

2nd World war: 80 years after it began

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Manifest Pedagogy

Second world war and the causes and consequences of the war is an important issue in World History. This year marks the 80th year of the outbreak of Second World War and UPSC has previously targeted questions like German responsibility in the outbreak of the war. The World Wars are directly mentioned in the syllabus too.

In news

80 years of World War two

Placing it in the syllabus

History of the world

Dimensions

- Causes of the outbreak
- The course of the war
- Consequences of the war

Content

Causes of the outbreak

1. **Invasion of Germany on Poland:** World War Two began in September 1939 when Britain and France declared war on Germany following Germany's invasion of Poland. Hence it is one of the main causes for the outbreak of the war.
2. **Germany's opposition to the treaty of Versailles:**

According to the treaty of Versailles Germany was made to pay for the damage that the world war one had caused. And even Germany was allowed to have a small army and six naval ships. No tanks, no airforce and no submarines were allowed. The land was taken away from Germany and given to other countries. The land was also taken away from Germany and given to other countries. The German people were very unhappy about the treaty and thought that it was too harsh. Germany could not afford to pay the money and during the 1920s the people in Germany were very poor. People were dissatisfied with the government and voted to power a man who promised to rip up the Treaty of Versailles. His name was Adolf Hitler.

3. **Rise of Nazism in Germany:** The humiliating terms of the Versailles Treaty strengthened German nationalism love. And Germany's problems made people more aware of the need for unity and strength. Therefore they willingly accepted the dictatorship of Hitler and his policy of restoring the prestige of Germans by taking revenge upon those responsible for humiliating Germany at the Paris Peace Conference.
4. **Fascism in Italy:** Italy's failure at the Paris Peace Conference to secure the desired gains made it completely dissatisfied and annoyed with Britain's and France's role. The 1930s economic depression gave another blow to the power of Italy. During this period that Mussolini and his Fascist Party came to power, making Italy rich and powerful. To safeguard Italy's ,interests the fascists advocated extreme nationalism, war and imperialism as the means. The Italian people found fascism to be a very attractive ideology because it promised a glorious future for them. Italy began to expand its power and secure new territories under Mussolini. Thus paved the way for the development of the Rome-Berlin Axis in international relations – a development that became responsible for the outbreak of World War II.

5. **Expansion of Japan:** Japan grew rapidly in the pre – World War II period. However, they did not, have the land or natural resources as an island nation to sustain their growth. To gain new resources, Japan began to look to grow its empire. Manchuria was invaded in 1931 and China was invaded in 1937 by Japan. When World War II broke out in 1939, the Sino-Japanese war was still in progress. Being a partner in the Rome-Berlin Axis, Japan found it essential to enter the war. In 1941, it attacked Pearl Harbour and made the Second World War a bloodier and more devastating war.
6. **Economic depression:** The period before World War II was a time of great **economic suffering** throughout the world called the Great Depression. Many people struggled to survive and were out of work. This created unstable governments and turmoil around the world that led to the Second World War.
7. **Failure of League of Nations:** The League of Nations was established to secure international peace in 1919. However, due to several structural defects, such as the provision for unanimous decisions, lack of adequate resources, etc., as well as the unhelpful environment, the League has failed to function effectively as a peace instrument.
8. **National Minorities problems:** The Paris Peace Conference failed to resolve the issue of minority settlement. The need to base the peace treaty on the principle of self – determination had been advocated by US President Wilson. But it was found difficult to operationalize this principle because of several social, cultural, religious, economic and military factors. As a result, minorities opposed to each other were left under an alien rule in many states. For example, a large number of Germans were left in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria. Consequently, in many states, a fierce dissatisfaction developed among minorities.
9. **Policy of Appeasement:** European nations were weary after

World War 1, and they did n't want another war. When countries like Italy and Germany became aggressive and started taking over their neighbours and building up their armies, countries like Britain and France hoped to maintain peace through "appeasement." This meant that they tried to make Germany and Hitler happy instead of trying to stop him. They hoped he would be satisfied by fulfilling his demands and there would be no war. Unfortunately, the policy of appeasement backfired. It only made Hitler bolder. It also gave him time to build up his army.

The course of the war

The world war second was followed through the below-mentioned course;

- The OutBreak of the Second World War in 1939
- German invasion on Poland
- Initial Russian role and actions(attack on Finland and annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia).
- Hitler conquered Denmark, Norway, Belgium and Holland.
- German Invasion of France and the French failed to meet the invasion.
- Control of Europe by Germany; By the middle of 1940, almost the whole of Western Europe from the Arctic Sea to the Pyrenees came under the control of Germany. But Germany failed to defeat Britain.
- German Invasion of the U.S.S.R.
- The Italian campaigns in Africa and the Near East(annexation of Albania and success in Libya and Egypt)
- The defeat of Italy in 1943 by the Allies(Collapse of Fascist regime and arrest of Mussolini)
- The War in the Pacific and the U.S. involvement in the Second World War followed by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour and the result was the defeat of Japan
- The defeat of Germany by allied power and death of Hitler.

Consequences of world war two

The result of World war two lead to several changes following are the some of them are;

- **Move towards atomic age:** When the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, the world was introduced with a new military element and threat. People were now living in fear of a possible nuclear attack.
- **Conference to establish peace:** After the end of the war, a conference to establish peace treaties was held in Potsdam, Germany. The countries fighting with Hitler lost territory and had to pay the Allies reparations.
- **Division of Germany and Berlin:** Germany was divided into two separate countries like East Germany, a Communist government, and West Germany, a democratic state. Berlin was also divided into East and West Berlin.
- **Superpower countries:** The Aftermath of World War II was lead to the beginning of a new era, defined by the **decline of all European colonial empires** and the simultaneous rise of two superpowers: the **Soviet Union (USSR)** and the **United States (US)**.
- **Cold war:** Europe's division was the beginning of the Cold War, between Western **democratic** nations and Eastern Europe's Communist countries. The Iron Curtain marked these two regions ' boundaries.
- **Marshal Plan for Europe:** In 1948 the United States set up the Marshall Plan to help Europe's economy. 18 nations received 13 billion dollars worth of food machines and other goods.
- **Formation of UNO and European Union:** During the Second World War, four of the Allies – the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China – agreed to create a peace-building organization. Fifty countries signed a charter in April 1945 and gave birth to the UN. Western Europe's devastated great powers formed the European Coal and Steel Community, which later became the

European Economic Community and ultimately the present **European Union.**

- **Increase in the rate of decolonization:** The end of the war also increased the rate of decolonization from the major powers with independence granted to India (from the United Kingdom), Indonesia (from the Netherlands), the Philippines (from the United States) and a number of Arab nations, primarily due to specific rights granted to major powers by the League of Nations Mandates in the post-World War I period, but which often existed. Sub-Saharan Africa's independence came more slowly.
- **Rise of Communist influence in Southeast Asia:** As the Chinese Communist Party emerged victorious from the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the aftermath of World War II also saw the rise of communist influence in Southeast Asia with the People's Republic of China.