

## Unit 4. Second World War (1939-1945)- Causes and Consequences



We have seen the causes and consequences of the First World War in the last post. The first world war itself sowed the seeds for Second World War, primarily because of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles. We shall see the causes and consequences of the Second World War (WWII) in this post.

### The Two Groups: Allies vs Axis Powers



### Causes of Second World War(1939-1945)

#### (1) Humiliation by the Treaty of Versailles

- War indemnity.
- The provision for disarming Germany.
- Saar coal mine to France for 15 years.
- Polish corridor was given to Poland.
- City of Danzing was made free.

## (2) Growth of Fascism and Nazism

- Mussolini (Italy) and Hitler (Germany) strongly glorified war and violence.
- While West was fighting communism, Germany and Italy started massive militarization.

## (3) Rise of Japan

- Imperialism.
- Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis (1936).

## (4) Neglect of minority interests

- New countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria were formed after the First World War. While drawing boundaries the interests of minority groups in each of these countries were neglected.

## (5) Military Alliance

- **Allies** – Britain, France, USA, USSR and China vs **Axis Powers** – Germany, Italy and Japan
- Leaders – Churchill (Britain), Roosevelt (USA), Stalin (USSR)

## (6) Germany's attack on Czechoslovakia

In spite of the Munich Pact between Germany and Britain (1938), Germany re-attacked and seized Czechoslovakia.

## (7) Immediate Cause : Germany's invasion of Poland (1st September 1939)

- Germany annexed Polish corridor and Danzig city. The sudden attack on Poland is known as Blitzkrieg (lightning war).
- Britain and France declared war on Germany.

## Course of the War



- World War II officially began on September 1, 1939.
- Germany conquered – Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland and France.
- **Battle of Britain** – Germany vs Britain (air battle; German Air force =Luftwaffe).
- **Battle of Stalingrad** – Germany vs USSR. (Operation of Barbaressa (1941 = Attack on Yugoslavia and Greece; Russia countered attack on Moscow with Scorched Earth Policy).
- Atlantic Charter (August 1941) – Between Churchill (UK) and Roosevelt (USA).
- **Pearl Harbor Attack** (7th December 1941) – Japan on USA.
- Italy vs UK in Africa (1942) – Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, British Somaliland, Eritrea.
- France was conquered by Germany in 1940, but British and American troops liberated France in 1944.
- Atom bomb – Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

### Consequences of Second World War

- End of colonialism and imperialism.
- End of dictatorship in Germany and Italy.
- Germany was divided into West Germany and East Germany. **West Germany** was controlled by Britain, France and USA. **East Germany** by USSR. (Read more about the re-union of Germany in 1989 when you check our post about the fall of the Berlin wall).
- Strengthening of nationalist movements in Africa and Asia. (**From Britain** – India, Myanmar, Egypt, Sri Lanka; **From America** – Philippines; **From France** – Indo-China; **From Dutch** – Indonesia)
- 5 crore deaths (2.2 crore soldiers and 2.8 crore civilians)
- Economics problems – Unemployment, low growth etc.
- Emergence of two power blocks – USA and USSR. This resulted in cold war.
- Emergence of third world Countries.
- UNO was set up in 1945.

