

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**  
**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION — 2012**  
**HISTORY**

**PAPER I****Time Allowed : 3 Hours****Full Marks : 100**

If the questions attempted are in excess of the prescribed number, only the questions attempted first up to the prescribed number shall be valued and the remaining ones ignored.

Answers may be written either in **English** or in **Bengali** but all answers must be in one and the same language.

All questions carry equal marks.

**GROUP - A**

Answer **any three** questions

1. 'The nineteenth century in India is a period of social and cultural renaissance? Discuss.
2. Was there a popular upsurge in India after the Second World War? What was its impact on the transfer of power?
3. Assess the importance of literary sources for reconstructing the history of ancient India.
4. Account for the decline and downfall of the Gupta Empire.
5. Analyse the historical background and principal features of the Bhakti movement.
6. How did the Rajput policy of the Mughal Emperors evolve till the end of Aurangzeb's reign?

**Group - B**

Answer **any two** questions.

7. Critically analyse Gandhi's rise to power in national politics in India after his return from South Africa.
8. How do you analyse the factors that led to the downfall of the Mauryan empire not very long after Ashoka?
9. To what extent did the agrarian crisis weaken the Mughal empire?

10. What was the significance of Civil Disobedience Movement in Indian politics?

**PAPER II**

1. To what extent Germany was responsible for the outbreak of the World War I?
2. What is Renaissance? What were its causes?
3. Why did the overseas expansion at the beginning of the 16th century become a concern of the European powers? What was its social and economic impact?
4. What was the system of Metternich? Why did it fail?
5. Was Alexander II really a 'Tsar the Liberator'?

**Group-B**

Answer **any two** questions :

6. Who was responsible for the World War II?
7. In how many ways was the English Revolution of 1688 glorious?
8. Explain the issues involved in the American Civil War of 1860.

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**  
**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION — 2011**  
**HISTORY**

**PAPER I****Time Allowed : 3 Hours****Full Marks : 100**

If the questions attempted are in excess of the prescribed number, only the questions attempted first up to the prescribed number shall be valued and the remaining ones ignored.

Answers may be written either in **English** or in **Bengali** but all answers must be in one and the same language.

All questions carry equal marks.

**GROUP - A**

Answer **any three** questions

1. How far did the interaction between Hinduism and Islam affect Indian society and thought in medieval India?
2. Assess the importance of archaeological sources for the study of ancient Indian History.
3. Give a brief but critical account of the principal aspects of the Harappan civilization. How is it different from and anterior to the culture of the Vedic period?
4. What were the different policies adopted by Samudragupta to establish his supremacy over his contemporaries and how far was he successful?
5. "The Din-I-Ilahi was a monument of Akbar's folly, not of his wisdom". (Smith) comment on this statement with reference to Akbar's motives behind this religious experiment.
6. Was the Partition of India in 1947 inevitable and unavoidable?

**GROUP - B**

Answer **any two** questions

7. What is exactly the significance of the Hussain Shahi rule in the history of Bengal?

8. How would you characterise Sher-Shah-an innovator or a reformer?
9. Was Maurya administration highly bureaucratic and centralized?
10. "Vidyasagar had the genius and wisdom of an ancient sage, the energy of an English-man and the heart of a Bengalee mother". — Justify Vidyasagar's nomenclature of "traditional moderniser" in the light of the statement and in the context of his various reform work.

**PAPER II****Time Allowed : 3 Hours****Full Marks : 100****GROUP - A**

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any three questions

1. What was the Continental System? How far did it contribute to the downfall of Napoleon? 8+12
2. Give reasons for the origin of the Renaissance in Italy. 20
3. "Feudalism collapsed in Western Europe because of its own internal contradictions". Do you agree with this statement? 20
4. Can Alexander II be called 'Tsar the Liberator'? 20
5. Trace the rise and growth of Fascism in Italy under Mussolini.

**OR**

Discuss the main characteristics of Fascism.

**GROUP - B**

Answer any two questions

6. "The Renaissance scholars laid the eggs which Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, later on hatched on". Discuss. 20
7. "The Treaty of Versailles was a dictated peace of victor powers on a vanquished nation". Explain. 20
8. What were the weaknesses and difficulties of the Weirner Republic? How did Hitler succeed in establishing his dictatorship? 8+12

**PAPER - II****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100**

All questions carry equal marks

**Group - A**

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any three questions

1. How far were the philosophers responsible for the outbreak of the French revolution (1789 A.D.)?
2. How did the English Civil War generate radical, social and political ideas?
3. What is meant by crisis in feudalism? How did the feudal order collapse?
4. Discuss the various reforms of Czar Alexander-II, Why is he called 'the Czar liberator'?
5. How did Bismarck unify Germany?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

6. Was the World War-I inevitable?
7. How far was the treaty of Versailles a 'Peace Diktat'?
8. How would you narrate the scientific revolution of 15th and 16th Centuries?

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**  
**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION — 2010**  
**HISTORY**

**PAPER I****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100**

If the questions attempted are in excess of the prescribed number, only the questions attempted first up to the prescribed number shall be valued and the remaining ones ignored.

Answers may be given either in English or in Bengali but all answers must be in one and the same language.

All questions carry equal marks

**Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. How did a political crisis develop in India after the death of Aurangzeb?
2. Give an account of the cultural life in Bengal under the Palas.
3. Assess the economic reforms of Alauddin Khalji.
4. What changes do you perceive in the socio-economic condition of the Aryans in the Later Vedic period?
5. Examine the nature of mass participation in the Quit India Movement of 1942.
6. Comment on the role of Raja Rammohan Roy as the architect of Indian Renaissance.

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

7. Was the Partition of India inevitable?
8. Discuss the background and the influence of the Sufi Movement in India.
9. Was Gandhiji wrong in writing the Khilafat issue with the Non-Cooperation Movement?
10. Discuss the nature of Asoka's Dhamma.

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2009**  
**HISTORY**

**PAPER I****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. Give a critical account of the economic measures of Sultan Alauddin Khalji.
2. Describe the broad features of the political and social institutions of the Rig Vedic period. What changes were effected during the Later Vedic period?
3. "The Gupta period is the Golden Age in Indian History" — Do you agree?
4. Analyse the causes of the decline of the Mughal Empire. How far Emperor Aurangzeb's policies were responsible for the downfall?
5. Describe the circumstances leading to the introduction of the Permanent Settlement. Discuss its merits and demerits.
6. What led to the growth of extremism in the ranks of the Indian National Congress? Why did it fail?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

7. Was the Rising of 1857 in India 'the first national war of independence'?
8. Discuss the political and cultural contributions of the Imperial Palas of Bengal.
9. Account for the emergence of the Bhakti movement in medieval India.
10. Analyse the problem of integration of the princely states with the newly independent India.

**PAPER - II**

**Time Allowed - 3 Hours Full Marks - 100**

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any five questions

1. In what ways did the Reformation in England strengthen the power of the English monarchy?
2. Describe the main features of the feudal order in Europe.
3. What factors contributed to the humanist culture in Renaissance Italy?
4. Explain the causes of the English civil war. Was it a 'bour-geois revolution'?
5. Discuss the role of the Philosophers in the French Revolution of 1789.
6. How did the Nazis impose a dictatorial regime in Germany after they seized power in March, 1933?
7. Discuss the different stages of the unification of Germany.
8. Assess the role of Lenin in the Bolshevik revolution.

2. "Feudalism was not merely a social system, but a complete pattern of life." – Do you agree?
3. "Declaration of independence was revolutionary." – Do you think it to be a correct estimate of the American War of Independence?
4. "Italy as a Nation is a legacy, the life-work of Cavour." – Elucidate.
5. How far did the Berlin Settlement (1878) solve the Eastern Question? Could Disraeli bring "peace with honour"?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

6. "The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a single revolution which developed in two phases." – Explain.
7. "England grew but Prussia was manufactured" – Explain.
8. "The anglican Vessel of Elizabeth glided smoothly between the clashing rocks of Romanism and Presbyterianism." – Do you think it to be a correct estimate of Reformation in England?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2008  
HISTORY  
PAPER I**

**Time Allowed - 3 Hours Full Marks - 100**

**Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. Was there any ideology behind Sivaji's attempt to build up a regional kingdom?
2. How far is it proper to consider Buddhism as a protestant movement?
3. Try to give an impartial judgement on the achievements of Sasanka.
4. Assess the historical significance of the Bhakti movement.
5. Analyse the impact of the colonial rule behind deindustrialisation of Indian economy.
6. How far is it appropriate to regard Vidyasagar as a traditional moderniser?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

7. What was the social character of extremism in Indian politics?
8. Analyse the value of archaeological sources for ancient Indian history – merits and limitation.
9. Would you consider Samudragupta to be the greatest among the Gupta emperors? Give reasons for your answer.
10. Was Din-i-Ilahi a new religion or was it born out of political compulsion?

**PAPER - II**

**Time Allowed - 3 Hours Full Marks - 100**

**Group - A**

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any three questions

1. Did the Reign of Terror really save France?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2007  
HISTORY  
PAPER I**

**Time Allowed - 3 Hours Full Marks - 100**

**Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. Why was permanent settlement introduced? What was its impact on Bengal's rural economy?
2. How would you explain the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization?
3. In what sense was Buddhism a protest movement?
4. Was Muhamud-Bin-Tugluq really a 'mad king'?
5. How did Akbar consolidate the foundations of the Mughal empire?
6. How did Gandhi transform the character of Indian nationalism?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

7. Would you consider Rammohan Ray as the 'father of modern India'?
8. Was the Mauryan state a centralized despotism?
9. Account for the relative stability in Bengal in the early part of the eighteenth century.
10. Make an assessment of Jawaharlal Nehru's role in organising the non-aligned movement.

**PAPER - II**

**Time Allowed - 3 Hours Full Marks - 100**

**Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. Analyse the role of John Lock in the development of liberalism.
2. Examine the economic crisis in 18th Century France. To what extent was it responsible for the 1789 revolution?
3. What is 'Renaissance'? What were its causes?



4. How far is it correct to describe Napoleon I as the child of the revolution?
5. Do you think that the congress of Vienna was a 'reasonable' and 'statesmanlike' arrangement?

**Group - B**Answer **Any two** questions

6. How did the Chinese Revolution of 1949 affect the international politics in the 1950s?
7. Why was the pace of industrialisation in France and Germany weaker than in England?
8. Who was responsible for the World War-I?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2006**  
**HISTORY**  
**PAPER I**

*Time Allowed - 3 Hours**Full Marks - 100***Group - A**Answer **any three** questions

1. In what ways was Sher Shah a precursor of Akbar as a ruler?
2. How do you account for the rise of Magadha as an imperial power in ancient India?
3. "Kaniska's fame rests not so much on his conquests, as on his patronage of the religion of Sakyamuni" – Do you agree?
4. Do you agree with the view that the region of Shah Jahan "marks the climax of the Mughal dynasty and empire"?
5. Discuss the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy on education in the first-half of the 19th century and analyse the effects of the triumph of Anglicism.
6. "Haider Ali was born to create an empire and Tipu to lose one" – Comment.

**Group - B**Answer **Any two** questions

7. What claim does Rammohan Roy have to the title of the "Father of Modern India"?
8. Give a critical account of the tripartite struggle among the Palas, Gurjara-Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas.
9. Was Firuz Tughlak really "the Akbar of the Sultanate"?
10. Critically analyse the role of Subhas Chandra Bose in the struggle for India's freedom.

**PAPER - II***Time Allowed - 3 Hours**Full Marks - 100***Group - A**

All questions carry equal marks.

Answer **any three** questions

1. Was Alexander II really a "Tsar the Liberator"?
2. What were the major principles of Bismarck's diplomacy? How far and why Kaiser William II change the policy of Bismarck? What were its results?
3. Why and how did Martin Luther revolt against the Pope of Rome? Was there any nationalist motive behind his protest?
4. Give a critical estimate of the "Treaty of Versailles". Was it a "dictated peace"?
5. How would you explain the rise of Hitler and growth of Nazi movement?

*Or,*

How would you explain the rise of dictatorships in Europe in the aftermath of the First World War?

**Group - B**Answer **Any two** questions

8. Explain the Bolshevik Ideology. Assess Lenin's role in the formation of a Socialist State in Russia.
6. In how many ways was the "English Revolution" of 1688 glorious?
7. Was the Vienna Settlement (1815) marked by reaction and betrayal?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2005**  
**HISTORY**  
**PAPER I**

*Time Allowed - 3 Hours**Full Marks - 100***Group - A**Answer **any three** questions

1. How did the Hindu and Muslim Communities interact during the Sultanate period?
2. How far was the downfall of the Maurya Empire due to Brahmapical reaction?
3. Why did the grandiose schemes of Muhammad bin Tughlak fail?
4. Explain the religious, social, economic and political causes of the religious protest movements in the 6th century B. C. India.
5. Examine the contributions of the Hussain Shahi dynasty to the economic and cultural life of Bengal.
6. What is 'drain of wealth'? How would you explain the gradual decline of the old cotton textile industry of Bengal?

**Group - B**Answer **Any two** questions

7. In what ways did Gandhi's leadership add new dimensions to the Indian National Movement?
8. Was Ashoka really a Buddhist?
9. Was the Din-i-Ilahi a monument of Akbar's folly not his wisdom?
10. Would you call the Mutiny of 1857 the first national war of Independence?

**PAPER - II****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**

All questions carry equal marks.

A **any three questions**

1. What were the main sources of the supply of industrial capital in Britain? How did the continental situation differ in this respect?
2. Make a critical estimate of the role of Philosophes in bringing about a revolutionary situation in France.
3. Examine briefly the basic characteristics of feudal society in Western Europe between the 9th and 12th centuries. Why did it decline?
4. What was Bismarck's contribution to German unification? What were the other factors which contributed to it?
5. Analyse the historical situation leading upto the First World War, with special emphasis on the economic relations and imperial rivalries.

**Group - B**Answer **Any two questions**

6. Critically examine the main objectives and features of the foreign policy of Nazi Germany.
7. Can the Treaty of Versailles be labelled as a 'diktat' (dictated peace) for the Germans?
8. 'The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a single revolution which developed two phases.' – Elucidate.

**PAPER - II****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100**

All questions carry equal marks.

Answer **any three questions**

1. Would you regard Mazzini as one of the pioneers in forging Italy's national unity?
2. To what extent did the philosophes influence the French Revolution of 1789?
3. Discuss the main features of civic humanism of the 15th and 16th centuries. How did it contribute to a fundamental revision of the approach to historical study?
4. Was slavery the chief cause of the American Civil War?
5. How would you explain the rise of Fascism in Italy?

**Group - B**Answer **Any two questions**

8. Why did World War II break out? Who or what was to blame?
6. Comment on the view that the continental system wounded its author more deeply than his opponents?
7. What led to the emergence of new Imperialism during the last quarter of the 19th century?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2004****HISTORY****PAPER I****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**Answer **any three questions**

1. Trace the growth and ascendancy of the British Power in Bengal between 1757 and 1765.
2. What were the salient features of the Indus Valley Civilization?
3. Explain Asoka's Dharma. Can you link it with Buddhism?
4. Briefly discuss the economic reforms of Alauddin Khalji with special reference to his market-control regulations.
5. Give a brief account of the peasant and tribal movements in India in the 18th and 19th centuries. Why did they fail?
6. Critically analyse the strength and weakness of the early leaders of the Indian National Congress.

**Group - B**Answer **Any two questions**

7. To what extent was 'jagirdari crisis' responsible for the decline of the Mughal Empire?
8. Give an account of the political life of the Rig-Vedic Aryans.
9. Write a note on the Bhakti movement in the Sultanate period.
10. Trace the growth of a Separate Muslim Politics in India.

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2003****HISTORY****PAPER I****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**Answer **any three questions**

1. Write a note on the reforms of Lord William Bentinck. Did these reforms have any imprint of utilitarianism?
2. How would you account, from available source materials, the influence of Mesopotamian civilisation on the Indus Valley or Harappan culture?
3. Judging by its form and functioning would you ascribe the Delhi Sultanat a theocratic state?
4. To what extent was Akbar's Rajput policy dictated by political expediency?
5. Was the partition of India in 1947 inevitable?

**Group - B**Answer **Any two questions**

6. 'The treaty (of Salbai) restored the *status quo-ante bellu* as both the parties (Maratha and British) reverted to the old territorial boundaries. But politically the British govt. was significant; the Company was recognised as one of the leading military powers in India.' – Elucidate and justify
7. The traditional thinking of Gupta period as a golden age on Indian history has been discarded by a good number of scholars of the last century. Do you subscribe to their views or those of the traditionalists? Give reasons for your answer.
8. How would you characterise Sher Shah – as an innovator or a reformer?



**PAPER - II****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any three questions

1. Explain the issues involved in the American Civil War (1860):
2. How far were the Philosophers a factor in the causation of the French Revolution (1789) ?
3. What was "the System of Metternich"? Why did it fail?
4. "Italy as a Nation is a legacy, the life-work of Cavour" – Is this a correct assesment of the story of Italian Unification?
5. Analyse the causes of the Russian Revolution of 1917.
6. Assess the role of Mao-Tse-Tung in the establishment of "the people's Democracy" in China.

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

7. How did England become "the workshop of the world" as a result of the Industrial Revolution?
8. Feudalism was "a barbarian protest against barbarism" – Examine the statement in the light of the origin and organisation of Feudalism.
9. "The Anglican vessel of Elizabeth glided sommthly between the clashin rocks of Romanism and presbyterianism" – Elucidate.
10. Do you think Fascism in Italy was "anti-individualist, anti-democratic, anti-socialist, anti-laissez-faire and anti-pacifist"?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2002****HISTORY****PAPER I****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. Discuss briefly the career of Chandragupta II.
2. Critically assess the importance of literary sources for the study of history of ancient India.
3. Discuss the rise of the Nanda Dynasty, and try to determine the causes of its downfall.
4. Account for the emergence of the Pala dynasty and give reasons for its ultimate downfall.
5. Assess the importance of the career of Vallalaseena.

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

6. Discuss the growth of agriculture in Northern India.
7. Discuss the salient features of Mahayana Buddhism.
8. Account for the popularity of the worship of Mother Goddess in early mediaeval Bengal.

**PAPER - II****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**

All questions carry equal marks.

Answer any three questions

1. How far was Napoleon I "a child of the Revolution"?
2. "The Renaissance opened the gates to the newer world of modern times and closed the door upon the long-drawn drama of the Middle Ages" – Do you consider this to be a correct assessment of the Italian Renaissance?

3. Was the Congress of Vienna really reactionary?

Or,

Was the Treaty of Versailles "a dictated peace"?

4. "Not by speches" but by "blood and iron" – How far does this policyh explain the unification of Germany by Bismarck?

Or,

Was Alexander II really "a Tsar Liberator"?

5. How did Mustafa Kamal of Turkey transform "The sick-man of Europe" into a modern state?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

6. "No taxation without representation" – How far does this explain the outbreak of the American War of Independence?
7. "England grew but Prussia was manufactured" – Elucidate.

Or,

In what respects was "Scientific Socialism" an improvement on "utopian socialism"?

8. In how many ways was the "English Revolution" of 1688 "glorious"?

**W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2001****HISTORY****PAPER I****Time Allowed - 3 Hours****Full Marks - 100****Group - A**

Answer any three questions

1. Analyse the economic measures of Firuz Tughluq. Would you regard him as Akbar of his age?
2. Examine the socio-economic condition of the 'Aryans' in the early Vedic Age. Do you notice any change in the later Vedic period?
3. Do you think that the Mauryas established a centralised administrative system?
4. Was Samudragupta Raj Chakraborty in true sense of the term?
5. Discuss the impact of Aurangzeb's Deccan policy on the Mughal Empire.
6. Why did the East India Company introduce the Permanent Settlement in 1793?
7. How did Extremism in Indian politics originate and grow? Would you interpret this movement in terms of social and class discontent?

**Group - B**

Answer Any two questions

8. Was the Revolt of 1857 national upsurge? Discuss the different interpretations in this connection.
9. Review critically the Art activities of the Pallavas of Kanchi?
10. Was the Delhi Sultanate a theocracy?
11. Was the Partition of India in 1924 inevitable?

## PAPER - II

Full Marks - 100

Time Allowed - 3 Hours

## Group - A

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any three questions

1. What importance would you attach to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England? Did it have any impact upon the Royal Prerogative?
2. How did Martin Luther revolt against the Pope of Rome? Was there any nationalist motive behind his protest?
3. Why was Overseas expansion, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, become a concern of European powers? What was its social and economic impact?
4. Why did the industrial revolution in England precede that in the Continent?
5. How did Metternich try to preserve the conservative order in Europe? Why did he fail?

## Group - B

Answer Any two questions

8. How would you describe Communist takeover of China in 1949?
6. Write a note on the Manchurian Crisis of 1931. Did it have any impact upon the League of Nations' credibility?
7. Why was India partitioned in 1947?

## W.B.C.S. (EXECUTIVE) EXAMINATION - 2000

## HISTORY

## PAPER I

Time Allowed - 3 Hours

Full Marks - 100

## Group - A

Answer any three questions

1. What are the various sources of the history of the reign of Harshavardhana. Examine critically the achievements of his reign.
2. Trace the rise and growth of the Magadhan power to the position of an imperial power till the fall of the Nandas.
3. Discuss the causes of the downfall of the Gupta Empire.
4. Critically evaluate the importance of archaeological sources for the study of the history of ancient India.
5. "The short period of Sena rule is an important landmark in the history of Bengal". Elucidate the statement.

## Group - B

Answer Any two questions

6. In what way did the Mauryan age constitute a landmark in the history of Indian art and architecture?
7. Discuss the essential features of Jainism. To what extent would you attribute its vitality even in modern times?
8. How did the organisation of guilds represent the corporate activity in the economic life of ancient India?

## PAPER - II

Full Marks - 100

Time Allowed - 3 Hours

## Group - A

All questions carry equal marks.  
Answer any three questions

1. How did Kaiser William II change the foreign policy of Bismarck? What were its results?
2. How did the nature of Industrial Revolution differ in European nations?
3. In what ways did Slavery become a central issue in the American Civil War?
4. Describe briefly the political, social and economic condition of France on the eve of the French Revolution of 1789.
5. Examine the causes of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

## Group - B

Answer Any two questions

6. Explain critically the Arab-Jewish problem centring Palestine. Did the birth of Israel in 1949 settle the issue?
7. Why was France anxious for her security after the First World War? What did she do to ensure her security in the inter-war period?
8. Analyse the diplomatic background of the Second World War. The outbreak of war - was it a blunder or design?