

2025

## Winds of war



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# 1. SUMMARY

We all know that World War II didn't just happen overnight. It came step by step, through years of drift, denial, and the rise of authoritarian regimes that **few people took seriously until it was too late**. Looking at today's world, the echoes are uncomfortable. Let's walk through the sequence — from the 1930s into the 2020s — and see how history might be rhyming again.

This is not a history master class. It pretends to show how dangerous these times are. **We are not on the brink of a war, but we are closing in.**

## 2. THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

### Then (1920s–1930s):

- Mussolini took power in Italy in 1922, creating a model of modern fascism.
- Hitler rose in Germany by 1933, promising to restore “greatness” and scapegoating minorities. In 1923 he led a failed coup which put him behind bars.
- Japan fell under the sway of military hardliners bent on conquest.
- Stalin tightened his grip on the Soviet Union, using purges and fear to control society.

### Now (2020s):

- Putin rules Russia with an iron fist, crushing opposition and launching wars of expansion.
- Xi Jinping in China has centralized power, dismantled term limits, and built a surveillance state. Purges in the military and foreign affairs domains are taking place.
- Even the United States shows troubling signs: polarization, attacks on democratic institutions, and the normalization of authoritarian rhetoric. Trump has been targeted twice, Democrat political figures have been killed and attacked, Trump's close political advisor and friend (Charlie Kirk) has been killed.
- Elsewhere, Erdoğan in Turkey, Orbán in Hungary, and strongmen across the Global South use nationalism and fear to chip away at democracy. In Spain, the judiciary is at odds with the incumbent government. AfD in Germany

is a growing political force, as it is in France Le Pen's Rassemblement National.

- Conscription is gaining traction in Western Europe. NATO has seen its ranks augmented. Military spending is to be increased in Europe.
- Russia is undertaking war economy. China is developing its armed forces with an effort in projects that allow it to project forces abroad.
- Hamas conducted a despicable terror attack in Israel (October 2023), killing and kidnapping civilians.

### 3. AGGRESSIVE EXPANSION

#### Then:

- Germany started rearming, openly violating the Treaty of Versailles.
- Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 while the League of Nations looked on helplessly.
- Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936 without facing serious resistance.
- Spain's civil war (1936–1939) became a testing ground for fascist military power.
- Germany and the Soviet Union signed their famous agreement – the **Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact** (also called the Nazi–Soviet Pact) – on **August 23, 1939**, in Moscow.

#### Now:

- Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, then launched a full-scale war on Ukraine in 2022. Before that, Russia evaluated the world in Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia in 2008.
- China expands militarily in the South China Sea and threatens Taiwan. Build military bases abroad: Djibouti.
- Iran and North Korea flex their influence regionally, pushing weapons and proxy wars. North Korea is taking part in Ukraine on Russia's side.
- The international community condemns, but consequences are often symbolic – echoing the toothless League of Nations.

- Israel is undertaking actions to obliterate Hamas and invaded Southern Lebanon to curb Hezbollah. Iran was attacked by Israel and the United States destroying and limiting its nuclear programme. Israel has carried out attacks on Qatari soil (against Hamas leadership).

## 4. ESCALATION

### Then:

- Japan invaded China in 1937, escalating violence across Asia.
- Hitler annexed Austria (Anschluss) in 1938 with little pushback.
- The Munich Agreement gave Germany the Sudetenland, in the name of "peace in our time."

### Now:

- Russia's expansion goes largely unanswered beyond sanctions and statements.
- China tightens control over Hong Kong and ramps up pressure on Taiwan.
- Western democracies often prioritize stability and trade over confrontation, echoing appeasement.
- The cost of resisting early feels too high, so leaders kick the can down the road.
- Russia is testing NATO, penetrating Poland, Baltic States and Romania with Iranian-modified Shahed drones.
- Show of force in Kaliningrad (missile deployment) and military drills (including nuclear tactical weapons) in Belarus by Russia.
- Show of force by Germany in the Baltic States deploying forces. NATO increases its air assets in the Eastern flank.

## 5. THE ROAD TO WAR

### Then:

- Germany broke its promises and occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia in 1939.
- Italy invaded Albania.

- Hitler signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact with Stalin, clearing the way for a joint carve-up of Eastern Europe.

#### Now:

- Russia deepens its alliance with China, Iran, and North Korea – an authoritarian bloc forming in plain sight.
- Autocrats share technology, weapons, and propaganda strategies.
- Meanwhile, democracies remain divided, slow, and reactive – just as Britain and France were in the late 1930s. Southern European nations regard the conflict in Ukraine as a distant threat.
- Differences regarding military spending remain in Europe and European military complex remains scattered, logistics is not being addressed.
- The U.S. under Trump's administration is distancing itself from Europe as Roosevelt's America was reluctant to enter war until directly attacked at Pearl Harbour.
- U.S. presence in Iraq is planned to decrease in September 2025 (agreed by Biden's administration). Oxygen for Iran to retake its stance, influence, and presence in Iraq by means of its proxy tribes in Iraq. An opportunity for Turkey (NATO member) to expand there, too.

## 6. FINAL THOUGHTS

The point of looking back isn't to say "history repeats itself" word for word. **It doesn't. But it does rhyme.** The 1930s teach us that **appeasement, denial, and wishful thinking allowed authoritarianism to grow unchecked** – until it exploded into the deadliest war in history.

Today, we're watching a similar pattern unfold. The question is whether **democracies will recognize the warning signs this time** – and act before the spark is lit.