

## **Unit Two- Lesson Three: The Interwar Period: Capitalist Economy, Fascism and Nazism and World War II**

### **Lesson Three: Lecture Video**

#### **Brainstorming Questions**

- What were the factors that turned the interwar capitalist economy into the Great Depression?
- What were the results of the Great Depression?
- What are the main characteristics of Fascism?
- What were the two alliance systems of World War II?
- How did Germany get the upper hand at the beginning of the war?

#### **Competencies**

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Discuss the causes and effects of the Great Depression;
- Jot down the factors that led to the rise of Fascism and Nazism; and
- Identify the main and immediate causes of World War II;
- Point out the social, political, and economic consequences of the war

#### **Lesson Overview**

The important topic in this lesson is the inter-war period, which is the period between World War I and World War II. This period witnessed the Great Depression and the rise of dictators, who eventually led the world again into another major war, i.e., World War II. In this lesson , will learn about the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Italy nd Germany. Finally, you will learn about the origin and outbreak of World War II. In this lesson the alliance systems of World War II, the course and consequences of the war will be discussed in detail.

#### **1. Interwar Capitalist Economy and the Great Depression**

Great Depression was a massive global economic recession (or “depression”) between 1929 and 1933. It led to massive bank failures, high unemployment, inflation, as well as dramatic drops in GDP, industrial production, and stock market share prices. The cause of the Great Depression was mainly due to the collapse of international trade as a result of restrictive trade practices globally. Many nations experienced a decline, though the severity and timing differed from country to country.

The world depression of 1929–33 was the worst depression recorded in history. The depression hit non-industrial countries more harshly in one way than industrialized countries since the price of raw materials and food stuffs failed more sharply than the price of manufactured goods. The World Depression was an economic and political turning point in the inter-war period. The political effects of the depression were disastrous internationally. The depression helped the

militarists to take power in Japan and was a major factor in enabling Hitler and the Nazis to take power in Germany in January 1933. The world was then again on the road to war.

## **2. The Rise of Fascism in Italy**

The Fascists chose an ancient Roman emblem of power, a battle-axe wrapped in reeds and was known as “fasces.” The party called for the glorification of the state, a single-party system with a strong ruler, and aggressive nationalism. The Fascists soon got the support of the majority because they promised jobs to the unemployed, land to the peasants and protection from communism to business owners. In October 1922, the Fascists wearing their usual black shirts began a march on Rome. King Victor Emmanuel III feared using armed force to stop the march. So, he appointed Mussolini as Prime Minister. With this, the Fascists took power in Italy.

## **3. The Rise of Nazism in Germany**

Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in 1933 following a series of electoral victories by the Nazi Party. He ruled absolutely until his death by suicide in April 1945. Upon achieving power, Hitler smashed the nation’s democratic institutions and transformed Germany into a war state intent on conquering Europe for the benefit of the so-called Aryan race. His invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, triggered the European phase of World War II.

## **3. Franco’s Spain and Japan in the 1930s**

There was indeed a Spanish fascist party that was founded in 1932. In the civil war, Franco received support from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. However, Franco was not a fascist. He had no Fascist ideology. He had a mass popular movement behind him like the movements in Italy and Germany, but Franco’s regime cannot be defined as Fascist.

Militarism, aggressive nationalism, hatred of Marxism and social revolution all characterized the Japanese military regime. Nevertheless, Japan’s militarist regime of 1933–1945 appeared in a different social and political context to European Fascism and was not Fascist in the European sense.

## **World War II**

### **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 the 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. Economic Depression**

The whole world was hit by an economic depression in the late 1920s. In a depression, economies shrink, trade is reduced, businesses close, prices fall, banks fail, and unemployment rises. Sometimes during a depression, people look for a strong political leader to resolve their problems. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became the leader of Germany by promising to restore German wealth and power.

### **8. Failure of Appeasement**

Appeasement meant agreeing to the demands of another nation in order to avoid conflict. During the 1930s, politicians in Britain and France began to believe that the Treaty of Versailles was unfair to Germany and that Hitler's actions were understandable and justifiable. This belief, adopted by Britain, was the Policy of Appeasement. An example of appeasement was the Munich Agreement of September 1938. In the Agreement, Britain and France allowed Germany to annex areas in Czechoslovakia where German-speakers lived.

Germany agreed not to invade the rest of Czechoslovakia or any other country. In March 1939, Germany broke its promise and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Neither Britain nor France was prepared to take military action. Then, on September 1, 1939, German troops invaded

Poland. Britain and France immediately declared war on Germany. World War II had begun in Europe.

## **9. Failure of the League of Nations**

The League of Nations was an international organization set up in 1919 to keep world peace. It was intended that all countries would be members and that if there were disputes between countries, they could be settled by negotiation rather than by force. The League of Nations was a good idea, but ultimately a failure. Not all countries joined the league and the League had no army to prevent military aggression such as Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in Africa or Japan's invasion of Manchuria in China.

### **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**

**Phoney War:** The western Europe was very quiet during the first few months of the war. This period of war is known as 'phoney war'. Preparations for war continued in earnest, but there were few signs of conflict, and civilians of the western European countries (allied powers) evacuated to safe places.

**Ribbentrop Pact:** Secret negotiations in August 1939, led to the signing of the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact in Moscow.

**Winter War 1940:** The 'winter war' between Russia and Finland concluded in March, and in the following month Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. Denmark surrendered immediately, but the Norwegians fought on - with British and French assistance - surrendering in June 1940.

**Fall of France 1940:** After war with Scandinavian countries got over, Germany invaded France, Belgium and Holland. During this phase, the western Europe encountered the Blitzkrieg - or 'lightning war'. **Blitzkrieg:** Germany's combination of fast armoured tanks on land, and superiority in the air, made a unified attacking force that was both innovative and effective. Despite greater numbers of air and army personnel in Allied powers, they proved no match for German Forces. In France an armistice was signed with Germany, with the puppet French Vichy government.

**Battle of Britain 1940 :** Lasting from July to September 1940, it was the first war to be fought solely in the air. German took decisions to attack from airfields and factories to the major cities, but somehow the Royal Air Force managed to squeak a narrow victory.

**War Getting Global:** Following the defeat of Mussolini's armies in Greece and Tobruk, German forces arrived in North Africa and invaded Greece and Yugoslavia in April 1941.

**Operation Barbarossa:** After facing defeat in Britain, Hitler broke the **Ribbentrop Pact** and invaded Russia in 1941. The initial advance was swift, with the fall of Sebastopol at the end of October, and Moscow coming under attack at the end of the year. The Soviets counterattacked in December and the Eastern Front stagnated until the spring.

**Pearl Harbour:** The Japanese, tired of American trade embargoes, mounted a surprise attack on the US Navy base of Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, on 7 December 1941. Through the Battle of Midway 1942, the US entered World War II. In this battle, US sea-based aircraft destroyed four Japanese carriers and a cruiser, marking the turning point in World War II.

**Reversal of German Fortunes:** By the second half of 1942, British forces gained the initiative in North Africa and Russian forces counterattacked at Stalingrad. In February 1943, Germany surrendered at Stalingrad to Soviet Union. This was the first major defeat of Hitler's armies. Further, German and Italian forces in North Africa surrendered to the Allies. As the Russian advance on the Eastern Front gathered pace, recapturing Kharkiv and Kiev from Germany. Moreover, Allied bombers began to attack German cities in enormous daylight air raids. The Russians reached Berlin (capital of Germany) on 21 April 1945. Hitler killed himself on the 30th, two days after Mussolini had been captured and hanged by Italian partisans. Germany surrendered unconditionally on 7 May, and the following day was celebrated as VE (Victory in Europe) day. The war in Europe was over.

**Nuclear Bombing And The End:** Plans were being prepared for an Allied invasion of Japan, but fears of fierce resistance and massive casualties prompted Harry Truman - the new American president to sanction the use of an atomic bomb against Japan. One of Atomic Bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later another was dropped on Nagasaki and the Japanese surrendered on 14 August. With the surrender of Japan, World War II was finally over.

## **Aftermath of World War II**

- **New Superpowers:** U.S.A and USSR
- **Start of Decolonization:** the post-war world witnessed the end of colonialism in Africa and Asia.
- **Birth of UN:** Although the League failed to deliver, mankind did not altogether lose its hopes of making the world a safer and happier place to live in.
- **Start of Cold War:** The three western Allies and the Soviet Union disagreed on many things and as time went on Germany was divided into two separate countries: East Germany, which had a Communist government and West Germany, which was a democratic state. This laid the foundation of the Cold War.
- **New Economic World Order:** It drew up a project for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD-now known as World Bank) to make long-term capital available to states urgently needing such foreign aid, and a project for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to finance short-term imbalances in international payments in order to stabilize exchange rates. Also, the US dollar was established as a reserve currency for the world trade.

## **New Concepts and Terminology**

- Great Depression
- Blitzkrieg
- Fascism
- Militarism
- Phone war
- Appeasement