



Mains Practice Question

Q. How did the experience of World War II reshape the political landscape of India and influence the final phase of the freedom struggle? **(150 words)**

16 Sep, 2024 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Introduce the answer by highlights the overall impact of World War II on India
- Key Impacts and Influences of WWII on India
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

World War II (1939-1945) had a profound impact on India's political landscape and significantly influenced the final phase of the Indian independence movement.

- The war years saw dramatic shifts in the **relationship between India and Britain**, accelerated political developments within India, and **set the stage for the country's eventual independence in 1947.**

Body

Key Impacts and Influences:

- **Polarization of Indian Political Landscape:** The outbreak of World War II led to a split in Indian political opinion:
 - The **Indian National Congress**, led by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, opposed India's involuntary participation in the war.
 - The **Congress Working Committee at Wardha (September 1939)** resolved that India couldn't support a war for democratic freedom while being denied its own freedom.
 - The **Muslim League**, under Muhammad Ali Jinnah, supported the British war effort in exchange for political concessions.
- **The August Offer (1940) and Its Consequences:**
 - The British government made the **August Offer**, promising dominion status to India after the war.
 - The offer was **rejected by both the Congress and the Muslim League**, leading to increased political tensions.
- **The Cripps Mission (1942)**
 - Sir Stafford Cripps proposed a plan for India's self-government after the war.
 - The **plan's failure** highlighted the growing gap between British intentions and Indian nationalist aspirations.
- **Quit India Movement (1942)**
 - The failure of the Cripps Mission led to the launch of the **Quit India Movement by the Congress.**

- This mass civil disobedience movement marked a decisive shift towards demanding immediate independence.
- **Weakening of British Power**
 - The war significantly **weakened Britain economically and militarily**, reducing its ability to maintain colonial control over India.
 - Indian participation in the war effort led to increased self-confidence and a stronger bargaining position.
- **Economic Impact and Social Changes**
 - The war led to economic hardships, including inflation and food shortages, fueling discontent against British rule.
 - It also brought about social changes, including **increased urbanization and industrialization**.
 - **Example:** The **Bengal Famine of 1943**, exacerbated by wartime policies, caused millions of deaths and intensified anti-British sentiment.

Conclusion

World War II acted as a catalyst in India's struggle for independence. It exposed the vulnerabilities of British rule, intensified nationalist sentiments, and accelerated political developments. The war's impact on India exemplifies how **global events can profoundly influence national movements and reshape political landscapes**.

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