

1. Examine the factors behind the Crimean war of 1853-56? Why was it significant? Discuss.

Approach-

Candidates need to write about Crimean war and its different factors also highlight the significance of the Crimean war.

Introduction

The Crimean War broke out on 5th October 1853, a military conflict fought between the Russian Empire on one side, against an alliance of Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and Sardinia. The complexity of the war meant that it was fought on the grounds of various reasons by different parties, as everyone had a vested interest in the region.

Body

The outbreak of violence arose from various factors:

- As the Ottoman Empire steadily weakened during the 19th century, the Russian Empire stood poised to take advantage by expanding southward.
- In the 1850s, the British and the French Empires were allied with the Ottoman Empire and were determined to prevent that from happening.
- Russia's aggressiveness also made the British nervous about maintaining their trade with Turkey and access to India. Meanwhile, the French, who still remembered Napoleon I's defeat by the Russians, saw a chance to take revenge.
- Religious tensions helped trigger the war. While it's remembered as a clash of empires, the Crimean War was sparked by a seemingly minor religious dispute.
- For years, Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics had squabbled over access to holy sites within the borders of the majority-Muslim Ottoman Empire.
- Its name notwithstanding, the Crimean War was a global conflict that featured several different theaters of battle. Early clashes occurred in the Balkans and in Turkey, and the focus only shifted to Crimea after the Allies launched an invasion of the peninsula in September 1854.
- For centuries, one central goal of Russian foreign policy was to obtain a warm water port in the south namely, at the Bosphorus Straits and the Strait of the Dardanelles, the small waterways connecting the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas.

Significance:

- The war helped convince Russia to sell Alaska to the United States. Several factors were involved in Russia's decision to offload its North American territories in Alaska, but the most pressing arose after its defeat in Crimea.
- Thanks to new technologies such as the steamship and the electric telegraph, the Crimean War was the first major conflict where civilian journalists sent dispatches from the battlefield.
- The resulting Treaty of Paris, signed on March 30, 1856, guaranteed the integrity of Ottoman Turkey and obliged Russia to surrender southern Bessarabia at the mouth of the Danube.
- The Crimean War produced about 500,000 total casualties, with about half suffered by each side. A disproportionate number of deaths were caused by disease. Their work paved the way for later developments in battlefield medicine.

Conclusion

The greater importance of the Crimean War is embodied in one international and one national element. It was the final war in which the Ottoman Empire had any victorious role and it marked the end of the veritable charade of Russian military dominance on the Continent. On the national scale, the Crimean War, some historians have argued, marked the beginning of the road to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

2. How did the disintegration of the USSR shape the future of Eastern Europe? Analyse.

Approach

Students are expected to write about the fall of USSR and then simply write about how it affected and shaped the eastern European nations.

Introduction

The Soviet Union was established in 1922 by a treaty signed between Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia Soviet Socialist republics and Trans-Caucasian Federation. It later constituted fifteen smaller states. Notwithstanding its achievements, the USSR met its fateful decline in 1991 mainly due to Mikhael Gorbvachev's economic and political reforms- Perestroika and Glasnost respectively.

Body

- Rise of nationalism among countries like Russia, Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Ukraine, Georgia etc is the most important and immediate cause of disintegration of the USSR.
- The national feeling was strong among the more prosperous areas in USSR and not in Central Asian republics. Ordinary people among prosperous republics didn't like to pay big price to uplift the backward Central Asian republics.
- Emergence of new countries and new alliances – Eg: Baltic countries aligned with NATO.
- Changes in politics of Europe led to dilution of division between Western and Eastern Europe. Demolition of the Berlin wall, the unification of Germany, the end of the Warsaw Pact and rise of democratic regimes changed the politics of Europe.
- The membership of European Union enlarged with eastern European countries leading to emergence of new economic bloc -EU.
- With the EU looming over the realm, the now-independent countries of Eastern Europe shifted their economic direction away from Moscow and the collapsing Communist state and toward the core industrial countries of Western Europe and the EU.
- With the fall of Communism came economic reforms that shifted countries from central planning to open markets.
- Great elegance has helped it become one of the major tourist attractions in Eastern Europe. Major movie studios have also traveled to the city to film.
- There was Change in power equations many eastern European countries joined the bipolar world, capitalist ideology, IMF, OECD, World Bank etc.

Conclusion

Hence, the disintegration of the USSR resulted in a phase of USA's dominance in world politics. Countries like India maintained good relations with Russia post-disintegration and shared the idea of having a multipolar world order. India's position also improved at international and regional level not in a hegemonic way but as a responsible and powerful country.



3. Discuss the historical background of the NATO. How is it shaping the events in Eastern Europe today? Discuss.

Approach-

Candidates need to discuss the historical background of the NATO and how is it shaping the events in Eastern Europe today.

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union. It was the first peacetime military alliance the United States entered into outside of the Western Hemisphere.

The historical background of the NATO

- After the destruction of the Second World War, the nations of Europe struggled to rebuild their economies.
- The United States viewed an economically strong, rearmed, and integrated Europe as vital to the prevention of communist expansion across the continent.
- As a result, Secretary of State George Marshall proposed a Marshall plan.
- The plan resulted in promotion of the idea of shared interests and cooperation between the United States and Europe.
- Aid provided through the US-funded Marshall Plan (also known as the European Recovery Program) and other means fostered a degree of economic stabilisation.
- European states still needed confidence in their security, however, before they would begin talking and trading with each other.
- Military cooperation, and the security it would bring, would have to develop in parallel with economic and political progress.
- With this in mind, several Western European democracies came together to implement various projects for greater military cooperation and collective defence, including the creation of the Western Union in 1948, later to become the Western European Union in 1954.
- In the end, it was determined that only a truly transatlantic security agreement could deter Soviet aggression while simultaneously preventing the revival of European militarism and laying the groundwork for political integration.
- Accordingly, after much discussion and debate, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed on 4 April, 1949.

How is it shaping the events in Eastern Europe today?

- The current confrontation between Russia and the west is fuelled by many grievances, but the greatest is the belief in Moscow that the west tricked the former Soviet Union by breaking promises made at the end of the cold war in 1989-1990 that NATO would not expand to the east.
- The threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine has placed heightened importance on the United States' and NATO's defences across eastern Europe, which for decades have acted as a buffer between Russia and the West.
- NATO has four multinational battalion-size battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, which operate on a rotational basis.
- Although Ukraine is not a NATO member, the alliance also provides strategic-level advice to the country and has described the relationship as "one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships."
- Other assets at NATO's disposal in the region include a missile defense system in Romania, designed to "detect, track, engage, and destroy" ballistic missiles in the atmosphere.

Conclusion

Today, the crisis in Ukraine makes it all too clear that the U.S. and NATO need to take a very different approach to creating an effective strategy and to NATO's force planning and modernization on a country-by-country level. Regardless of how Russia's present pressure on Ukraine works out, it is clear that Russia is likely to be hostile as long as President Putin is in power.