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Q7

To what extent can Germany be held responsible for causing the two World Wars? Discuss critically.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS I · 12 marks · History of the World

History of the world will include events from the 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc. - their forms and effect on the society.

Core demand of the question

- To what extent can Germany be held responsible for causing the two World Wars? Discuss critically
- Cover 1914 and 1939 separately, German agency, and shared or other causes
- Keep the explanation within a 12-mark length

Revision summary

In 1914 Germany's blank cheque and Belgian plan spread a Balkan crisis.

Other powers share 1914 responsibility through alliances and mobilisation.

In 1939 Nazi expansion and the Poland attack make Germany the main European aggressor.

Versailles, slump, and appeasement were conditions, not a substitute for Hitler's will.

Extent is high in both wars, and higher in the second.

Flow diagram

Blank cheque Schlieffen -> WWI general war
Other empires alliances -> WWI general war
Hitler conquest -> WWII Europe
Versailles depression appeasement -> WWII Europe
Hitler conquest -> Main European aggressor

Conclusion

- Split the two wars; do not paste 1939 guilt backward onto 1914 without evidence.
- Use blank cheque and Poland as the two crisp examples of German choice.

Germany can be held largely responsible for turning 1914 into a general war and overwhelmingly responsible for launching the European war of 1939. Critical history still counts allies, empires, and appeasement, but it does not dissolve those two German decisions.

Facts & figures

Blank cheque, July 1914

German backing for Austria against Serbia that widened the July crisis.

Schlieffen Plan

German war plan to hit France through Belgium, drawing in Britain.

Fischer thesis

Argument that German elites sought a bid for power that helped cause 1914.

Invasion of Poland, 1939

German attack that began the European war after years of treaty-breaking.

Nazi-Soviet Pact, 1939

Agreement that cleared the way to partition Poland; it shares timing, not Hitler's core aim.

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