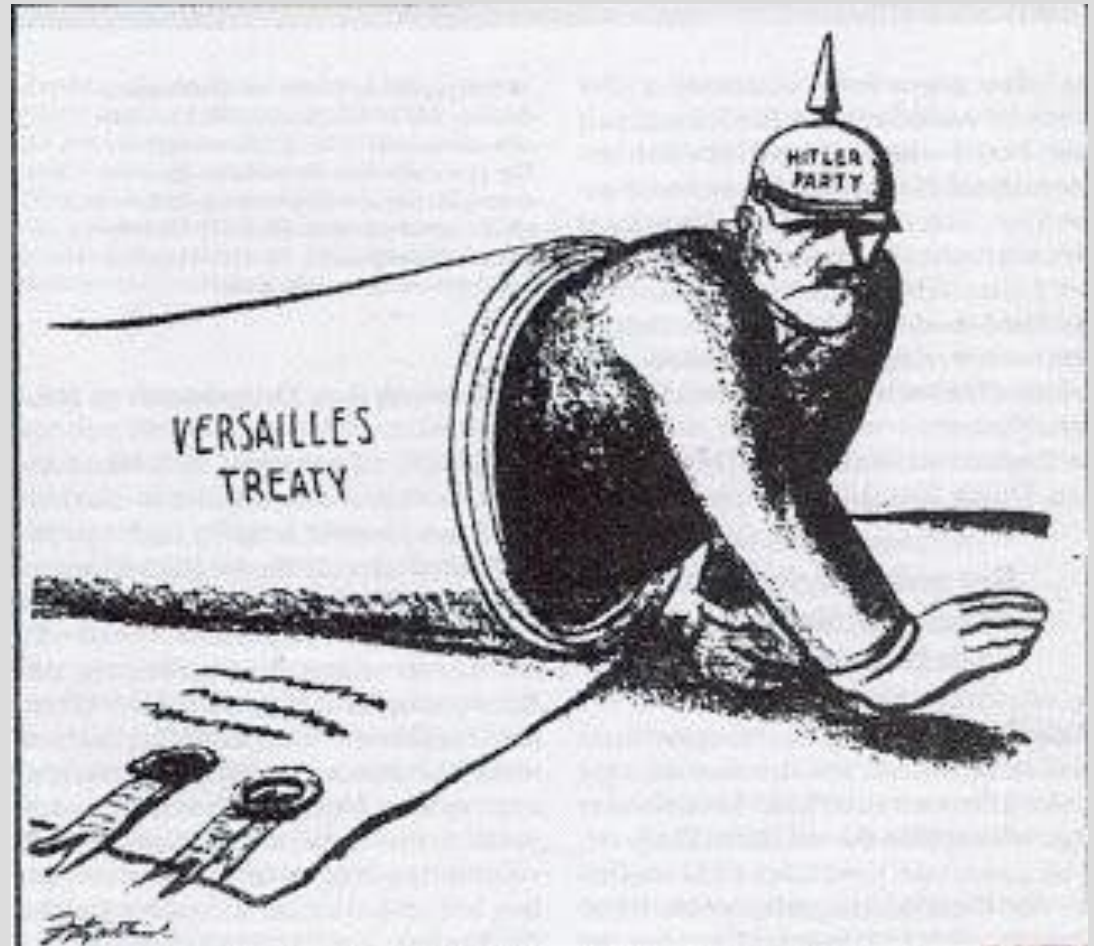
Europe before WWI General

# Outcome of WWI: Treaty of Versailles

- Germany was forced to accept war guilt (responsibility for causing the war) and told to pay reparations (payments) totaling \$30 billion to the Allies.
- Germany's military was also stripped down to the bare bones
- What was formerly Austria-Hungary was divided up and made into new nations like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Finland.
- Creation of the League of Nations: an organization in which all the nations of the world could join together to ensure security and peace for all members.

# How did the Treaty of Versailles set the world up for WWII?

Consider: which country would be upset by the treaty and why?  
**EXPLAIN.**



# The Rise of Fascism and Nazism

- Following WWI, nations weakened by the war turned to **fascism** (political philosophy that valued the race/nation over the individual) as a way to renew their strength and spirit.





## Benito Mussolini & Italy

- Mussolini felt Italy had been short-changed by *the Versailles Treaty*.
- He declared himself dictator in 1925, suspended elections, put all business under govt. control, and started *modernizing the military*.
- Wanting to create a modern-day Roman Empire, he invaded and took over Ethiopia.



## Adolf Hitler & Germany

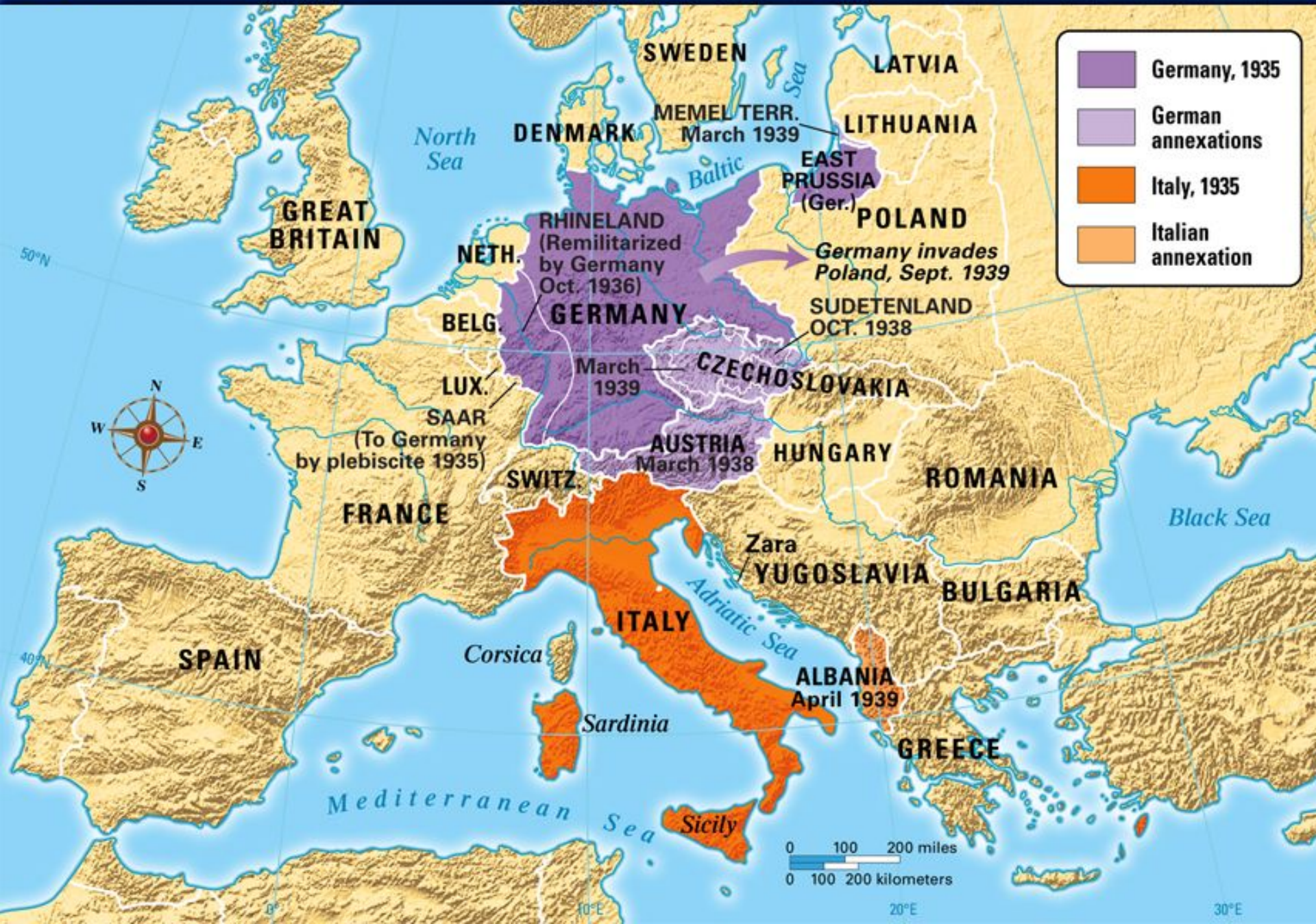
- In the years after WWI, Germany suffered from high unemployment and inflation.
- Once he was made the leader of the Nazi Party in Germany, Hitler got rid of opponents, and took away Germans' civil liberties (no free speech, etc..)
- The Nazis promised to stabilize the country, fix the economy, and make Germany great again.

Determined to return the German Empire to its former glory, Hitler pursued an aggressive foreign policy.

- By aggressive foreign policy, I mean that Hitler quickly tried to take over most of Europe.



# Aggression in Europe, 1931-1939





- German aggression began with their seizure of the *Rhineland* in 1936.
- Germany and Italy formed an alliance in 1936 as well.
- In 1938, Hitler annexed *Austria* and later that year, he demanded possession of the Sudetenland (a region in *Czechoslovakia*) and in March 1939, Germany took the rest of Czech.
- In Aug. 1939, the Germans and Russians signed a 10 year *Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact*. (MEANING?)



NOTE: The German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact fell apart in June 1941, when Nazi forces invaded the Soviet Union.

# AXIS ADVANCES, 1939–1941



## Where was everyone else you might ask?

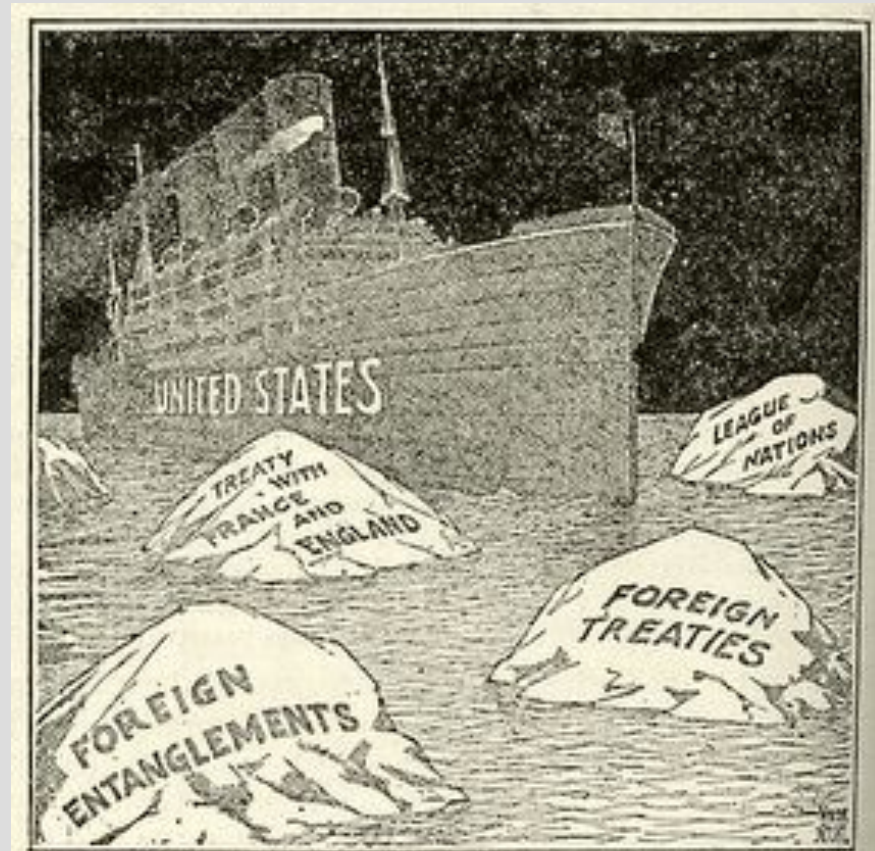
- England and France, reluctant to get involved in another big conflict (WHY?), adopted a policy of appeasement.



Additionally, to block Hitler's advances, France and Britain pledged in March 1939, they would come to the defense of Poland should its security and independence be threatened. They declared war in Sept. 1939 after Germany invaded Poland.

# Meanwhile, back in America...

- The U.S. was busy minding its own business (pursuing a policy known as **isolationism** - DEFINE).
- WHY?
  - In the 1930s, the U.S. turned inward and focused on rebuilding the American economy during the Depression.



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BETTER KEEP TO THE OLD CHANNEL.

—McCay in the *New York American*.



“Ho hum! When he’s finished pecking down that last tree he’ll quite likely be tired.”

Dr Seuss

## Other fears – can we win?

In the words of Charles Lindbergh  
(a vocal supporter of isolationism)

“we should not enter a war unless  
we have a reasonable chance of  
winning.... And I know that the  
United States is not prepared to  
wage war in Europe successfully at  
this time.”



# Problems with isolationism

... and the Wolf chewed up the children and spit out their bones ...  
But those were Foreign Children and it really didn't matter."



# American “Neutrality”

neu·tral·i·ty

/n(y)oō'tralədē/ 

*noun*

1. the state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict, disagreement, etc.; impartiality.  
"during the war, Switzerland maintained its neutrality"
2. absence of decided views, expression, or strong feeling.  
"the clinical neutrality of the description"

- Consider, how “neutral” is America during the early years of WWII?



# American “Neutrality”

- Congress passed several neutrality acts in the 1930s, which were known as the “cash & carry” policy:
  - The U.S. would withhold weapons and loans from all nations at war and would sell other goods to warring powers only if they paid cash and picked the goods up themselves. MEANING?
- In August 1939, Albert Einstein warned FDR that German researchers were at work developing an atomic bomb. In response, FDR authorized funds for a top-secret project to build an American bomb first.


# Once France fell to the Nazis, Roosevelt moved to help *Great Britain*.



- FDR repealed the arms embargo section of Neutrality Act and got approval to sell arms on a cash and carry basis to Britain and France (wanted to support them vs. Hitler but also ensure that the U.S. stayed out of the war and that the economy was not disrupted)
- In March 1941, FDR further amended our neutrality policy even further and instituted the **Lend-Lease Act**, whereby the U.S. provided *war supplies to Britain with the faith that payment would be provided later*.
  - Roosevelt said it was like “lending a garden hose to a neighbor whose house is burning down.”

# American “Neutrality”

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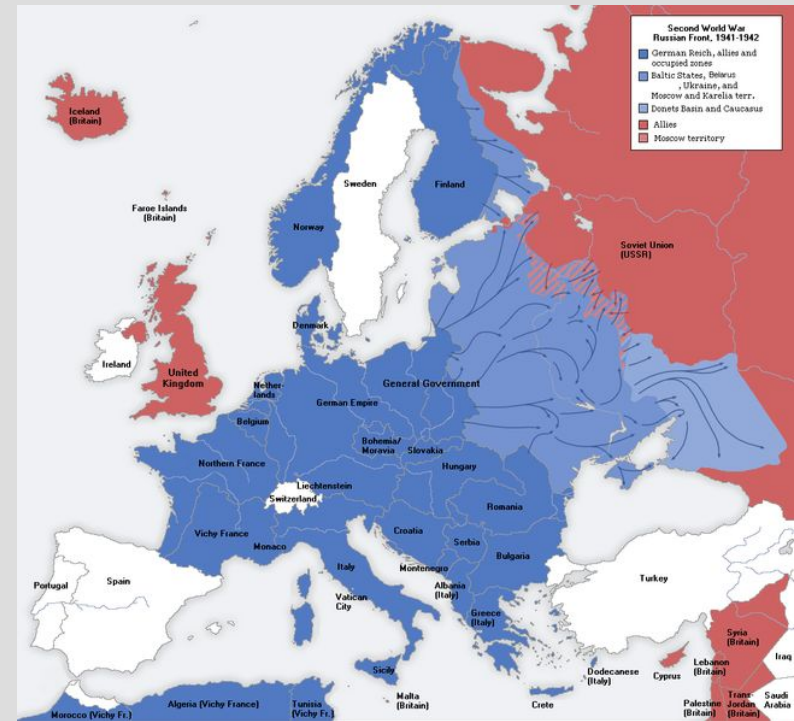
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- How “neutral” was America during the early years of WWII?

Even though 88% of the American people opposed the war in 1941, things were pretty bleak on the European front.

- Between September 1939 and June 1940, the Axis Powers defeated Norway, Poland, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. In Asia, Japan was swallowing up French and Dutch colonies.
- And England was all alone to defend herself and the rest of Europe.



# While all of this was going on in Europe, in Japan...

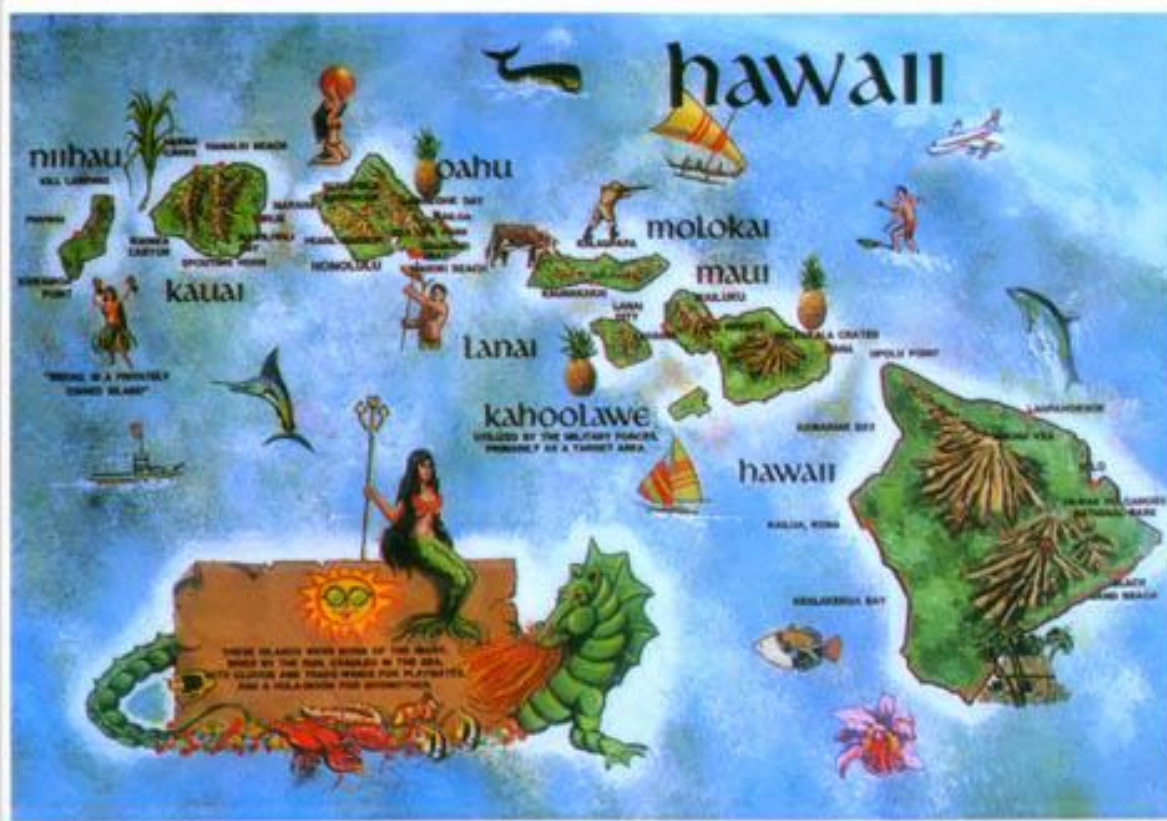
- Japanese leaders, also trying to make Japan into a world power, were busy attempting to take over *China and the rest of Southeast Asia*.
- Japan formed an alliance with Germany and Italy, known as the **Tripartite Pact**. They were known as the Axis Powers.
- Then they invaded Indochina, which was ruled by *France*.



Meanwhile, tension between the U.S. and Japan increased.

- They were mad at the U.S. because:
  - they could no longer make money off of exports to the U.S. because of high tariffs (remember the Hawley-Smoot Tariff that was put in place by Hoover to boost American business!)
  - by 1940, the U.S. had stopped selling planes to Japan, ending a long-standing trade agreement.
  - by mid-1940, the U.S. had stopped selling other crucial items (i.e. scrap metal and oil) to Japan.
  - After Japan's attack on Indochina, the U.S. froze *all Japanese assets in the U.S.*

Only the U.S. naval fleet based in Hawaii stood between Japan and total domination of eastern Asia and the Pacific.



So, on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941...



- Japan launched a surprise attack on the American naval base at *Pearl Harbor*.
- Nearly 2,400 people died, and the attack destroyed five battleships and three cruisers.





# Soon after, Roosevelt called on Congress to declare war on Japan.

- Congress quickly agreed.
- Three days later, Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, declared war on the U.S., thus involving the U.S. in one of the most destructive wars to have ever been waged.





The AXIS Powers 1942