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World War II, 1939-1945, causes, Reasons for success of allied powers and effects

Questions to ponder

1. Examine the contributions of the following to the outbreak of World War II

- (a) Weakness of Versailles settlement
- (b) Appeasement policy
- (c) Alliance system
- (d) Adolf Hitler's foreign policy
- (e) Economic depression
- (f) Imperialism
- (g) Rise of militaristic leaders in Europe/triumph of dictatorship in Europe
- (h) Spread of communism from Russia
- (i) Hitler invasion of Austria
- (j) League of nations

(Give a brief background of World War 2. Identify and explain the contribution of each factor above to the outbreak of World War 2. Identify and explain other causes of World War II. Make a conclusion).

2. Assess the impact of World War II on Europe up to 1970

(Give a brief background of World War 2. Analyse the positive and negative effect of World War 2 on Europe. A clear standpoint is required).

3. Account for the success of allied powers in World War II. / Account for the defeat of the axis power in World War II.

(Give a brief background of World War 2. Identify and explain the factors for either success of allied powers or defeat of axis of powers in World War II. Make a conclusion).

Summary of the World War II 1939-1945

World War II was a global conflict that involved more than 30 countries. It lasted from 1939 to 1945 and was the largest and deadliest war in human history. The main combatants were the Axis of powers of Germany, Italy and Japan, and the Allies of France, Great Britain, the United States, The Soviet Union and China.

1. **Causes:** The war was sparked by the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany on September 1, 1939. This invasion led to Britain and France declaring war on Germany.
2. **Major Combatants:** The main combatants were the **Allies** (including the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China) and the **Axis powers** (Germany, Italy, and Japan).
3. **Key Events:** Notable events include the Battle of Britain, the invasion of the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa), the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Battle of Stalingrad, the D-Day landings, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
4. **Outcome:** The war ended with the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers in 1945. The Allies emerged victorious, leading to the establishment of the United Nations and setting the stage for the Cold War.
5. **Casualties:** The war resulted in an estimated **70 to 85 million deaths**, including military personnel and civilians, with millions more injured and displaced.

The contribution of the weakness of Versailles settlement to outbreak of World War II

The Versailles Treaty concluded World War I in 1919 and was signed between Germany and the victor powers. It made the following contributions to World War II.

1. The **Treaty of Versailles**, signed in 1919, imposed harsh penalties on Germany and is widely considered to have contributed to the outbreak of World War II.
2. It was signed in a revengeful mood on the part of the allied powers on Germany which cause hatred between Germany and allied powers
3. It was dictated on Germany.
4. **Economic Hardship:** The treaty imposed heavy reparations on Germany, leading to economic instability and hardship. This created widespread resentment and anger among the German population.
5. **Territorial Losses:** Germany lost significant territories, which fueled nationalist sentiments and a desire for revenge.
6. **Military Restrictions:** The treaty severely limited the size and capabilities of the German military, which many Germans viewed as an affront to their national pride.
7. **War Guilt Clause:** The treaty included a clause that placed sole responsibility for the war on Germany, further humiliating the nation and fostering a desire for retribution.

8. **Political Instability:** The economic and social turmoil caused by the treaty contributed to political instability in Germany, paving the way for extremist ideologies and leaders like Adolf Hitler to gain power.
9. **It ignored the interests of Italy and Japan.** Leading to rise of dictators i.e. Mussolini and Tojo.
10. **It created weak state vulnerable to aggression e.g.** Czechoslovakia, Lithuania and Poland.
11. **It violated Thomas Woodrow Wilson's 14 points** up on which Germany accepted to surrender.
12. **It forbid reunion of Germany and Austria** a clause that Hitler rejected
13. **George Clemenceau who chaired the Treaty was biased against Germany.**

Others factors

1. Weakness of League of Nations
2. The renewal of the alliance system
3. The rise of dictators
4. The World Economic Depression of 1929.
5. The appeasement policy
6. Growth of Nationalism in Europe
7. Imperialism
8. Rearmament and militarism
9. Press propaganda
10. The ideological differences between liberal and democrats
11. Spanish civil war
12. Germany invasion of Poland September 1939

The contribution of the Appeasement policy to outbreak of World War II

The Appeasement policy was initiated by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and adopted later by France. It was intended to prevent a war with aggressive powers especially; Germany, Italy and Japan. Britain and France under the appeasement policy gave the aggressive power way to attain their demands as long as could not go beyond the boundaries of reality.

The **Appeasement policy** played a significant role in the lead-up to World War II. Here are some key contributions:

1. **Encouragement of Aggression:** By conceding to Hitler's demands, such as the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, the policy emboldened Hitler to pursue further territorial expansion.
2. **Undermining Deterrence:** The policy weakened the resolve of potential allies and undermined the credibility of deterrence, making it easier for Hitler to continue his aggressive actions.

3. **Failure of Diplomacy:** The Munich Agreement of 1938, a prime example of appeasement, failed to secure lasting peace. Hitler's subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland demonstrated the policy's ineffectiveness.
4. **Loss of Trust:** The policy eroded trust among European nations, as countries like Britain and France appeared weak and unreliable in their commitments to collective security.
5. **Appeasement policy encouraged Mussolini to invade Ethiopia.** His success in Ethiopia inspired Hitler to invade Poland which triggered the outbreak of World War II.
6. **Appeasement policy contributed to the revival of militant Germany** and its desire to revenge against the allied powers that humiliated it using the Versailles Treaty.
7. The policy was misinterpreted by the axis of power as a weakness of Britain and France.
8. It enabled revival of alliance system such as the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis.

Others factors

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2. The renewal of the alliance system
3. The rise of dictators
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9. Press propaganda
10. The ideological differences between liberal and democrats
11. Spanish civil war

The contribution of the Alliance system to outbreak of World War II

The **Alliance system** played a crucial role in the outbreak of World War II by creating a complex web of commitments and obligations among nations. Here are some key contributions:

1. **Entangling Alliances:** The system of alliances, similar to that of World War I, meant that a conflict between two countries could quickly escalate into a larger war as allies were drawn in. For example, Germany's invasion of Poland led Britain and France to declare war due to their alliances with Poland.
2. **Axis Powers:** The formation of the Axis Powers, including Germany, Italy, and Japan, created a strong military alliance that sought territorial expansion and dominance in Europe and Asia.
3. **Allied Powers:** In response, the Allied Powers, including the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States, formed a coalition to counter the aggression of the Axis Powers.
4. **Militarization and Deterrence:** The alliances led to increased militarization and a focus on deterrence, which heightened tensions and made diplomatic resolutions more difficult.

Others factors

1. Weakness of League of Nations
2. The renewal of the alliance system
3. The rise of dictators
4. The World Economic Depression of 1929.
5. The appeasement policy
6. Growth of Nationalism in Europe
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8. Rearmament and militarism
9. Press propaganda
10. The ideological differences between liberal and democrats
11. Spanish civil war

The contribution of the Adolf Hitler's foreign policy to outbreak of World War II

Adolf Hitler's foreign policy played a significant role in the outbreak of World War II:

1. **Expansionist Aims:** Hitler's foreign policy was driven by the desire to expand German territory, as outlined in his concept of **Lebensraum** (living space) in Eastern Europe.
2. **Violation of Treaties:** Hitler systematically violated the Treaty of Versailles by rearming Germany, remilitarizing the Rhineland, and pursuing aggressive territorial expansion.
3. **Annexations:** The annexation of Austria (Anschluss) in 1938 and the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939 demonstrated Hitler's aggressive expansionist policies.
4. **Non-Aggression Pacts:** Hitler signed non-aggression pacts, such as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with the Soviet Union, to secure his eastern flank and facilitate the invasion of Poland.
5. **Diplomatic Deception:** Hitler used diplomatic agreements, such as the Munich Agreement, to buy time and weaken his opponents, while continuing his preparations for war.
6. **Hitler withdrew from League of Nations in 1933 and from the disarmament conference organized in Geneva.** This cause suspicion and tension.
7. **In 1939 Hitler signed a non-aggressive treaty with Soviet Union** which encouraged her to invade Poland.

Other factors

1. Failure of appeasement policy
2. Revival of Alliance system
3. The World Economic Depression of 1929.
4. Growth of Nationalism in Europe
5. Imperialism
6. Rearmament and militarism
7. Press propaganda

8. The ideological differences between liberal and democrats
9. Spanish civil war
10. Hitler's prosecution of the Jews.

The contribution of the Economic depression to outbreak of World War II

The **Great Depression** of the 1930s played a significant role in the lead-up to World War II:

1. **Economic Instability:** The global economic crisis led to widespread unemployment, poverty, and social unrest, creating fertile ground for extremist ideologies and leaders.
2. **Political Instability:** Economic hardship undermined faith in democratic governments, leading to the rise of authoritarian regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan.
3. **Nationalism and Militarism:** Economic struggles fueled nationalist sentiments and militaristic policies as countries sought to secure resources and markets.
4. **Appeasement:** The economic turmoil made European powers reluctant to engage in another costly conflict, leading to policies of appeasement that allowed aggressive expansion by Nazi Germany.
5. **It cemented the alliance Germany, Italy and Japan.**

The contribution of the rise of Imperialism to outbreak of World War II

Imperialism played a significant role in the lead-up to World War II by creating intense rivalries and tensions among European powers. Here are some key contributions:

1. **Territorial Competition:** European powers competed for colonies and resources around the world, leading to conflicts and rivalries. This competition often resulted in military build-ups and alliances that set the stage for war II.
2. **Economic Rivalries:** Imperialist ambitions led to economic rivalries as nations sought to control markets and resources. These rivalries exacerbated tensions and contributed to the outbreak of conflict.
3. **Nationalism:** Imperialism fueled nationalist sentiments, as countries sought to assert their dominance and prestige on the global stage. This nationalism often led to aggressive foreign policies and territorial expansion.
4. **Colonial Disputes:** Disputes over colonial territories, such as those in Africa and Asia, created friction among European powers. These disputes often led to diplomatic crises and military confrontations.
5. **Strengthened the aggressive power economically and militarily** inspiring them to attack others.
6. **Imperialism weakened the League of Nations** making it difficult to handle delicate matters like the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy and invasion of Poland by Germany.
7. **Imperialism lead to revival of alliance system** such as Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis in order to help each other in any war which weakened diplomatic means of resolving disputes.

Other factors

1. Failure of appeasement policy
2. Revival of Alliance system
3. The World Economic Depression of 1929.
4. Growth of Nationalism in Europe
5. Weakness of the Versailles system
6. Rearmament and militarism
7. Press propaganda
8. The ideological differences between liberal and democrats
9. Spanish civil war
10. Hitler's prosecution of the Jews.
11. Rise of nationalism

The contribution of the rise of militaristic leaders in Europe/triumph of dictatorship in Europe to outbreak of World War II

The rise of militaristic leaders and the triumph of dictatorships in Europe significantly contributed to the outbreak of World War II:

1. **Authoritarian Regimes:** Leaders like Adolf Hitler in Germany, Benito Mussolini in Italy, and Francisco Franco in Spain established authoritarian regimes that prioritized military expansion and nationalism.
2. **Militarization:** These regimes heavily invested in military infrastructure and weaponry, leading to an arms race and increased tensions among European nations.
3. **Expansionist Policies:** Militaristic leaders pursued aggressive territorial expansion, such as Germany's invasion of Poland and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, which destabilized the region and led to conflicts.
4. **Suppression of Opposition:** Dictatorships suppressed political dissent and opposition, creating a climate of fear and control that facilitated their aggressive foreign policies.
5. **Alliances:** The rise of these leaders led to the formation of alliances like the Axis Powers, which further polarized Europe and set the stage for a larger conflict.
6. **Destroyed the balance of power leading to tension and mistrust among European leaders.**

Other factors

1. Failure of appeasement policy
2. Revival of Alliance system
3. The World Economic Depression of 1929.
4. Growth of Nationalism in Europe
5. Imperialism
6. Press propaganda
7. The ideological differences between liberal and democrats

8. Spanish civil war
9. Hitler's prosecution of the Jews.

The contribution of the Spread of communism from Russia to outbreak of World War II

The spread of communism from Russia did not directly contribute to the outbreak of World War II, but it did create significant geopolitical tensions that influenced the global landscape:

1. **Ideological Conflict:** The rise of communism in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 led to ideological conflicts with capitalist Western nations, contributing to global political tensions.
2. **Soviet Expansion:** The Soviet Union's efforts to spread communism in Eastern Europe and support communist movements internationally created friction with other nations, particularly those wary of communist influence.
3. **Alliances and Rivalries:** The spread of communism influenced the formation of alliances and rivalries, such as the eventual alliance between the Soviet Union and Western democracies during World War II against the Axis powers.
4. **It led to rise of dictators and militant political ideologies** like Mussolini and Fascism in Italy.
5. **Communism threat** caused Britain and France to tolerate aggression through appeasement policy.
6. **Contributed to the revival of alliance system.**
7. Force Russia to sign a non-aggressive treaty with Germany in 1939.

The contribution of the Hitler invasion of Austria to outbreak of World War II

The **invasion of Austria** by Nazi Germany, known as the **Anschluss**, significantly contributed to the outbreak of World War II:

1. **Territorial Expansion:** The annexation of Austria in March 1938 demonstrated Hitler's aggressive expansionist policies and emboldened him to pursue further territorial gains.
2. **Undermining Appeasement:** The Anschluss showed the failure of the appeasement policy, as Britain and France did not intervene, encouraging Hitler to continue his aggressive actions.
3. **Strategic Advantage:** By incorporating Austria, Germany gained strategic military advantages, including additional resources and a stronger position in Central Europe.
4. **International Tensions:** The invasion heightened tensions among European nations and contributed to the growing instability in the region, setting the stage for further conflicts.
5. **It encouraged Adolf Hitler to sign a non-aggressive pact** with Joseph Stalin of Russia which encouraged Hitler to invade Poland.
6. **It encouraged alliance system** in which Britain, France and Russia formed an alliance.

The contribution of the League of Nations to outbreak of World War II

The **League of Nations** played a complex role in the lead-up to World War II:

1. **Failure to Maintain Peace:** The League was established to prevent another world war through collective security and disarmament. However, it failed to effectively intervene in conflicts such as the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, undermining its credibility.
2. **Lack of Enforcement:** The League lacked its own armed forces and depended on its member nations to enforce its resolutions. Many countries, including powerful ones, were reluctant to commit resources, weakening the League's ability to act decisively.
3. **Non-Participation of Major Powers:** The United States, despite President Woodrow Wilson being a key architect of the League, never joined due to congressional opposition. This absence of a major world power limited the League's influence and effectiveness.
4. **Economic Depression and Nationalism:** The global economic depression and rise of nationalism further eroded the League's ability to maintain peace, as countries focused inward and pursued aggressive policies.
5. **The league failed to prevent revival the alliance system during the inter-war.** The alliances included the axis alliance of Germany, Italy and Japan, and alliance of Britain, Poland and France.
6. **The league of Nations dominated by Britain and France** was undermined by an appeasement policy.
7. **The League of Nations failed to promote economic integration** that would have encouraged cooperation of European powers.
8. **The League of Nations failed to stop European dictators from attacking weaker states.** For instance, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia scorn free. This encouraged Adolf Hitler to attack Poland.
9. **The League of Nation Failed to stop Spanish War** which partly contributed to outbreak of World War II.
10. **It lacked fund to finance its activity.**

Reasons for the success of allied powers over axis of powers in World War II

The success of the Allied powers over the Axis powers in World War II can be attributed to several key factors:

1. **Superior Resources:** The Allies, particularly the United States, had vast industrial capabilities and resources, which allowed them to produce war materials at a much higher rate than the Axis powers.
2. **Strategic Alliances:** The Allies formed strong alliances, including the partnership between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom, which provided military, economic, and logistical support to each other.
3. **Technological Advancements:** The Allies made significant technological advancements, such as radar, code-breaking (e.g., the Enigma machine), and superior aircraft and tanks, which gave them an edge in various battles.

4. **Effective Leadership:** The leadership of key figures like Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin played a crucial role in coordinating the war effort and making strategic decisions.
5. **Mobilization of Manpower:** The Allies were able to mobilize large numbers of troops and civilian workers to support the war effort, which was crucial in sustaining long-term military campaigns.
6. **Control of the Seas:** The Allies, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, maintained control of the seas, which allowed them to disrupt Axis supply lines and transport troops and materials more effectively.
7. **Soviet Resistance:** The Soviet Union's resilience and eventual counter-offensive, particularly after the Battle of Stalingrad, significantly weakened the German war machine.
8. **The axis powers were outnumbered by the allied powers.**
9. **The axis of power has shortage of raw materials for war ammunition.**
10. **The allied powers successfully used war propaganda that boosted military morale.**
11. **The assassination of Mussolini in 1943 compelled Hitler to commit suicide.**

Negative impacts of World War II on Europe

World War II had several negative impacts on Europe:

1. **Widespread Destruction:** The war caused massive destruction of infrastructure, cities, and industries across Europe, leading to significant economic challenges in the post-war period.
2. **Loss of Life:** An estimated 39 million people died in Europe during the war, including military personnel and civilians. This loss of life had profound social and demographic impacts.
3. **Displacement:** Millions of people were displaced from their homes, leading to a refugee crisis and long-term population shifts.
4. **Economic Hardship:** The war devastated European economies, leading to shortages of food, fuel, and other essential goods.
5. **Political Instability:** The war led to the collapse of several European governments and the rise of new political regimes, including communist governments in Eastern Europe.
6. **Social Disruption:** Families were separated, and communities were disrupted, leading to long-term social and psychological impacts.
7. **Cultural Loss:** Many cultural and historical sites were destroyed, and intellectual and artistic life was stifled under the regimes that emerged during and after the war.
8. **European countries lost colonies.**

Positive impacts of World War II on Europe

While World War II was a devastating conflict, it also had some positive impacts on Europe:

1. **Technological Advancements:** The war accelerated technological innovation, leading to advancements in fields such as radar, aviation, and medicine (e.g., the development of penicillin).
2. **Economic Recovery:** Post-war reconstruction efforts, such as the Marshall Plan, helped rebuild European economies and infrastructure, leading to economic growth and stability.
3. **Social Change:** The war led to significant social changes, including the empowerment of women who took on roles traditionally held by men, and the narrowing of income inequality through increased state welfare and social programs.
4. **Formation of the European Union:** The desire for lasting peace and cooperation in Europe led to the formation of the European Union, which has promoted economic integration and political stability.
5. **Democracy and Human Rights:** The war highlighted the dangers of totalitarian regimes, leading to a renewed commitment to democracy and human rights in Europe.
6. **It led to defeat of German and its allies.**
7. **It led to downfall of dictators** for example Mussolini and Adolf Hitler
8. **It lead to fall of League of Nations and formation of NATO in 1945.**
9. **Jewish State of Israel was created with the help of Britain in 1948**
10. **Liberation of victims of aggression** such as Austria and Czechoslovakia.
11. **Lead to the formation of new World economic order (International capitalism) USA** after accumulation of a lot of Wealth during the War.

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