World History · GS - I

“There arose a serious challenge to the Democratic State System between the two World Wars.”

Evaluate the statement.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - I	World History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Interwar period, Treaty of Versailles, rise of fascism, Mussolini, Hitler and Nazism, Stalinist authoritarianism, Japanese militarism, Great Depression, failure of the League of Nations, democratic resilience.

Model Answer

Introduction

The period between the First and Second World Wars (1919–1939) witnessed a major crisis of liberal democracy. Economic instability, political polarisation and extremist ideologies weakened democratic institutions across several countries.

Major Challenges to Democracy

- **Fascism in Italy:** Benito Mussolini established a dictatorship in 1922, suppressing opposition and promoting aggressive nationalism.
- **Nazism in Germany:** The Weimar Republic faced resentment over the Treaty of Versailles, economic instability and political extremism. Hitler's rise in 1933 led to the dismantling of democratic institutions.
- **Militarism in Japan:** Military influence expanded during the 1930s, culminating in aggressive expansion into Manchuria and China.
- **Authoritarianism in the Soviet Union:** Under Joseph Stalin, purges, censorship and one-party rule severely restricted political freedoms.

- **Great Depression:** The economic crisis beginning in 1929 caused mass unemployment and weakened confidence in democratic governments. Extremist movements exploited popular frustration.
- **Failure of collective security:** The League of Nations failed to prevent aggression by Japan, Italy and Germany, undermining international cooperation.

Democratic Resilience

Democracy survived in countries such as Britain and France. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal also demonstrated that democratic governments could respond to economic crises through public intervention.

Conclusion

The interwar period exposed democracy's vulnerability to economic shocks, authoritarian nationalism and institutional weakness. It demonstrated the need for inclusive governance, constitutional safeguards and effective international cooperation.

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