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The Second World War

Scope of Syllabus

Causes (Dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Versailles, Rise of Fascism and Nazism, Policy of Appeasement, Japanese invasion of China, Failure of League of Nations and Hitler's invasion of Poland). Brief mention of the attack on Pearl Harbour and bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Consequences (Defeat of Axis Powers, Formation of the United Nations and Cold War).

IMPORTANT TERMS, EVENTS, PERSONS AND DATES

- **Allied Powers** : The four countries included in the Allied Power were Britain, France, America and Russia.
- **Cold War** : The Cold War is a situation when there is no actual war but war like situation prevails and the danger of another war looms large. The Cold War was an effect of the Second World War which prevailed till 1990.
- **United Nations Organization (UNO)** : The United Nations Organization was established on October 24, 1945 with its headquarters at New York (USA).
- **Truman Doctrine** : The doctrine was announced in 1946 by USA President Harry S. Truman to check Soviet influence in Greece through economic and military assistance.
- **Marshall Plan** : The plan was announced by the American Secretary of State, George C. Marshall to help the war torn nations of Europe to recover from their shattered economies.
- **Warsaw Pact** : The Pact was signed by Russia with other Communist countries to meet the challenge posed by the American sponsored NATO.
- **Communism** : It is a socio-economic structure based on common ownership of the means of production and property.
- **Capitalism** : It is an economic system in which resources are controlled by private individuals. All the major economic decisions are taken keeping in mind the market.

The Second World War

Twenty years nine months after the end of the First World War, there came the Second World War. It was a *global military conflict* which involved a majority of the world's nations, including all of the great powers, organized into *two opposing military alliances*: the **Allies** and the **Axis**. The war involved the mobilization of over 100 million military personnel, making it the most widespread war in history. In a state of "total war", the major

participants placed their complete economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities at the service of the war effort, erasing the distinction between civilian and military resources. Over 70 million people, the majority of them civilians, were killed, making it the deadliest conflict in human history.

The starting date of the war is generally held to be September 1, 1939 with the **German invasion of Poland** and subsequent declarations of war on Germany by the United Kingdom, France

and the British Dominions. The following were the main Long term and the Immediate causes of the Second World War.

The Second World War



Date	: September 1, 1939 – September 2, 1945.
Immediate Cause	: Invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 by Hitler.
Location	: Europe, Pacific, South-East Asia, China, Middle East, Mediterranean and Africa.
Major powers	: Allied (i) Britain (ii) USSR (iii) USA : Axis (i) Germany (ii) Italy (iii) Japan
Result	: Victory of Allies
Aftermath	: Formation of United Nations on October 24, 1945.

(a) Long Term Causes of the Second World War

1. Unjust and Humiliating Treaty of Versailles:

The victors of the First World War (Britain, France and U.S.A.) forced Germany to sign the unjust and humiliating Treaty of Peace. It imposed heavy war-penalties on Germany, made her surrender large chunks of her territories like Saar, Rhineland, Ruhr area, etc. and some parts of her foreign colonies. The Treaty also prohibited Germany from re-arming herself; her army was disbanded beyond a limit of one lakh soldiers. The Germans found it too humiliating. The huge reparations imposed on Germans, prevented Germany's economic recovery. Moreover, the attitude of France towards Germany

was revengeful. Now when Germany lay prostrate before France, she took revenge from her by taking the Saar valley and the Ruhr zone in 1923 A.D.



A TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE

By the mid-1930s, Germany, Italy, and Japan all had repressive, right-wing governments. All three countries also wanted to control more territory and defeat communism. It therefore, made sense for them to promise to support each other if war broke out. This Italian poster shows the flags of the three countries in the shape of a V for the victory, they thought they might achieve by fighting alongside each other, if necessary.

2. Rise of Fascism and Nazism :

- Rise of Fascism in Italy under Mussolini and Nazism in Germany under Hitler was one of the major factor responsible for the Second World War.
- Both of them were against democracy and followed aggressive nationalism and imperialistic policies.
- Both believed in the principle of expansion.
- In 1936 Italy attacked and acquired territories of Ethiopia.
- Hitler attacked Austria, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Norway, etc.
- In 1937 Italy, Japan and Germany formed Rome-Berlin and Tokyo axis.

3. The Policy of Appeasement : England and France followed a policy of appeasement towards Germany to divert German Aggression against Soviet Union. They also felt that if genuine grievances of Germany and Italy were removed, they would be satisfied and would not do anything to destroy the peace of the world. They did not care to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, when Hitler started to flout it openly. The heads of four nations - Germany, Italy, Britain and France met at Munich on September 29, 1938 and decided to handover Sudetanland to Germany. The Czechs were persuaded by them to accept the **Munich Pact** in the name of world peace. But actually, they were appeasing Hitler at the cost of

Czechoslovakia. Hitler's troops occupied Sudetenland on 5th October, 1938 and later on the whole of Czechoslovakia became a German satellite. Thus, the *Anglo-French policy of appeasement* proved dangerous for world peace. It emboldened, Germany, Italy and Japan which led to another destructive war.

Policy of Appeasement : It was the foreign policy of Britain and France towards, the Nazi Germany between 1937 to 1939. Under this they allowed the German troops in the Rhineland. They allowed Hitler to annex Austria. They also allowed to take Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia.

The Munich Agreement or Munich Pact was an international agreement signed in 1938 by Germany, France, Britain and Italy. The Agreement which was designed to avoid war between the powers of Europe by allowing Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler to annex the Sudetenland. Sudetenland was the western regions of Czechoslovakia, which were primarily inhabited by ethnic Germans.

4. Japanese invasion of China : In Asia, Japan harboured expansionist desires. It attacked China in 1931 and annexed Manchuria. China appealed to the League of Nations to declare sanctions against Japan, Britain and France, leading members of the League ignored the appeal. In 1933, Japan left the League of Nations and started occupying the British and American properties in China. Britain and France followed the *policy of appeasement* under which they ignored aggressive policy of Japan, thinking that Japanese could be used to weaken China. The Japanese were determined to dominate the Far East. America warned Japan of the dire consequences but Japan ignored. She joined '**Rome-Berlin-Tokyo**' Axis. In response to this western nations decided to impose economic sanctions (most importantly oil) against Japan. This transformed the nature of the war. It was in response to these sanctions that Japan decided to attack America at Pearl Harbor, and so initiate World War II in the Far East.

The League of Nations failed to check these nations in their aggressive policies of territorial annexation.



Hitler signing the Tripartite Treaty [Rome – Berlin – Tokyo Axis] with Japan and Italy in Berlin.

5. The Weakness of the League of Nations : The League of Nations was set up to maintain peace in the world. But it failed in its objective to check the rise of dictatorships in Italy and Germany. When the weaker nations appealed, the League could only apply economic sanctions against the aggressors. It failed to contain Italy's aggression in Ethiopia, Japan's invasion of China and Manchuria and Germany's occupation of Austria and attack on Poland. Actually, the *League of Nations* had no power to act on its own initiative to preserve peace in the world. It lacked its own armed force and so depended on the great powers to enforce its resolutions, keep to economic sanctions, or provide an army when needed. Moreover, the U.S.A. did not become its member, because the *U.S. Senate* did not ratify the Covenant of the *League of Nations*. Germany was also not allowed to join the League.

6. The Armament Race : In order to achieve their territorial aims, Germany, Italy and Japan began producing firearms, tanks, guns, war-ships, aircrafts and other weapons of destruction at a large scale. Britain and France never bothered to protest due to the **Economic Depression of 1930s**. They were serious and busy tackling their own problems. The **Disarmament Conferences** failed to stop the stock-piling of the arms and ammunition. The League of Nations also did not achieve any success in this regard. All the nations followed only one policy, namely "**Security first and disarmament afterwards.**"

(b) The Immediate Cause

The German Invasion of Poland

The immediate cause of the outbreak of the Second World War was the German aggression on Poland on 1st September, 1939. In August, 1939, Germany had signed a Non-aggression Pact with Russia. Hitler accused Poland of committing atrocities on Germans living there. On September 1, 1939, German troops stormed Poland. England asked Germany to vacate Poland, but Hitler refused to do so. So on September 3, 1939, Britain and France declared war against Germany and thus, began the Second World War. Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal and Turkey remained neutral.

Why Hitler Invaded Poland ?

Danzig Corridor was the main cause of tension between Germany and Poland. Danzig was part of Germany until the Versailles Treaty gave it to Poland.



Danzig Corridor was given to Poland to provide Poland's access to sea. Immediately, after coming to power, Hitler demanded the Danzig Corridor from Poland because :

- (i) It was a part of Germany before the Treaty of Versailles.
- (ii) It had cut off East Prussia from the rest of Germany (to connect East Prussia with Germany).
- (iii) Due to isolation, the Germans living in East Prussia were being slaughtered by the Polish Jews.
- (iv) The corridor was creating a number of obstacles for the German traders.

Main Events of the War

In the initial stages, the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) got a good success against the

Allied Powers (Britain, France and about 80 other nations). Hitler adopted a new method of warfare called '**Blitzkrieg**' meaning *lightning attack*. German troops in April-May, 1940 captured Denmark, Norway, Luxemburg, Holland, Belgium and France, and large territory in North Africa. In July 1940, in the Battle of Britain the German fighters bombarded the British ports, factories and centres of population including London. By 1941 A.D. Hitler had over run the whole of Eastern Europe and reached right up to the suburbs of Moscow. In 1942 Hitler targeted Stalingrad, an industrial city, but had to finally surrender due to frigid temperatures and lack of fresh supplies. After the Japan's attack on US Fleet based at Pearl Harbour on 7th December, 1941 USA entered into the War. The British Air Force with the help of the U.S.A., caused great damage to Japan and German air-power. In 1942 A.D., the Allies could check the advances of the Axis Powers and by 1945 A.D., they were being pushed back on almost all fronts. On 6th August, 1945, America dropped an **atom bomb** on **Hiroshima** and on 9th August, 1945, she dropped another atom bomb on **Nagasaki**. Japan surrendered soon, thereafter. In this way the Second World War came to an end.

Consequences of the Second World War

The war exposed the moral degradation of man for killing his own species on a mass scale. Both the victors and the vanquished had indulged in such barbaric acts of the most heinous type that they must stand self-condemned. The consequences of World War II had their impact on life then and even today. These can be briefly stated as under.

1. The Defeat of the Axis Powers : The Axis Powers – **Germany, Italy and Japan** – were defeated at the end of World War II. They had to pay heavy war indemnity and surrender their colonies abroad.

Germany : The Battle for Berlin began in April 1945. The Germans were caught between the British and Americans on one side and the Russians on the other. Hitler committed suicide in an underground bomb shelter. On 7th May, 1945 the German armies surrendered. Germany stood broken, humiliated and devastated. It was divided into two parts, i.e., the **East** and the **West Germany**.

Germany's army was reduced; her war material was taken away. She had to pay heavy war indemnity and surrender her colonies abroad. Her war-criminals were tried and duly punished, even executed. *Nazism came to an end.*

Japan : Japan conquered Thailand, Malaya, Burma and Philippines and was still fighting against America in the Pacific. In spite of many warnings Japan refused to surrender. To show its supremacy, America dropped the atom bomb on **Hiroshima** on **6th August 1945**, and another on **9th August** on **Nagasaki** within a few seconds, 80,000 lives were lost and 70,000 were seriously wounded. Japanese lost all hopes of winning the war and officially surrendered on 15th August. All territories acquired or seized by Japan since 1895 were taken away.

The American General Mac-Arthur was given complete control over Japan until 1952.

The first atomic bomb was known as Little Boy. It was just over 10ft (3 m) long, but caused an explosion equal to about 22,000 tons (21,000 tonnes) of high explosives.



Picture of the first Atom Bomb

Thousands of people were killed outright by the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many thousands more suffered from burns and radiation sickness.



The atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki sent huge, mushroom shaped clouds towering 5 miles. (8 km) into the sky.



Italy : Italy too was defeated. The Allies took over Sicily in July 1943, and then marched to Rome. Mussolini was dismissed and a new government of Badoglio surrendered before the Allies. Mussolini and his mistress were shot dead by the Italians on 28th April, 1945 when they tried to flee. In June 1944, the Allied Forces under General Eisenhower landed in Normandy and

liberated France. The German army in Paris surrendered on 25th August, 1944.

2. Unprecedented Deaths and Destruction and the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki : The war killed about 25 million soldiers on both the sides, while it wounded more than 34 millions of them. Millions of civilians were also killed. Many big cities with beautiful buildings were reduced to ashes. Europe, from Baltic to the Black Sea, presented a tragic sight of ruined towns and cities, bridges, roads, fields, factories, and **concentration camps**. This region was called the "misery belt" of the world. A large number of people became **refugees**, as their houses were destroyed. The two Japanese cities **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki** continued to reel under the radiation effects of these nuclear weapons. These not only brought death for millions, but caused damage to kidney, ovary, nervous system, brain, muscles, skin, and also caused diseases like cancer, blindness, sterility. The radioactive dust contaminated the earth, the water, the air; it killed animals and destroyed ecology. Vast areas of land were rendered unworthy of cultivation and human habitation. Six million Jews were exterminated. Inhuman medical experiments were conducted on human beings by Japanese doctors and scientists in countries occupied by them. Some of these effects have continued even upto the present day; and life of man is today endangered with the stock-piling of more powerful nuclear weapons.

The cost of the war too was very huge. To the U.S.A. alone, it cost something like 350 billion dollars, whereas the direct expenditure of other countries was estimated at one trillion (1,000 billion) dollars, while loss of property must have run to another trillion. The indirect long range effects of the war were simply incalculable. No country was free from the impact of the war, directly or indirectly. Inflation pushed up the prices. The spread of epidemics, scarcity of food, clothing and shelter caused untold suffering, misery and death to a large number of people, all over the world.

3. Emergence of the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union as Super Powers : The U.S.A. had played a decisive role in the victory of the Allied Powers,

especially as she was the only nuclear power in the world. By using the atom bombs to crush Japan, she had emerged as a super military and economic power. The US experienced tremendous industrial expansion. Most of the European, Asian and African countries looked to her for financial assistance. Soon in the years to come, **dollar-imperialism** became a reality and her influence in world politics increased tremendously, leading to the U.S. interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

The Soviet Union emerged as another super power in the post-Second World War period. The Russian empire was greatly expanded. It included half of Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and many parts of Germany. Under Stalin's leadership, Soviet Russia became a dominant power in world politics. She tried to establish communist governments in East European and South East Asian Countries.

4. Birth of the United Nations Organization (UNO) : Mankind looked for a better, a happier and a peaceful world after it had witnessed the nuclear holocaust and the widespread destruction and death in the Second World War. To save the coming generations from the scourge of War, the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) was established on October 24, 1945, with its headquarters at New York (U.S.A.). Peace, human dignity, justice, human brotherhood, cooperation, etc. are the main objectives of the U.N.O. It is the largest world organization, and has 192 member-States, and it has done a commendable job in almost all spheres of life. We can say that the U.N.O. is the **great gift** of the **World War II** to save and serve mankind.

THE COLD WAR

The end of the Second World war led to rise of two major centres of power in USA and Russia.

The term 'Cold War' was first used by Bernard Baruch, an American Statesman. Cold war is a intense economic, political, military and ideological rivalry between nations, short of military conflict. In fact, the Cold War was

neither a condition of war, nor a condition of peace, it was "a state of uneasy peace".

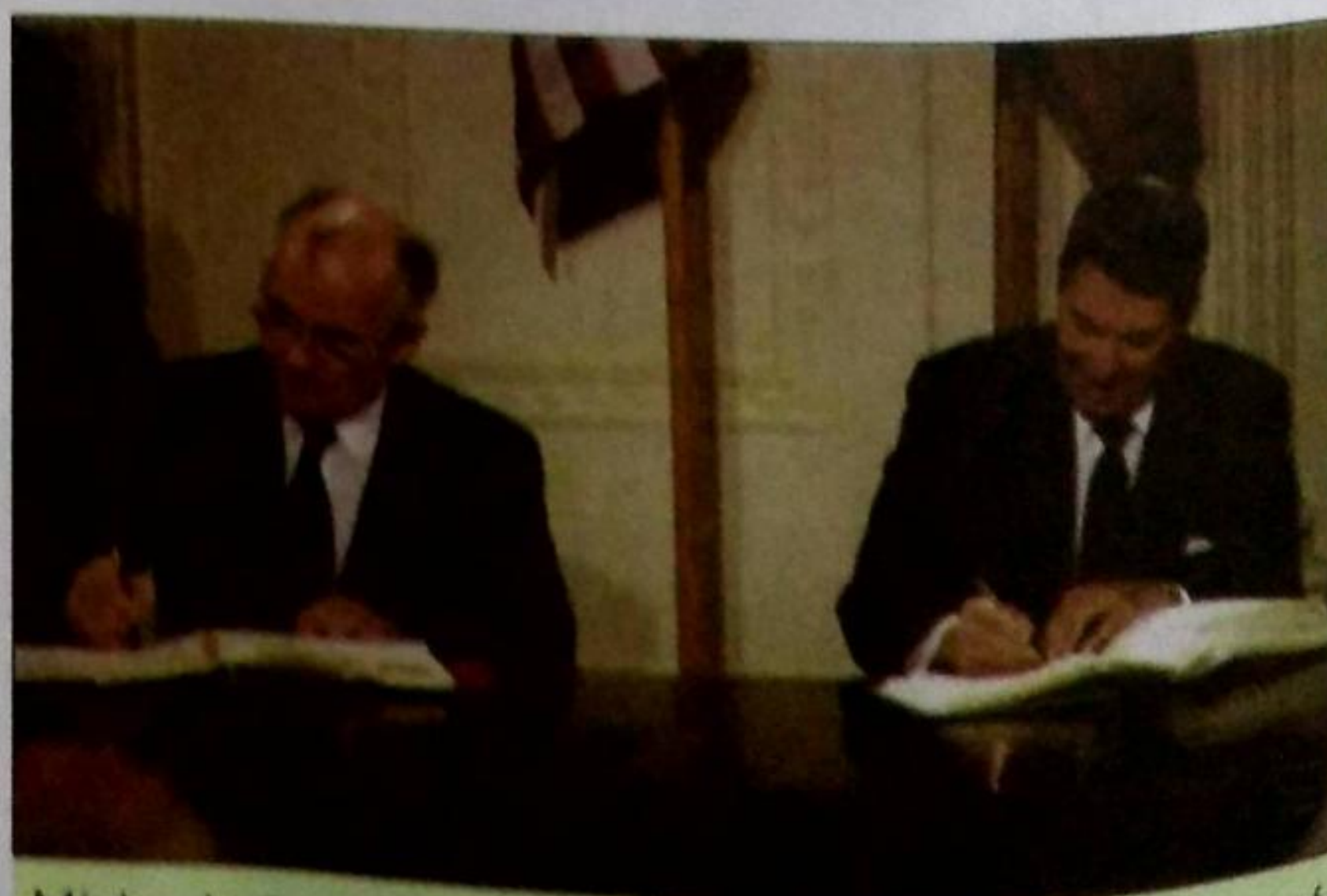
The two super powers were keen on expanding their spheres of influence in different parts of the world.

Cold War set in motion a mad race for armaments. It also led to the formation of various military alliances, such as the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) under US leadership and the Warsaw Pact signed by the representatives of Russia and other Communist countries.

The world was divided between two blocs, i.e., the **Anglo-American Bloc** or capitalist nations led by the U.S.A. which included U.S.A., Britain, France and many other countries and the communist nations led by the Soviet Union which included countries of East Europe, i.e., Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. These were also formally called the **American Bloc** and **Soviet Bloc**.

The Cold War led to one crisis after another, such as the Berlin Blockade (1948-1949), Crisis Over Missiles in Cuba (1962) and military intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Michael Gorbachev introduced many reforms in Russia. His policies of political liberalisation went a long way in relieving the world of the tensions of Cold War. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in July 1991 and in December 1991 came the collapse of Soviet Union.



Michael Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, President of America - Both the leaders played a very important role in the ending of the Cold War.

Answer the following:

1. Regarding the causes of the Second World War, discuss the following:

- a) The policy of appeasement.
- b) Unjust Treaty of Versailles.
- c) Japanese invasion of China.

2. With special reference to the consequences of the Second World War, explain:

- a) Defeat of the axis powers.
- b) Death and devastation.
- c) Birth of U.N.O.

3. Discuss the 'Cold War' as a consequence of the Second World War.