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Analyse the causes of the Second World War.

The Second World War began in Europe in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland, and in response, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The Second World War in Asia-Pacific broke out in 1941 after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, and in response, America declared war on Japan. Long-term factors led to the aggressive foreign policies of Germany and Japan, which caused the war. At the same time, appeasement policy, alliances and the failure of collective security contributed to the outbreak of the war. For the war in Europe, appeasement was the more important factor, more so than aggressive foreign policy, since it emboldened Hitler to invade Poland, which sparked the war. However, for the war in Japan, aggressive foreign policy was the most important factor because Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour while the Japanese were negotiating with the Americans shows that to Japan, whatever the American response in the negotiations was did not matter, and it would continue with its aggressive foreign policy even if this meant provoking the USA into a war.

The aggressive foreign policies of both Germany and Japan led to the Second World War. For Germany, its expansionist policy was influenced by a number of long-term factors. Hitler's ideology included the idea of pan-Germanism, which sought the unity of the ethnic Germans under one German Reich. This justified any attempt by Hitler to annex territories that contained a German majority. Hitler's ideology also included Lebensraum, which specified that the superior German race had the right to appropriate territories from other countries for their living space. This justified an expansionistic policy that conquered even territories with non-ethnic German majority populations.

Germany's aggressive foreign policy was also influenced by the humiliation that Germany faced due to the Treaty of Versailles imposed upon it by the Allied Powers after World War I. Through the treaty, territories were taken away from Germany. The losses such as Memel Port and Upper Silesia to Poland and northern Schleswig to Denmark led to a situation of 6 million ethnic Germans living under foreign rule, which Germans felt did not follow US President Wilson's promise of self-determination for all peoples. Germany also lost its prestige as it lost all its colonies in Africa and the Pacific. The Rhineland, a natural defensive line for Germany, was demilitarised and occupied by Allied troops for 15 years. Due to these terms, there was a sense of resentment amongst Germans for the Allied Powers preventing self-determination for ethnic Germans to occur, and in the loss of status in the world due to its loss of colonies. Thus, Germans wanted to reverse the settlement, and it is in this context that Hitler's ideology, including pan-Germanism and Lebensraum, gained support from Germans.

Hence, when Hitler came to power, he had the legitimacy to implement his aggressive foreign policy to achieve his ideological aims. The first steps taken were to reverse the legacies of the treaty. Where the treaty limited German arms, Hitler increased military spending fivefold in the years 1934 and 1935, and introduced compulsory conscription. The 100,000 men in the military was trebled in size by 1935. This military build-up served to support Hitler's expansionistic goals. In 1936, Hitler remilitarised the Rhineland. Whereas previously the treaty had prevented a union between Austria and Germany, preventing the unity of these two countries with German majorities, Hitler initiated the annexation of Austria in 1938. However, Hitler's aggressive foreign policy was to go beyond reversing the treaty. Due to Lebensraum in his ideology, even after he was given Sudetenland, an area in Czechoslovakia that contained a majority population of Germans, through the Munich Agreement of 1938, he went on to annex the whole of Czechoslovakia. His successes in his expansionistic policy to this point emboldened Hitler to go further to fulfil his ideological aims and continue with his aggressive foreign policy. Hence, Hitler chose to invade Poland in September 1939,

provoking Britain and France to declare war on Germany, as Germany's expansion threatened the balance of power in Europe that they wanted preserved, and this sparked off the Second World War in Europe.

As for Japan, its aggressive foreign policy was also due to several long-term factors. During the Meiji Era, Japan had sought to modernise itself in order to protect itself from Western imperialism. As part of this project, Japan was to work towards being respected as an equal by the Western powers. Thus, Japan modernised its military along Western lines. Conscription was introduced in 1872, while military spending continued to rise since the beginning of modernisation efforts. These efforts were successful, as by the outbreak of WWI Japan had created an efficient army of 306,000 and the fourth-largest fleet in the world. This modernised military enabled Japan to achieve military successes on the world stage, such as in winning the Sino-Japanese War from 1894 to 1895, and the Russo-Japanese War, from 1904 to 1905. Furthermore, it was also able to acquire its own colonies, just like the Western powers, when it annexed Korea in 1910. The successes of these ventures gave Japan the confidence to acquire more territories to gain more prestige and created the expectation that the Western powers would treat Japan as an equal power.

However, Japan was disappointed and even resentful by the West's response. Even though Western countries recognised Japan's newfound power and made alliances with it, such as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, this was by no means an indication that Japan was being treated as an equal, however much Japan had this impression initially. The West viewed Japan's expansion in the Far East as a threat to their colonies and interests there. Thus, even though Japan joined the World War I on the side of the Allies, Japan felt that it was not rewarded enough by the Versailles Treaty that resulted from the war. The larger Mandates that Britain and France had received under the treaty meant that Japan was not satisfied with her own Mandatories, small Pacific islands. Furthermore, the West had refused to insert the racial equality clause that would have protected the rights of overseas Japanese that Japan had proposed into the Covenant of the League of Nations. Its Twenty-One Demands were rejected by the West, hampering Japanese expansion of their influence in China, while the West seemed to enjoy more influence there. Naval inferiority seemed to be imposed on Japan due to the Washington Naval Agreement and the London Naval Agreement. These were viewed by Japan as an affront to its power and status from the West, and increased tensions between the two parties.

When the Great Depression hit Japan in 1929, an aggressive foreign policy became an attractive option for addressing Japan's economic problems. The Great Depression was devastating to Japan as it led to demand for silk to collapse. As this had been a key export to the USA, millions became unemployed. The expansion of Japanese territory could provide resources for economic recovery and growth. Furthermore, Japan was facing rapid population growth and there needed to be space for the growing numbers of Japanese to go to. Thus, an expansionistic foreign policy was seen as necessary for Japan's survival. This was helped by the rise of militarism in Japan. Since the Meiji period, the military had some **autonomy from the civilian government** as only generals and admirals could be ministers for the army and navy from 1900. Hence, the Japanese government had a strong military influence since the start of the 20th century. This influence increased in the aftermath of the Depression, as the democratic government seemed to be unable to solve Japan's problems, especially in the economy. The military, who could be at the forefront of an aggressive foreign policy seen by many as necessary for Japan's survival, gained in popularity. The military frequently intervened in the government in violent ways, such as through assassinations, while ultra-nationalist organisations and Japanese businesses supported militarism and territorial expansion and further undermined the democratic government.

Due to these trends, Japan engaged in a more aggressive foreign policy from the 1930s. In 1931, Manchuria was invaded to gain full control of its rich resources. Even though there were no strong reactions from the West, relations between Japan and the Western democracies deteriorated. In 1933 Japan left the League of Nations as it was unhappy with the Lytton Report that proposed for an autonomous Manchuria under Chinese sovereignty in response to Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Another consequence of the Manchurian invasion was that it increased the power of the military in Japanese politics. Thus, an aggressive foreign policy continued that went against any move by the West to attempt to rein in Japan's aggression.

The Japanese invaded China in the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, continuing Japan's quest for survival through imperialism, but in China, the Japanese were bogged down in an immensely costly and inconclusive war. The Americans stepped up their attempts to stop Japan's war in China in September 1940, when it banned the export of scrap iron to Japan. This had a severe impact on Japan's already fragile economy, and in order for Japan to continue its conquest of China, it would need to import food and raw materials such as oil and steel. However, Japan was dependent on the US for these imports. This situation was made worse after Japan attacked Indochina in 1940. In response to this, the US, Britain and the Netherlands responded by imposing a total trade embargo on oil and scrap steel. Once again, this was problematic for the Japanese imperialist effort because 78% of all Japanese scrap steel and 80% of Japan's oil came from America. This caused a crisis for Japan – there was a danger that the country would run out of oil and this would mean it could not continue to fight in China. America and the West were now seen as a prescient threat to Japan's survival through imperialism, and tensions between the two countries rose, something with precedents in the tensions between Japan and the West since the end of World War I. Japan demanded that the Americans end their embargo, and they hoped that an attack on Pearl Harbour would demoralise the Americans such that they would give in to Japan's demands. An attack on Pearl Harbour was also meant to cripple the American fleet so that it would not be a threat to Japan's expansion into the European colonies in Southeast Asia, which were meant to provide resources for Japan's war effort. Hence, for the continuation of its aggressive foreign policy in China and Southeast Asia, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in Hawaii in 1941, starting the Second World War in the Pacific, when America declared war on it in response, as Japan had attacked American sovereignty. Hence, Germany's and Japan's aggressive foreign policies led to the Second World War in Europe and the Pacific respectively.

Appeasement also contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War, and is a more important factor than aggressive foreign policy in the case of the war in Europe. Britain and France were concerned about Germany's aggressive foreign policy being a threat to the balance of power in Europe. However, instead of confronting Hitler militarily, they chose to use appeasement, or the using of compromise and negotiations to settle international disputes. This was due to several reasons. Britain and France hoped that by appeasing Hitler in his demands such as rearmament, political union with Austria and for Sudetenland would help to ease off his demands and prevent another war. In addition, they felt that the Treaty of Versailles had been genuinely harsh on Germany and believed that Germany's demands were just at revising the treaty terms and therefore justified. Appeasement was also meant to buy time for Britain to rearm itself, since after World War I Britain had reduced its fighting forces and thus was unable to militarily oppose Hitler in the 1930s. British governments had cut defence to the bone between 1920 and 1929 – the army was reduced to a tiny force designed to help police the British Empire or maintain domestic peace. Economic considerations also mattered, since World War I had damaged British trade abroad, the cost of war had reduced British investments overseas, and threatened the home economy through inflation and war debts. Thus, a foreign policy of peaceful cooperation was essential to safeguard trade and to

rebuild foreign investment on which British economic influence had been based. As Richard Overy argues, appeasement policy for the British was pragmatic when rearmament was not yet at a stage that the nation could resist if not defeat Hitler. As evidence of this, even while appeasement was going on in the 1930s, Britain's rearmament policy was set in motion in 1936, which would only near its completion in 1939 and 1940. It was for these reasons that the British engaged in appeasement with Hitler.

For the French, appeasement was also pragmatic. The French also faced economic stagnation, where inflation, a mounting deficit and a massive flight of capital occurred, causing social programmes to stop be funded and rearmament to be cut back. Meanwhile, French politics was polarised between left and right, and it was difficult to be decisive in responding to Hitler's actions. Finally, France was isolated and had no dependable allies to back it in responding to Hitler; Britain was unsupportive and relations with Italy soured in the Abyssinian Crisis. Hence, to the French, in the face of a weak military and a divided politics, appeasement was the most realistic approach to countering Hitler's ambitions.

However, appeasement only served to embolden Germany to continue with its aggressive foreign policy. Britain and France did not oppose Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland and annexation of Austria. These accommodations, along with the British and French accommodation to Hitler's demands for the German-speaking Sudetenland in the Munich Agreement of 1938 encouraged Hitler that if he broke the terms of the Agreement, which forbade anymore advances into Czechoslovakia, Britain and France would not stop him. Thus, Hitler went on to annex the whole of Czechoslovakia, and even though after this Britain and France promised to defend Poland in case it was attacked, Hitler, not believing that Britain and France would declare war, invaded Poland. However, this provoked Britain and France, who did declare war on Germany. The balance of power was at stake for them and by this time British and French rearmament was considerable. Appeasement policy let Hitler believe that Britain and France would not oppose him in Poland and unintentionally provoke a war with them. Thus, appeasement led to the Second World War in Europe.

Compared to Germany's aggressive foreign policy, appeasement is a more important factor to why the war started. This is because when World War II started in 1939, Germany was not ready for a total war. Germany's economic Four Year Plan began in 1936 and planned for Germany to be ready for war in four years' time. In 1939, rearmament was not completed in preparation for a large-scale war, and so had Hitler expected that Britain and France would genuinely intervene, he would not have invaded Poland, threatened the balance of power when Britain and France were willing to intervene. He would not have wanted to be caught unprepared. Instead, because of appeasement, Hitler was encouraged to think otherwise, leading him to provoke Britain and France into a war over the issue of Poland. Hitler's aggressive foreign policy was not enough for World War II to begin in Europe; appeasement was necessary.

Meanwhile, appeasement also contributed to the Second World War in Asia-Pacific. Even though Japan's invasion of Manchuria alarmed the West, particularly the USA, there was little retaliation from them. Britain and USA had strategic and economic concerns in China and Japan and they did not want to face Japanese retaliation and a threat to these interests. Even early in the Sino-Japanese War from 1937, Britain, France and USA did not want to get involved. Britain and France were concerned about the increasing tensions in Europe with the aggressive foreign policy of Hitler, and did not want to become enmeshed in a conflict in Asia. America only verbally condemned Japan's aggression, and only took a harder line from 1938 onwards, with the cancellation of the Commerce and Navigation Treaty with Japan; it was isolationist in its outlook and there was public support for this outlook.

Like with the case of Germany, Japan was emboldened to further pursue its expansionist goals by the accommodation of the Western powers. Any form of economic sanctions came as late as 1940 when Japan attacked Indochina, and even then the USA was willing to negotiate with the Japanese. However, these actions gave the Japanese the confidence to strike the USA at Pearl Harbour and then Southeast Asia in 1941, leading to the outbreak of the war in the Pacific.

However, unlike in the case of Germany, appeasement was not as important a factor as aggressive foreign policy. When the USA imposed sanctions from 1940, thus breaking the appeasement attitude, Japan was pushed to further its aggressive foreign policy to attack Pearl Harbour in an attempt to remove the US threat to its expansionist goals. Thus appeasement did not play an important part in the intensification of the aggressive foreign policy of Japan that led to the outbreak of the Pacific War.

Furthermore, even this deterrent policy of the US was less important than Japan's aggressive foreign policy in the outbreak of the war. Japan's surprise attack on Pearl harbour occurred as negotiations were going on between Japan and America about the trade embargo. This shows that regardless of the US response to the negotiations, the Japanese had decided on an expansionist policy. Thus, the American response, whether it was appeasement or deterrence, did not matter in changing the course of Japanese policy and preventing the Japanese from threatening American sovereignty. In this way, Japan's aggressive foreign policy is the more important than the American response to it in provoking a war in the Pacific in 1941.

Alliances contributed to its outbreak of the war in Europe. This was especially so with regard to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, agreed upon in 1939 between Germany and the Soviet Union, which guaranteed the USSR's promise to not interfere when Germany attacked Poland, which encouraged Germany to attack Poland, which led to the war in Europe.

However, other alliances did not contribute to the outbreak of war in Europe. Even though Germany's involvement in the Spanish Civil War with Italy cemented the two countries' relationship, resulting in the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936 and the Anti-Comintern Pact in the same year with Japan, Italy failed to aid or join the war on the side of Germany immediately. In addition, Germany did not keep to the agreement made in the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan because it went against the Pact to sign the treaty with the USSR in 1939. Hence, Germany's aggressive actions that led to war were not motivated by the alliance it had with other fascist states. As for the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the German expansionistic foreign policy was still more important because it created the need for the pact in order for Germany to be able to attack Poland. In other words, it provided the aim for which the pact was a means to, and the achievement of this aim was what sparked the war in Europe.

As for the war in the Pacific, alliances did not contribute much to the outbreak of the war. Japan's major alliance was the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany. This pact only gave an assurance that Germany would remain neutral in the case of an attack on Japan, especially if the USSR was to attack it. However, this did not play a major role in Japan's expansionism, because long before the pact in 1931 Japan had already threatened the USSR by invading Manchuria, which bordered Russia, and yet despite the threat of Soviet intervention the Japanese continued. Thus, the removal of the Soviet threat through the Anti-Comintern Pact did not contribute much to Japan's aggressive foreign policy, which eventually led it to attack Pearl Harbour. Thus, alliances did not contribute much to the outbreak of the war in the Pacific.

The failure of collective security contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War. Even though there was considerable support for a new approach to international relations after World War I to

avoid another war through collective security, collective security was hard to achieve. The League of Nations, created to protect peace through the collective security of its members, faced problems when members were expected to assist in resisting aggression whether the incident was vital to their interests or not. This was not a practical or realistic expectation, as sometimes national interests may not have supported the cause of collective security. Furthermore, the League was weak in its membership. It did not have the support of the isolationist USA, which seriously weakened the potential of the League to use collective security against aggression. The USA was the most powerful country in the world in terms of economic strength, and would have given the League's economic sanctions, a method employed by the League to deter aggression, real weight. The League lost credibility by excluding Germany and the USSR, subverting the principle of collective security itself.

These posed serious problems in the League's response to the Manchurian Crisis in 1931. Japan could not be deterred by moral condemnation and when it thought its survival through the acquiring of resource-rich Manchuria was at stake, but this was the only action the European countries were willing to take in Japan. National interests interfered with the possibility of implementing a stronger response against Japan's aggression through collective action. Britain and the USA did not oppose Japan because they had economic interests in Japan and China, and would be negatively affected if Japan retaliated against them. Thus, Japan would be allowed to continue its aggressive foreign policy, which would culminate in its attack on Pearl Harbour and the expansion into Southeast Asia in 1941, which led to World War II in the Pacific.

The League was also hampered in its response to the Abyssinian Crisis in 1935. Italy had invaded Abyssinia, and economic sanctions applied by the League against Italy, but these sanctions were ineffective as so many large nations, including Germany and the USA, were not bound by these sanctions, since they were not in the League. In fact, the USA did not fully implement sanctions. The economic interests of these nations, with regard to trade with Italy, trumped the need for collective security to be implemented to deter aggression. The lack of response by the League and the Western countries to Italy's aggression would embolden Germany to engage in its own aggression, which would lead eventually to Germany's invasion of Poland which sparked the war in Europe.

Hence, the failure of collective security allowed aggressive nations to go unchecked and encouraged them to continue with their aggressive plans, which eventually led to the Second World War. However, failure of collective security is a less important reason for the war than are the aggressive foreign policies of Japan and Germany. It served to encourage these policies, but did not cause them.

In conclusion, long-term factors led to the aggressive foreign policies of Germany and Japan, which caused the war. At the same time, appeasement policy, alliances and the failure of collective security contributed to the outbreak of the war. For the war in Europe, appeasement was the more important factor, more so than aggressive foreign policy, since it emboldened Hitler to invade Poland, which sparked the war. However, for the war in Japan, aggressive foreign policy was the most important factor because Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour while the Japanese were negotiating with the Americans shows that to Japan, whatever the American response in the negotiations was did not matter, and it would continue with its aggressive foreign policy even if this meant provoking the USA into a war.