

## SAMPLE ESSAY

"Hitler was responsible for the outbreak of WWII." How far do you agree with this statement?  
[25m]

### INTRODUCTION

The statement given suggests that Hitler and his actions were mainly responsible for starting World War II (unpack the question). There could have been no war without Hitler. It was Hitler's vision of Lebensraum (Living Space), Union of all ethnic Germans to establish a Greater Germany and determination to reverse the Versailles settlement which led to war. Hitler consciously built up Germany's army and weapons with the intention of taking it to war. At each stage of the road to war from 1936 to 1939, it was his beliefs, actions, and decisions that led to the outbreak of World War II. However, it would be rather myopic to place the blame fully on Hitler as Britain and France were unwilling to use violence to stop his aggression.

there were opportunities provided through the Appeasement policy for Hitler to achieve his foreign policy aims by giving in to his demands.

The Appeasement policy caused Britain and France to turn away from collective security based on common interests. (Alternate perspective), It also brought about inaction from the Allies to effectively counter Hitler's aggression. Hitler was emboldened to go further in his expansion with each successful step he took in his aggressive foreign policy. This escalated tensions in Europe and threatened peace in the 1930s as it eventually led to the outbreak of WWII in Europe in 1939. Overall, my stand is that Hitler was the main driving force for the outbreak of WWII and Appeasement was an attempt to limit Hitler's serious acts of aggression but failed.

### GIVEN PERSPECTIVE

#### PREMISE 1

Hitler's foreign policy was based on the concept of Lebensraum, or "living space," which he believed was necessary for the German people to thrive. To achieve this, Hitler sought to expand German territory and influence throughout Europe and beyond, which ultimately led to military conflict. Hitler began to pursue his foreign policy goals almost immediately after coming to power in 1933. He first withdrew Germany from the League of Nations, which was an international organization established after World War I to promote peace and cooperation among nations. Hitler also began to re-arm Germany in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, which limited the size and capabilities of the German military after World War I. In 1936, Hitler ordered the German army to reoccupy the Rhineland, which was a demilitarized zone between Germany and France. This move violated the Treaty of Versailles and alarmed the French and British governments, but they chose not to respond with military force. This emboldened Hitler to pursue further territorial gains. In 1938, Hitler annexed Austria into Germany, which was known as the Anschluss. This violated the Treaty of Versailles and was another step towards Hitler's goal of creating a greater German empire. Later that year, Hitler demanded the cession of the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia with a large German-speaking population. When the Czechoslovakian government refused, Hitler threatened war, and the Munich Agreement was signed, which allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland in return for a promise not to seek further territorial gains. However, Hitler broke his promise and invaded the rest of

Czechoslovakia in March 1939. This led Britain and France to guarantee the security of Poland, which was seen as the next likely target of Hitler's aggression. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, which led to the declaration of war by Britain and France, and the beginning of World War II.

## **GIVEN PERSPECTIVE**

### **PREMISE 2**

Furthermore, Hitler had the intention for World War II to happen. In his autobiography and political manifesto, Mein Kampf, Hitler outlined his plan for creating a greater German empire, which he believed required a war of conquest. He wrote that "the great foreign policy aim must be to obtain for the German people the land and soil to which they are entitled on this earth," and that "war is not just a necessary evil, it is also a tonic...the highest and most glorious expression of human activity." From the moment he came to power in 1933, Hitler began to rearm Germany and build up its military capabilities, in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. This included expanding the army, navy, and air force, and increasing the production of war materials. By the late 1930s, Germany had the most powerful military in Europe. Hitler's aggressive foreign policy, which aimed to expand Germany's territory and influence, was a clear indication that he was willing to use force and destroy the existing status quo to achieve his goals. He annexed Austria and the Sudetenland, and then invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland, tipping the balance of power so much that the Allies had no choice, despite their great aversion to war, but to declare war on Nazi Germany when Hitler invaded Poland on 1 Sept 1939, leading to the outbreak of World War II. Hence, it was Hitler's aggressive foreign policy, which was based on the concept of Lebensraum and the desire to expand German territory and influence, that led to a series of territorial gains and violations of international agreements, culminating in the invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World War II.

## **TRANSITION TO ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

While Hitler indeed played a large role in causing World War II, there is also a need to examine the policy and diplomatic blunders made by leaders from the Allied countries that played a significant role in causing the outbreak of World War II. As Winston Churchill put it - "World War II had never been an easier war to stop." There had been numerous opportunities to prevent the outbreak of the war, but all were missed.

## **ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

### **PREMISE 1**

Some historians blame Britain & France the WWII due to their Appeasement policy which made it difficult to confront Germany's escalating acts of aggression through the League of Nations. The League which was dominated by Britain and France, was largely ineffective in its role of keeping the peace of Europe and the world. First, the failure of collective security facilitated the outbreak of World War II. The League of Nations, which was established after World War I to promote international cooperation and prevent future conflicts, failed to prevent the aggression of Germany in the 1930s. The ineffectiveness and delayed response from the League of Nations set the foundation for enabling the outbreak of the war. As the LoN was not backed by all of the key powers, especially the fact that the USSR and USA were not members, meant that the LoN

lacked the necessary military power to enforce its decisions, which made it ineffective in deterring aggression. Its lack of effectiveness was highlighted by its failure to prevent the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. Hitler took advantage of this weakness and continued his expansionist policies, knowing that the League would be unable to stop him. This encouraged Hitler to become more aggressive as there was inadequate deterrence of aggression from the LoN. This allowed Hitler to annex Austria and Czechoslovakia without any opposition, emboldening him to pursue his aggressive expansionist policies further. The ineffectiveness of the LoN meant that it was sidelined and ignored, not just by Germany, but also by Britain and France as they pursued Appeasement to preserve peace, during the crises that Hitler provoked in Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1938-9. Overall, the failure of the League of Nations created a power vacuum that allowed Hitler to pursue his expansionist policies unchecked. The resulting uncontrolled spiraling of tensions and conflicts ultimately led to the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Hence, the western powers did not take proper measures to keep Hitler in check and this allowed him to become more ambitious and daring.

## **ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

### **PREMISE 2a**

Some historians blame the Appeasement policy for the **resurgence of Nazi Germany as a military power by 1938-9. It weakened Europe's alliances, betrayed weaker states, and delayed the process of rearmament**, all of which ultimately led to the devastating outbreak of WWII that engulfed the world. There were several missed chances to stop Hitler in his tracks, but they were all missed because the Allied leaders, such as Chamberlain, were unwilling to risk a war during an economic Depression. This mistake meant that Hitler was emboldened to pursue further expansionist policies. The tacit approval of Hitler's rearmament in 1935 and remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 led Hitler to believe that the British and France were decadent and no longer had the will to stop him. Furthermore, Appeasement betrayed smaller and weaker states, such as Czechoslovakia, which was forced to surrender its territory to Nazi Germany. This signaled to Hitler and other aggressors that Britain and France would not defend weaker states, thus encouraging them to pursue further territorial ambitions. Hitler was thus encouraged to take ever larger risks, which led to the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, followed by the invasion of Poland, which ultimately triggered the start of the war. This policy of Appeasement contributed to the outbreak of war because it allowed Hitler's military aggression to escalate to the point where it could only be tacked by going to war.

### **Premise 2b**

Appeasement also undermined the collective security of Europe by **weakening the alliances that could have deterred Hitler's aggression**. By making unilateral deals with Hitler, Britain and France weakened their relationship with the Soviet Union and other potential allies. This was a key reason for the **Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 that left the Allies and Poland isolated** when war finally broke out with the Nazi attack on Poland. Appeasement delayed the process of rearmament in Britain and France and allowed Nazi Germany to build up its military power unchecked. By the time Britain and France realized the threat posed by Nazi Germany, they were ill-prepared to resist its aggression. For example, Britain only started rearmament in

earnest after the **Munich Agreement in 1938**. The Agreement was seen by many as an act of appeasement and a betrayal of Czechoslovakia, and it led to a surge of public support for rearmament. By the time war broke out in September 1939, Britain had made significant progress in its rearmament program, particularly in the production of aircraft and the expansion of the Royal Air Force but the army was still sorely underfunded and equipped. Overall, appeasement failed to prevent the outbreak of World War II and allowed an aggressive Nazi Germany to pursue its expansion that tipped the balance of power of Europe and led the start of WWII when Germany invaded Poland in Sept 1939.

### **COUNTER ARGUMENT TO AP**

However, it must be noted that Appeasement was adopted in response to Hitler's actions. Chamberlain believed that Hitler was a man who could be reasoned with and by giving in to his demands, another major war could be prevented from breaking out. But he was proven wrong. It was Hitler's aggressive foreign policies that caused the spiraling of tensions in Europe. Hitler pursued an expansionist foreign policy, aimed at creating a Greater Germany that would dominate Europe. Hitler thought Chamberlain was so set on peace at all costs that Britain would never go to war. He thought he could go on seizing land to the East while Britain and France did nothing. He annexed Austria in 1938, took over Sudetenland in August 1938, annexed the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and invaded Poland in Sept 1939. It was these actions made by Hitler that led to the uncontrolled escalation of tensions that left the Allies with no choice but to declare war on Germany and start WWII. The Allies had tried all way to negotiate and appease Hitler to maintain peace, but it was Hitler who repeatedly tore up its promises to expand. For example, the Munich Agreement in Sept 1938 was torn up by Hitler and Germany proceeded to annex the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. As such, it is not logical to put the main blame of the outbreak of WWII on the Allied leaders like Chamberlain. Their incompetence and inability to realise the aggressive ambitions of Hitler and to counter him early were indeed reasons where WWII broke out so early in 1939 but the extent of their responsibilities for WWII was simply that. They were catalysts to the outbreak of WWII, but it was nonetheless still Hitler's actions and decisions that drove the tensions out of control and tipped Europe over the edge and into the abyss of WWII.

### **CONCLUSION**

Therefore, in conclusion, Hitler was thus the main driving force for the outbreak of WWII, as his aggressive foreign policy, militarization, and expansionist ambitions directly led to the outbreak of the war. From the start, Hitler had already resolved to embark on an aggressive foreign policy and appeasement only served to embolden Hitler to do so. As he succeeded in achieving each successive goal, he was encouraged to continue and become even more daring and aggressive.

Hitler pursued an expansionist foreign policy, aimed at creating a larger German empire that would encompass Austria, Czechoslovakia, and other parts of Europe. He remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936, annexed Austria in 1938, and later invaded Poland in 1939, sparking off WWII. Hitler repeatedly violated international treaties, such as the Munich Agreement of 1938, which undermined the stability of the international system and increased tensions in Europe. It was Hitler's actions that led to WWII and resulted in immense human suffering and devastation,

including the Holocaust and the deaths of millions of people across Europe and around the world.