

Unit - 3

World War II



Learning Objectives

- To acquaint ourselves about the political and economic developments after World War I which ultimately led to World War II
- To understand the course of the War, in general; in particular, to learn the main events which were turning points in the War
- To know the effects of World War II
- To understand the “holocaust”, and the mass killing of Jews in Nazi
- To acquire knowledge about the international organisations established after the



Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed two wars which devastated the world. World War I was fought from 1914 to 1918 and World War II began in 1939 and ended in 1945. While the world at large had experienced many wars, these two wars are referred to as “World” wars because of the extended areas of the conflict and the very high death toll of civilians as well as armed combatants. Both wars were fought on several fronts across Europe, Asia and Africa.

In both wars, the combined forces of Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States fought against a war alliance led by Germany. Germany’s allies were Italy and Japan in World War II.

3.1 Causes, Course and Effects of World War II

(a) Causes

The devastation caused by World War I was of such magnitude that it was referred

to as The Great War, or The War to End All Wars. The belligerent nations, especially the Allies, had no desire for a second prolonged conflict, and this was the main driving force behind their actions after the end of World War I. The immediate and primary cause of World War II was the aggressive military offensive undertaken by a resurgent Germany and a fast developing Japan.

Germany and Treaty of Versailles, 1919

The Treaty of Versailles ending World War I was signed in June 1919. Among the many clauses of the Treaty, three in particular caused great resentment among the Germans. (i) Germany was forced to give up territories to the west, north and east of the German border; (ii) Germany had to disarm and was allowed to retain only a very restricted armed force; (iii) as reparations for the War, Germany was expected to pay for the military and civilian cost of the War to the Allied nations.