

CHAPTER 6:

Reasons for the End of WW2 in Europe and the Asia-Pacific

1. Strengths of the Allies
 2. Military Weaknesses of Germany and Japan
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POSSIBLE QUESTIONS: Reasons for Germany / Japan's Defeat

'The entry of America was more decisive than the Allied Resistance in defeating Germany'. How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

'The main reason why Germany lost the war in Europe was due to US military might'. How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

'The defeat of Japan only came about with the dropping of the atomic bombs.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

How do I explain these factors?

While it all depends on the key issue, here are some general guiding questions for you to consider:

- [Effect on warring parties] How did this factor affect this side's war effort? Did it contribute in helping their war effort or did it result in severe consequences?
 - [Link to issue] How then did this lead to the defeat of Germany / Japan?
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Why was Blitzkrieg unsuccessful in the long term? (pp.6-7)

Blitzkrieg was successful at the initial stages of the war. However, once the war dragged on and turned into a battle of attrition, it grew increasingly disadvantageous for Germany.

- June 1941, Germany declared war on USSR who pressured the Germans from the Eastern Front.
- In late 1941, the US entered the war and bolstered the Allied forces from the Western Front.
- In June 1944, the Allies landed on Normandy (in France) and invaded Germany on March 1945.

WW2 IN EUROPE (1939 - 1945)

Fall of France, 1940 (p.7)

- Germans attacked France in May 1940
- British Expeditionary Force and Royal Air Force (RAF) supported the French, but were not successful
- The Allied armies retreated to the Channel coast in the region around the port of Dunkirk, where they were vulnerable and could have been destroyed
- However, the German forces decided to slow down their advancement on the Allied armies, and this provided an opportunity for the Allied armies to reorganise and recuperate for the war
- France fell into the hands of Germany in June which allowed Germany to avenge for their defeat in 1918

Battle of Britain, 1940 (p.7)

- After the fall of France, Hitler focused his German Air Force (Luftwaffe) to carry out large scale attacks against Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) to try to achieve air superiority
- However, Britain was not an easy target to fight and the Germans turned to bombing British cities, known as the Blitz
- The Blitz lasted from September 1940 to May 1941
- Although the Blitz brought about much damage to Britain, The British RAF held on and resisted against the German forces, which contributed to the defeat of Germany later

Operation Barbarossa, 1941 (p.8)

- June 1941: Germany launched Operation Barbarossa against USSR
- Initially, the German forces gained an upper hand as Stalin was close to abandoning Moscow in September 1941
- However, the Germans could not overwhelm the USSR fast enough and the harsh winter halted their advance
- USSR used the time to reorganise the Soviet war effort and with the extensive resources provided by the US Lend-Lease scheme
- This allowed the Soviets to turn the tide of war and enabled them to put up strong resistance on the Eastern Front

Operation Overlord: D-Day, 1944 (p.9)

- Strong fortifications were laid in France since its fall in 1940
- 6 June 1944: the US launched Operation Overload, or D-Day to liberate France
- They landed on the heavily fortified coasts of Normandy
- Germany was fighting on its own against the Allied forces as Italy signed an armistice

with them on September 1943

- D-Day was a success as it involved overwhelming resources, effective planning and leadership contributed by the entry of the US

Victory in Europe (p.9)

- December 1944: Germans launched counterattack through the Ardennes Forest, but were driven back
 - Huge victory in Stalingrad in early 1943 also halted the German advance
 - 30 April 1945: facing imminent defeat by the Allies, Hitler committed suicide
 - 8 May 1945, the war in Europe was over when Germany formally surrendered
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WW2 IN ASIA-PACIFIC (1937 - 1945)

Attack on Pearl Harbor, 1941 (pp.12-13)

- US intelligence failed to warn the US forces and Japanese planes achieved almost complete surprise against the American forces.
- Three Days after Pearl Harbor: Japanese forces sank the British Prince of Wales and the Repulse in the Pacific region.
- US forces were able to recover quickly within a few months and retaliate against Japan. American outrage allowed President Roosevelt to rally the country. The country's huge resources were directed towards war.
- The USA constructed aircraft carriers which it was able to use throughout 1942.

Battle of Midway, 1942 (p.13)

- Midway Islands were important due to their airfields and location on the route to Pearl Harbor.
- Japan's aim: bomb the island defences and land troops on it so it could become a base for Japanese naval and armed forces.
- June 1942: Japan and the USA fought each other.
- Japan lost 4 of its aircraft carriers and nearly 3/4 of its experienced pilots.
- This significantly affected its naval and air defence capabilities as Japan could not match the output of the US shipyards and aircraft factories.

Defeat of Japan and the Atomic Bomb (pp.14-16)

- The USA and its allies used the strategy of island-hopping (attacking strategically important islands one by one, establishing a foothold there and then moving on to the next island).
 - 1942 – 1945: Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands (Aug 1942), Marianas Islands (June 1944), the Philippines (Oct 1944), Iwo Jima (Feb 1945) and Okinawa (Apr 1945).
 - Japan's military became weaker with each successive battle. Japan's resources were severely overstretched and it was not able to defend its entire empire.
 - 1945: the USA became conducting air raids on Japanese soil, such as the bombing of Tokyo. April 1945: British and US forces took the island of Okinawa. This was a brutal battle as none of the Japanese soldiers would surrender. Allied ships were badly damaged by Japanese kamikaze suicide bombers.
 - April 1945: Roosevelt passed away and Truman became the new President. Truman was faced with the prospect of a year or more of heavy casualties. Truman decided to use the newly developed atomic bombs to compel Japan to a quick surrender.
 - 6 August 1945: 'Little Boy' was dropped over Hiroshima.
 - 9 August 1945: 'Fat Man' was dropped over Nagasaki.
 - 14 August 1945: Japan surrendered.
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REASONS FOR THE END OF WW2

STRENGTHS OF THE ALLIES

- Importance of America
- Economic and Military Power
- Allied Strategies (Battle of the Atlantic, Island-Hopping in the Pacific, Use of the Atomic Bomb)
- Importance of Britain
- Importance of the Soviet Union
- Reorganisation and Resistance
- Resources and Production: The Soviet War Economy
- Entry to the Asian-Pacific Theatre of War

WEAKNESSES OF THE AXIS POWERS

- > Germany's Military Weaknesses
 - Hitler's Mistakes
 - The Two-Front War
 - Poor Planning
 - > Japan's Military Weaknesses
 - Inter-Service Rivalry between the Army and Navy
 - Overstretched Empire
 - Poor Planning
 - Lack of Local Support
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STRENGTHS OF THE ALLIES

AMERICA 🦅★

> *Importance of America: Economic and Military Power (pp.18-19)*

- Following the Pearl Harbor attack, the US mobilised its vast resources in a short time – people, factories, farms and even the movie industry joined the war effort.
- Within months, the USA was rebuilding its fleet and training troops, producing weapons and other essential equipment.
- Made possible because it was the world's largest producer of goods and so were able to convert its military production at a faster rate than the Axis Powers.
- The USA supplied the Allies with food, raw materials, industrial equipment, weapons and ammunition, troops, ships and aircraft.

- [Effect on warring parties] How did this factor affect this side's war effort? Did it contribute in helping their war effort or did it result in severe consequences?
- [Link to issue] How then did this lead to the defeat of Germany / Japan?

> *Importance of America: Battle of the Atlantic (pp.19-20)*

- Before its formal entry into WW2, Roosevelt had introduced the Lend-Lease scheme. This supplied vast amounts of food, fuel and equipment to help the British war effort against Hitler.
- After 1941, the USA began sending supplies to the USSR.
- These supplies were transported via merchant ships accompanied by convoys so that they would be protected against German submarines (U-boats).
- Initially, the U-boats were very effective in the Battle of the Atlantic.
- However, British intelligence broke the secret codes ('Enigma' codes), allowing the Allied convoys to steer clear of the U-boats.
- US shipyards also began building cargo ships (Liberty ships). Soon the USA was building more ships than the U-boats could sink.
- The tide was reversed and the Allies began to sink U-boats.
- The Germans were losing more U-boats than they were sinking Allied ships.
- March 1944: the Germans called off the U-boat campaign.

- [Effect on warring parties] How did this factor affect this side's war effort? Did it contribute in helping their war effort or did it result in severe consequences?
- [Link to issue] How then did this lead to the defeat of Germany?

> *Importance of America: Island-Hopping Strategy in the Asia-Pacific (p. 21)*

- 1937 – 1941: Japan had built up a large empire in Asia-Pacific. US and its allies faced a potentially lengthy and costly campaign against the Japanese forces.
- The Allies came up with island-hopping (using air attacks and submarines to isolate Japanese-held areas. The Allies would then conquer these islands and use them to further cut-off ships that supplied well-defended islands).

- [Effect on warring parties] How did this factor affect this side's war effort? Did it

<u>contribute in helping their war effort or did it result in severe consequences?</u> - <u>[Link to issue] How then did this lead to the defeat of Japan?</u>
> <i>Importance of America: Use of the Atomic Bomb (p.15-16, 22)</i>
Emperor Hirohito's announcement: 'the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to damage is indeed incalculable. Should we continue to fight, it would result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation...'
- <u>[Effect on warring parties] How did this factor affect this side's war effort? Did it contribute in helping their war effort or did it result in severe consequences?</u> - <u>[Link to issue] How then did this lead to the defeat of Japan?</u>

BRITAIN 🇬🇧👑
> <i>Importance of Britain (pp.22-23)</i>
- Britain's Royal Air Force had the Supermarine Spitfire, and the Hawker Hurricane which were as good as the Germans. British factories were able to keep producing more of such aircraft to replace their losses. - Britain also had the new radar technology to detect and locate incoming enemy aircraft. - Fighting on home ground also enabled the British to tap large reserves of spare parts for repair work and use less fuel. - Britain became a substantial military base: once the USA entered the war, it became a base for a massive US presence. - Britain also helped fought the Japanese troops in the Asia- Pacific. This included its Indian colony which provided over 2.5 million men and women and a staggering 80% of its wealth to the Allied war effort.

USSR 🇷🇺🔨
> <i>Importance of the USSR (pp.23-25): Reorganisation and Resistance (pp. 23-24)</i>
Stalin made use of harsh winters in 1941 – 1942 to rebuild and reorganise: - Officers in the Red Army were given greater freedom and independence to act. - Effective new weapons were developed. - Radio communications were adopted and radios were placed in all tanks and aircraft. - Specialist units were created to listen in on German radio signals and disrupt them. - Harsh discipline was used, e.g. Order 227 ('Not a step back') which ordered Soviet soldiers to fight and die for every bit of Russian soil. - The turning point came at the Battle of Stalingrad. The Wehrmacht (German armed forces) was unable to defeat the Soviet Red Army despite controlling 90% of the city. This victory raised the morale of the Soviets as they began to drive the Germans back.

> *Importance of the USSR: Resources and Production: the Soviet War Economy (pp.24-25)*

- The Soviets enacted harsh measures – adults in the Soviet Union received no food unless they worked in some way for the war effort. Forced labour was used and the secret police kept close control of the population.
 - This enabled the Soviet Union to produce weapons in large quantities which surpassed German production by 1942.
 - The Soviets also shifted its major industrial complexes to the Urals, Siberia and Kazakhstan, beyond German reach.
 - The Soviet Union's allies also made important contributions to the campaign by supplying large amounts of resources such as food, raw materials and industrial equipment via shipping lanes.
 - This gave the Soviets an advantage that became apparent at the Battle of Kursk in July 1943. The Germans were defeated and retreated from the Eastern Front and this point.
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STRENGTHS OF THE ALLIES (!)

> D-Day, 1944 (p.9)

- 6 June 1944: the combined Allied forces landed on the heavily fortified coasts of France's Normandy region.
- This was the beginning of Operation Overlord – the campaign to liberate Europe from Nazi control.
- By this time, Italy had signed an armistice with the Allies and Germany was fighting against the Allies on its own.
- The D-Day landings involved huge numbers of military personnel and military equipment:
- It brought 130 000 Allied troops across the English Channel by sea and 23 000 by air and was made possible as the US fought hard to achieve control of the sea as seen in the Battle of Atlantic.
- Tanks, weapons, ammunition and other war essential were provided to further aid the operation.
- 13 000 Allied aircraft overwhelmed the 400 German aircraft and pounded radar installations, rail links and bridges, effectively cutting off the German forces in Normandy from reinforcements.

> Entry to the Asian-Pacific Theatre of War (p.25)

- The Soviet Union entered the war against Japan three months after the defeat of Germany.
 - 8 August 1945: the Soviet declared war against Japan and launched their invasion of Manchuria (which was under Japanese control).
 - The Soviets defeated the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and occupy northern Korea, which contributed to Japan's decision to surrender to the Allied forces.
 - [Effect on warring parties] How did Britain and the Soviet Union affect the Allied war effort? Did it contribute in helping their war effort or did it result in severe consequences?
 - [Link to issue] How then did this lead to the defeat of Germany and Japan?
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WEAKNESS OF THE AXIS POWERS

> Germany's military weaknesses (pp.26-28)

Hitler's Mistakes

- German commanders constantly had to report back to Hitler who regularly intervened in military decisions.
- However, Hitler had never been a senior military commander and lacked the experience to make decisions at the highest level.
 - Example 1: Decision to halt the advance of German forces towards Dunkirk in May 1940.
 - Example 2: Pressing on with the Battle of Stalingrad, despite German commanders wanting to withdraw.
 - Example 3: Declaring war on the USA, despite having no obligation to do so. Hitler had believed that the USA would be primarily occupied with fighting Japan in the Pacific. Instead, Roosevelt concentrated his troops and efforts in North Africa and Europe.

The Two-Front War

- While at war with Britain on the Western Front, Hitler chose to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941.
- This prevented him from concentrating his efforts and resources on a single front, causing the military to be gradually worn down by the Allied forces.

Poor Planning

- The Germans put too many resources into building giant battleships, such as Bismarck and Tirpitz, and failed to build aircraft carriers. However, these were destroyed by Allied aircraft.
- The Germans also never developed heavy bombers which could do severe damage to towns and cities.
- The Germans had not invested in radar.

> Japan's Military Weaknesses (p.29)

Inter-Service Rivalry between the Army and Navy

- Both services of the Japanese military had different strategic goals and ideas for how they wanted to seize territories to obtain resources to sustain Japan's economy:
 - The Army wanted to 'strike north', taking the natural resources of Siberia, by way of Manchuria.
 - The Navy wanted to 'strike south', taking the oil-rich Dutch East Indies.
- When war broke out, this rivalry prevented both the Army and Navy from sharing their resources and exchanging military intelligence, much less coordinate their attacks and defences.
- 1942: when the Navy asked the Army to provide troop support for an invasion of Australia, the Army refused. Throughout 1943, the army refused to commit major reinforcements to the Pacific Islands.
- Both groups also disagreed on where to set Japan's defence perimeter against the Allied forces.

Overstretched Empire

- By 1942, Japan occupied almost the whole of Southeast Asia. However, it was unable to maintain and defend these territories:
 - The Japanese empire was very spread out. Rail and road communications were poor and it was difficult to deliver raw materials and workers effectively to the places where they were needed.
 - Large quantities of raw materials and finished goods had to be transported by sea, which took a longer time.
 - Key military defeats by the Allies against the Japanese forces decimated the numbers of experienced Japanese pilots and aircraft carriers, which made it more difficult for Japan to defend the empire it had acquired.

Poor Planning

- The Japanese failed to understand that the war at sea had changed by 1941.
- Air power, in the form of aircraft based on carriers, was more important than traditional naval power like battleships.
- Example: the Japanese did not destroy any US aircraft carriers during its attack on Pearl Harbor. As a result, the US navy was able to recover from the attack and retaliate.

Lack of Local Support / Local Resistance

- The Japanese treated the people they conquered brutally. They looted the resources of the conquered lands, abused the locals and forced thousands into slaved labour. Millions of civilians died.
- The conquered people began to resist the Japanese.
- Example: in China, the communists carried out a campaign of guerilla warfare. In Vietnam, the nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh led the Viet Minh in a guerilla campaign which wore down the Japanese. There was also the Malayan People's Anti- Japanese Army.

- [Effect on warring parties] How did Japan's military weaknesses affect its war effort, and lead to its defeat subsequently?
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