



Mains Practice Question

Q. "There arose a serious challenge to the Democratic State System between the two World Wars". Evaluate the statement. (250 words)

07 Feb, 2022 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Give a brief description of the interwar period between two world wars.
- Mention the cause behind the collapse of democratic state system post first world war.
- Mention the challenges posed to the democratic state system between 1919-39.
- Conclude the answer by mentioning the outbreak of the second world war.

Introduction

- The Interwar period between two world wars was relatively short, yet featured many significant social, political, and economic changes throughout the world.
- Politically, the era coincided with the rise of communism, starting in Russia with the October Revolution and Russian Civil War, at the end of World War I.

Body

Cause of Collapse of Democratic System

- The conditions of economic hardship caused by the Great Depression brought about significant social unrest around the world, leading to a major surge of fascism and in many cases, the collapse of democratic governments.
- In the 1930s the breakdown of the League of Nations, the rise of aggressive dictatorships posed a serious threat to democracy throughout the world.

Challenge to Democratic State System

- **Rise of Fascism:** The rise of fascism in Italy began during World War I, when Benito Mussolini and other radicals formed a political group (called a fasci).
 - The people of Italy are living under a dictatorship; living oppressed and under someone else's beliefs without having your own freedom and limited rights.
- **Rise of Nazism in Germany:** The Treaty of Versailles was also a huge blow to the economy so the country could not afford to be a democracy.
 - Hitler and the Nazis had succeeded in dismantling democracy and laying the foundation for dictatorship in Germany.
- **Persecution of Jews:** After the Nazis took power and implemented their antisemitic ideology and policies, the Jewish community was increasingly persecuted.
 - A total of about six million European Jews were murdered under the direction of the Nazis, in the genocide that later came to be known as the Holocaust.

- In 1936, Jews were banned from all professional jobs, effectively preventing them from participating in education, politics, higher education and industry.
- **Spanish Civil War:** Spanish Civil War, (1936–39) was a military revolt against the Republican government of Spain, supported by conservative elements within the country.
- **Iron Guard:** The name most commonly given to a far-right movement and political party in Romania in the period from 1927 into the early part of World War II. It was ultra-nationalist, antisemitic, anti-communist, anti-capitalist, and promoted the Orthodox Christian faith.
- **Fascism Beyond Europe:**
 - Fascism also expanded its influence outside Europe, especially in East Asia, the Middle East, and South America.
 - In China, Wang Jingwei's Kai-tsu p'ai (Reorganization) faction of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China) supported Nazism in the late 1930s.
 - In Japan, a Nazi movement called the Tōkyōkai was formed by Seigō Nakano.
 - The Al-Muthanna Club of Iraq was a pan-Arab movement that supported Nazism and exercised its influence in the Iraqi government through cabinet minister Saib Shawkat, who formed a paramilitary youth movement.
- **Rise of Japan as Colonial Powers:** Japan underwent a period of industrialization and militarization, the Meiji Restoration being the fastest modernisation and contributed to Japan's emergence as a great power and the establishment of a colonial empire.

Conclusion

- The efforts of the League of Nations failed to maintain peace after the first world war.
- Eventually, Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939 drove Great Britain and France to declare war on Germany, marking the beginning of World War II.
- Over the next six years, the conflict would take more lives and destroy more land and property around the globe than any previous war.