



Mains Practice Question

Q. The western policy of appeasement of the fascist powers caused the Second World War. Examine. (250 words)

30 Dec, 2019 GS Paper 1 History

Approach:

- Write about the policy of appeasement
- Explain the reasons for adopting this policy
- Give instances of appeasement

Introduction

- The policy of appeasement was the policy followed by the British and the French, of avoiding war with aggressive powers such as Japan, Italy and Germany by giving way to their demands in order to maintain peace and harmony.

Body

- Learning from the First World War made Britain and France apprehensive of another global escalation and they wanted to avoid a war-like situation by any means.
- British and French governments were not prepared for war because there was a strong anti-war attitude prevailing among the people in these countries.
- The devastation left by the First World War forced the European leadership to work for peace and harmony in every possible way.
- The western powers believed that mistakes were committed at the Paris Peace Conference and some of the German grievances were quite genuine.
- The fear of communism was also behind the policy of appeasement. It was believed that Germany and Italy would act as buffers to check the spread of communism.

Examples of the policy of appeasement:

- The allied powers failed to check the German advancement in Rhineland which under the Treaty of Versailles and Locarno was to remain demilitarised.
- German occupation of Austria, Czechoslovakia met no resistance whatsoever from either Britain or France.
- The signing of the Munich Treaty was also a form of western appeasement employed to avert the imminent danger of war.
- Backed by German expansionist motives, Italy too attacked Ethiopia in 1935 which was a member of the League of Nations. The failure of the League in stopping the aggression highlighted its ineffectiveness in containing global conflicts.

The policy of appeasement can be held responsible for the Second World War as:

- The policy of appeasement allowed Hitler to destroy the system created by peacemakers of Paris (after the First World War).

- This policy played a role in the failure of the League of Nations because western democracies were supposed to maintain peace by providing meaningful leadership to the League.
- It allowed Germany, Italy and Japan to come closer to form the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis. The emergence of this alliance had disturbed the balance of power.
- The policy of appeasement convinced Hitler that western democracies had neither the intention nor the capacity to stand in front of Germany. He was greatly emboldened by the appeasing attitude.
- Eventually, the policy of appeasement drove Hitler to attack Poland on 1st Sep 1939 and with this World War II commenced.

Conclusion

- Hence, the policy of appeasement which was introduced by the British and the French to avoid war eventually resulted in the Second World War.

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