CHAPTER 4 & 5: OUTBREAK OF WAR IN EUROPE

(a) Explain how Hitler’s foreign policy and the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact led to the outbreak of World War II in Europe.

Hitler’s foreign policy led the outbreak of World War II in Europe. Hitler’s foreign policy aimed to create ‘lebensraum’ (living space) for the German population. He aimed to establish a ‘Greater Germany’ to unite all the ethnic Germans in Europe and went on to invade countries like Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Hitler also defied the Treaty of Versailles and carried out secret rearmament and conscription. He built up a strong German army, navy and air force and also remilitarised the Rhineland. Hitler foreign policy led to the outbreak of World War II because due to his expansionist foreign policy, Hitler became aggressive and resorted to military means to achieve his aims. Britain and France could not tolerate Hitler’s ambitions and actions indefinitely and thus to defend themselves from German aggression, they were eventually compelled to declare war on Germany which led to the outbreak of World War II in Europe.

E.g. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact led to the outbreak of World War II in Europe. Hitler signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact with Stalin in August 1939. Both the Soviet Union and Germany promised not go into war with each other for ten years. The pact divided Eastern Europe into Soviet and German spheres of influence. Poland would be also divided between them. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact led to the outbreak of World War II in Europe because it gave Hitler the confidence to invade Poland without having to fight the Soviet Union. The pact made war likely as Germany no longer had to fight a war on two fronts. It could focus all its strength on Western front to fight Britain and France. It encouraged Hitler to invade Poland in 1939. World War II broke out as Britain and France declared war on Germany following the invasion of Poland, which led to the outbreak of World War II in Europe.
I agree with the statement that one of the reasons for the policy of appeasement was to buy time to rearm. After the end of World War I, the British economy and military were severely weakened. Britain needed time to strengthen its industries, restore its economy and recover from its military losses. Without the policy of appeasement, Britain was too weak to rearm itself sufficiently to stand up to Germany’s strength. Buying time to rearm was a reason for the policy of appeasement because it gave Britain and France the time to rearm and build up their military strength to prepare for war as well as to match Germany’s military strength. Therefore, Britain and France would be sufficiently armed in the event of war with Germany.

Fear of another major war

Another reason for the policy of appeasement was the fear of another major war. World War I had a huge impact on Britain and France. Both nations suffered tremendous losses in the war. The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain realised that he would not have public support for a war against Germany. Both Britain and France were democracies and their leaders were aware that the public was against another war as the memories of death and destruction of World War I was still fresh in their minds. As such, public opinion must be taken into consideration in any policies they made. Therefore, the fear of another major war was a reason for the policy of appeasement because Britain and France both wanted to avoid war with Germany as it was against the will of the public. Therefore, Britain and France decided to give in to Hitler’s demands to prevent the outbreak of another major war.

Weaknesses of the League of Nations

Another reason for the policy of appeasement was the weakness of the League of Nations. The main aim of the League of Nations was to resolve conflicts among nations. However, the League was ineffective in resolving disputes among nations and preventing aggressors from continuing their aggression, such as in the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 and Abyssinia by Italy in 1935. The weakness of the League of Nation was a reason for the policy of appeasement because Britain and France could not rely on the League of Nations as it was too weak without its own military force. As such Britain and France could not depend on the League of Nation to restrain Hitler and decided to adopt the policy of appeasement to pacify Hitler and prevent the outbreak of war as they did not want to confront Hitler on their own.
Explain why the appeasement policy of the 1930s was justified

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Explain why Hitler and Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939.

Need to avoid a war on two-fronted war

Hitler - The need to avoid a two-front war was the reason for the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Hitler was keen to expand his empire and create more living space for his people by attacking Poland. However, he was aware that Britain and France had stopped appeasing him after Munich Agreement and his annexation of Czechoslovakia. Hence, they were likely to attack him should he invade Poland. Furthermore, Poland was also created from lands of USSR and the Communists and Nazis were not on good terms. As a result, Hitler might be facing a two-front war with Britain and France on one hand and USSR on the other. In order to avoid this, an alliance with USSR was crucial.

Stalin - Similarly, Stalin was aware of Hitler’s plan to attack USSR. However, he was also concerned with the rapid expansion of the Japanese in the East. Stalin had been hoping for an alliance with Britain and France to contain Germany for a long time but no deal was made. This caused Stalin to be highly suspicious of Britain and France and he believed that these powers were hoping for Germany to attack USSR so as to destroy communism. Hence, Stalin decided to turn to Hitler. In this way, Germany would not attack USSR and Stalin could concentrate on the East should Japan decided to invade USSR.

Thus, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed by both Germany and USSR to avoid a two-front war and the pact would benefit both sides. In this way, Germany could attack Poland without fear of a two-front war and USSR could avoid a war with Germany while preparing the Japanese invasion. Therefore, the need to avoid a two-front war was the reason for the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

Territorial Gains

Hitler - The desire for territorial gain was the main reason for the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Hitler had always wanted to reunite East Prussia with the rest of Germany by taking the Polish Corridor. Furthermore, Poland was created as a result of Versailles Treaty. Hence, Hitler had always harboured a hatred for the state and wanted to destroy it. In addition, he also disliked the Poles. All these were the reasons why Hitler wanted to invade Poland.

Stalin - Similarly, USSR also harboured ambition of expanding its territories by incorporating certain states in Eastern Europe such as the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. In this regards, the Nazi-Soviet Pact served the interests of both parties as Germany and USSR agreed to divide up Poland and USSR could also annex the Baltic states.
Thus, the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed because of both Germany and USSR were keen to expand their empires and both sides hoped to do so without having conflict with each other. Therefore, territorial gain was the main reason for the Nazi-Soviet Pact.
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Yes

I agree that it was Germany’s own miscalculations, rather than its weaknesses, that led to its eventual defeat in World War II. An example of Germany’s miscalculations is the inappropriate use of resources and military funds. During the war, funds were diverted to produce conventional battleships and cruisers instead of the more threatening U-boats. However, by the time Germany realized the mistake and tried to revert to the tactic of using U-boats, the British had already developed an anti-submarine force that could effectively destroy German U-boats. This resulted in the loss of naval advantage for Germany, leading to naval defeats. Another example of miscalculations is the decision to declare war on two fronts. While still at war with Britain in the Western Front, Hitler chose to invade the Soviet Union, opening up the Eastern Front. Then, while he seemed to be gaining the upper hand against the Soviets, he declared war on the USA after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, as he mistakenly believed that the USA would be primarily occupied with fighting Japan in the Pacific. However, US President Roosevelt concentrated his troops and efforts in North Africa and Europe, which meant that Hitler found himself fighting a war on two fronts against formidable opponents at the same time. Thus, such miscalculations led to Germany’s eventual defeat in World War II, as they caused Germany to lose the upper hand in war, resulting in mounting defeats in battles.

No

Even though USA aided the Allies in the war against Germany and Italy before her official entry in the war through loaning or selling of military equipment, escort roles and other financial aids through programmes such as cash-and carry and the Lend-Lease Act, these supplies increased significantly when they formally entered the war. It was only in the early December 1941 when USA entered the war officially, this boosted the Allies towards victory.

USA entered WWII formally when they declared war on Japan on 8 December 1941. This then led Hitler’s Germany to declare war on USA as part of the Axis Powers Tripartite Pact. With the formal entry of the USA into the war, USA extended its participation and involvement in the form of ground troops, weapons and other military equipment. With vast production capabilities and abundant supply of resources, USA was able to convert its factories for military production and armed the Allies at a faster rate than the Axis Powers. In addition, the entry of large American forces military personnel in the form of ground troops/ soldiers and intelligence officers solved the Allied problems of military shortages and eventually contributed to the defeat of Germany.

US also collaborated with the Allies in military strategies against the Axis Powers. They were vital participants in the planning and execution of crucial military
strategies, which greatly enhanced the effectiveness of Allied military strategies. For example, American participation was crucial in helping the Allies achieve control of both the sea and air, which enabled the Allies not only to achieve control of the Atlantic, but also to successfully carry out aerial bombing campaigns against German targets such as their synthetic oil plants and oilfields. The USA also participated in the planning and execution of the D-Day landings, which were instrumental in leading the Allies to victory in the war. This was an important factor which led to Germany’s defeat.
The British practiced appeasement because they wanted to buy time to rearm so that it could challenge the German forces. The Allies had signed a few disarmament treaties after WW1 like the Washington Naval Conference in 1921. Britain in particular had stood by the terms of the disarmament treaties in the 1930s in order to promote global peace and to prevent the outbreak of another world war. The League also had not interceded when Hitler marched his troops back into the Rhineland because British were not prepared to go to war against Germany. Thus, Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Britain, used the appeasement policy to provide his country time to build up her defenses and not intimidate Hitler until his forces were more fortified. Thus it seems that by opting for the policy of appeasement was wise for Britain to increase their chances of winning against a stronger Germany under Hitler’s aggressive expansionism as it was unfavorable to stand up against Hitler with an unprepared strike force.

The British practiced appeasement because they wanted to prevent war. Both British and French were war weary and traumatized from the first World War hence they wanted to avoid another war at any cost. To them, appeasement was the way to deal with aggressors and allowed peace to prevail. The British public also voiced to opt for diplomacy rather than the use of force to deal with Hitler’s aggressive foreign policies. Britain thought that Germany would know their own limits and stop expanding after they are satisfied. Furthermore, Britain’s economy was in no position to wage another war and have her resources drained. Therefore, since the public opinion in Britain was to achieve peace, Chamberlain resorted to appeasement to satisfy the German dictator, thus securing peace in Europe and prevent war.
Hitler was to be blamed for the outbreak of war because of his aggressive foreign policy. Hitler had decided, from the moment he became the supreme leader of Nazi Germany, to expand Germany's borders to seek lebensraum for the German citizens, regain nationalistic pride, and to create a Greater Germany. To allow for such ambitions to be fulfilled, Hitler went on a path of rearmament. He introduced conscription and initiated the German Air Force. He reversed many restrictions under the Treaty of Versailles and marched his troops into Rhineland. After which, he occupied Sudetenland and eventually the entire Czechoslovakia. Thus, Hitler's aggressive policies and actions antagonised relations in Europe as Germany's forces became a serious threat. As Britain and France adopted appeasement, Hitler went unopposed in his expansion and went on to invade Poland in 1939 as he became even more ambitious. This move was the 'last straw' for Britain and France as they declared war on Germany and thus, Hitler's aggressive foreign policy was to be blamed for sparking the start of war in Europe.

The appeasement policy was to be blamed for the outbreak of war as it encouraged Hitler to be more determined. With each step, Hitler was able to expand towards his desired Greater Germany eastwards towards Russia. From the remilitarisation of Rhineland and the union with Austria, nothing was done to stop the German dictator and he became bolder in his expansion. Hitler went on to demand for Sudetenland and appeasement continued until Hitler was able to claim the Sudetenland without having to use force, and this allowed him to march his troops to occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia. Thus the failure of the appeasement policy bolstered Hitler's ambitions and was to be blamed for causing the war in Europe. Hitler thought that no country dared to and no country was able to stop him, so he continued his plan of expansionism. Appeasement failed to satisfy Hitler and Chamberlain had no choice but to declare war on Germany when Germany invaded Poland in 1939, which sparked the start of WWII.

Other acceptable reasons: The failure of the League of Nations, Nazi-Soviet Pact.

In conclusion, Hitler's expansionist policy was the main reason for the outbreak of war in Europe. Hitler's aggressive foreign policy was the active contributor that to tensions in Europe. His constant efforts to achieve his vision of Greater Germany and to resist the Treaty of Versailles led to Germany being a great threat in Europe. The policy of appeasement merely fuelled his ambitions as he was not stopped. Therefore, the root cause of WW2 in Europe was Hitler and his policies to dominate the region thus, carrying the most blame for the outbreak of war in Europe.
Explain the role played by Germany in its own defeat.

Germany was responsible for its own defeat due to its poor command structure and tactical errors made. The Germany military was poorly structured and this often led to confusion as conflicting commands were given. Hitler viewed himself as a brilliant military strategist and made all the final decisions. His refusal to listen to trained and experienced military generals led to him making many wrong military decisions. One crucial mistake made by Hitler during the Battle of Britain was to shift focus of German aerial bombardment of British cities instead of military targets as suggested by German generals. This gave the British Royal Air Force (RAF) time to strengthen themselves and prevent Germany from defeating Britain. Failing to defeat Britain before embarking on his invasion of the Soviet Union was a crucial mistake on Hitler's part. This enabled Britain together with the USA to attack Germany from the West. Hitler made another brutal mistake of overstretching the German army, when his primary concern should be to capture Moscow. He shifted troops from Moscow to other areas in the initial months of the invasion of the Soviet Union, thus prolonging the invasion and drove the Germans into the bitter Russian winters of 1941-42, which they were unprepared for, and which the Soviet Union took advantage of to reorganise its troops, rebuild its economy and turn the tide against the Germans. Thus by overstretching his forces in the Soviet Union, it enabled Soviet Union to defeat the German forces.

Hitler's decision to fight a 2 front war also contributed to its defeat. Hitler decided to begin a war with the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front before fully defeating Britain on its Western front. He then declared war on the USA before conquering Soviet Union. This allowed USA to send its troops and war equipment to Britain and Soviet Union respectively. Hitler had wrongly assumed that an isolated Britain would not be a threat on his Western front and that the USA would only commit its troops to fight the Japanese in Asia Pacific. The two-front war divided and overstretched the German army, causing its defeat. The German did not have the resources to fight both fronts simultaneously.

Germany's defeat was also partly caused by the misuse of resources. There was a fierce competition amongst the Germany army, navy and air force for resources to strengthen their own commands.

In terms of labour, Germany suffered from massive labour shortages with the men fighting at the forefront. The German labour largely consisted of slave labourers from the Nazi-occupied countries who were often worked to their deaths. The German women stayed at home and did not contribute to the war.

Germany also believe in using a large range of weapons and this often resulted in them becoming useless in the battlefield as spare parts were hard to come by.

Germany also did not have its oil fields. It depended mainly on oil it gained from occupied countries and the synthetic oil produced in the local industries. It had no contingency plans should these two supplies be cut.

The wrong use of resources resulted in the Germans lacking essential equipment to fight the war. Furthermore, when the Allies bombed in the oil fields in the occupied countries as well as the industries in Germany that produced synthetic oil, the Germany army began to suffer oil shortages. These shortages brought the mighty
German war machines to a virtual halt.
YES:
Appeasement was a miscalculation by Chamberlain. This is because even though it bought time for Britain to rebuild its military capabilities, it also afforded Germany the space, time and resources to build up her own military capacity and wage war on a grander scale. The policy had failed to prevent war and only delay it to a time when its occurrence would bring about greater destruction to both sides. In retrospect, war would have been prevented if Chamberlain had taken a firm stand on Hitler’s rearmaments programme in 1933, and not allow him to make a mockery of the Treaty of Versailles. Had he done so, Hitler would most probably have backed down as Germany was in no way prepared for war at that time, and would not want to risk offending both Britain. Therefore Appeasement was a miscalculation as it failed to curb Hitler’s ambitions and led to an escalation in the scale of war when it finally broke out.

Appeasement was also a miscalculation because it encouraged Hitler’s gambling by always giving in to him, and fuelled his insatiable appetite for more territories and a stronger military force. This policy proved to be a severe miscalculation as it sacrificed the sovereignty of Austria and Czechoslovakia but failed to secure peace in Europe. The failure of Chamberlain to take a firm stand on Hitler allowed him to violate clause after clause in the Treaty of Versailles, starting with the Germany rearmaments programme 1933, the retaking of the demilitarized Rhineland 1936, Anschuluss with Austria in 1938, the annexation of Sudentenland in Sept 1938, and finally the whole of Czechoslovakia in Mar 1939. The failure of Chamberlain to stop Hitler emboldened him to test the limits and to take advantage of Britain’s passivity, to reassert German strength. Appeasement was the wrong policy to take with Hitler as its success relied on the trustworthiness of both parties, to honour their agreements. However, Hitler proved to be untrustworthy time and time again, and the Allied powers either failed to notice the incongruities between his actions and words, or disregarded all the warning signs that Hitler was not a reliable party. A strengthened Germany clearly posed a threat to the long term stability of Europe, given Hitler’s explicit aim of Lebensraum, and the government should not have been constrained by anti-war public opinion, but should have convinced the public of the need to take strong measures to halt Germany’s expansionist foreign policy. Therefore, the policy of Appeasement was a costly miscalculation by Chamberlain, which brought more harm than good, as Hitler could not be trusted to keep his word.

NO
On the other hand, the appeasement policy was necessary and NOT a miscalculation, especially if considered from the Allies perspective. The appeasement policy was the right policy as it was essential to avoid war which was likely to be even more devastating than before. Britain, still in the throes of a post WW1 economic crisis, could not afford vast rearmament and the crippling expenses of a major war. WW1 had made both Britain and France weak as many factories, manpower and other resources were lost. The effects of the Great Depression on
the economies of both countries made rearmament very difficult. They worry that attempts to stop Germany would lead to a full-scale war which Britain was totally unprepared for and this made the adoption of appeasement policy the right move to take at that point of time. Britain was not strong enough to fight a war against more than one country at the same time. (E,E)

The appeasement would buy time for Britain to rearm itself and build up the country again. This would strengthen them against any aggressive move by Germany. (L)

In conclusion, I can conclude that Appeasement was a miscalculation as it bought temporary peace at a huge cost. Ultimately, Appeasement backfired because it could not prevent war, but merely delayed it, and made it more deadly when it finally erupted, given that the British and German war machines were fully mobilized. Hence in retrospect, it would have been a lot more effective had Chamberlain denied Hitler firmly from the start rather than indulge him and allow Germany to become a formidable enemy.