

The Second World War

1933–1945



Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima (February 23, 1945) Five members of the United States Marine Corps raise the U.S. flag on Mount Suribachi, during the Battle of Iwo Jima. Three of these Marines would die within days after this photograph was taken. The image earned photographer Joe Rosenthal the Pulitzer Prize. A bronze statue of this scene is the centerpiece of the Marine Corps War Memorial in Virginia.

When Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1933, he shared with most Americans a determination to stay out of international disputes. His focus was on combating the Great Depression at home. While the United States had become deeply involved in global trade during the twenties, it had remained aloof from global conflicts. So-called isolationists insisted that there was no justification for America to become embroiled in international affairs, much less another major war. With each passing year during the thirties, however, Germany, Italy, and Japan threatened the peace and stability of Europe and Asia.

Roosevelt strove mightily to keep the United States out of what he called the “spreading epidemic of world lawlessness,” as fascist dictatorships in Germany and Italy and ultranationalist militarists in Japan violated international law by invading neighboring countries. By the end of the decade, Roosevelt had decided that the only way for the United States to avoid fighting in another war was to offer all possible assistance to its allies, Great Britain, France, and China.

Roosevelt’s efforts to stop “aggressor nations” ignited a fierce debate between isolationists and interventionists which ended with shocking suddenness on December 7, 1941, when Japan staged a surprise attack against U.S. military bases at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The second world war that Americans had struggled to avoid had arrived at last. It would become the most significant event of the twentieth century, engulfing five continents and leaving few people untouched.

The Japanese attack unified Americans as never before. Men and women rushed to join the armed forces. Eventually, 16.4 million people would serve

focus questions

1. How did German and Japanese actions lead to the outbreak of war in Europe and Asia?
2. How did President Roosevelt and Congress respond to the outbreak of wars in Europe and Asia between 1933 and 1941?
3. What were the effects of the Second World War on American society?
4. What were the major factors that enabled the United States and its allies to win the war in Europe?
5. How were the Japanese defeated in the war in the Pacific?
6. How did President Roosevelt and the Allies work to shape the postwar world?

in the military during the war, including 350,000 women. To defeat Japanese imperialism and German and Italian fascism, the United States mobilized all of its economic resources. The massive government spending required to wage total war boosted industrial production and wrenched the economy out of the Great Depression.

Four years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States and its allies emerged victorious in the costliest and most destructive war in history. Cities were destroyed, nations dismembered, and societies transformed. More than 50 million people were killed in the war between 1939 and 1945—perhaps 60 percent of them civilians, including millions of Jews and other ethnic minorities in Nazi death camps and Soviet concentration camps.

The global scope and scale of the Second World War ended America's tradition of isolationism. By 1945, the United States was the world's most powerful nation, with new international interests and global responsibilities. The war left power vacuums in Europe and Asia that the Soviet Union and the United States sought to fill to protect their military, economic, and political interests. Instead of bringing peace, the end of the war led to a "cold war" between the two former allies. As the *New Yorker* magazine asked, "If you do not know that your country is now entangled beyond recall with the rest of the world, what do you know?"

THE RISE OF FASCISM IN EUROPE

In 1917, Woodrow Wilson had led the United States into the First World War to make the world "safe for democracy." In fact, though, democracy was in retreat after 1919, while Soviet communism was on the march. So, too, was **fascism**, a radical form of totalitarian government in which a dictator uses propaganda and brute force to seize control of all aspects of national life—the economy, the armed forces, the legal and educational systems, and the press. Fascism in Germany and Italy thrived on a violent ultranationalist patriotism and almost hysterical emotionalism built upon claims of racial superiority and the simmering resentments that grew out of defeat in the First World War.

At the same time, halfway around the world, the Japanese government fell under the control of expansionists eager to conquer China and most of Asia. Japanese leaders were convinced that they were a "master race" with a "mission" to lead a resurgent Asia, just as Adolf Hitler claimed that Germany's "mission," as home of the supposedly superior "Aryan" race, was to dominate Europe. By 1941, there would be only a dozen or so democratic nations left on earth.

ITALY AND GERMANY In 1922, former journalist Benito Mussolini and 40,000 of his black-shirted supporters seized control of Italy, taking advantage of a paralyzed political system incapable of dealing with widespread unemployment, runaway inflation, mass strikes, and fears of communism. By 1925, Mussolini was wielding dictatorial power as "Il Duce" (the Leader). He called his version of antisocialist totalitarian nationalism *fascism*. All political parties except the Fascists were eliminated, and several political opponents were murdered. There was something darkly comical about the strutting, chest-thumping Mussolini, who claimed that "my animal instincts are always right."

There was nothing amusing, however, about Mussolini's German counterpart, the Austrian-born Adolf Hitler. Hitler's remarkable transformation during the 1920s from social misfit to head of the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) party startled the world. Hitler and the Nazis claimed that they represented a German ("Aryan") master race whose "purity and strength" were threatened by liberals, Jews, socialists, Communists, homosexuals, Gypsies, and other "inferior" peoples. Hitler promised to make Germany strong again by renouncing the Versailles Treaty, defying the limits on its armed forces, and uniting the German-speaking people of Europe into a Greater German Empire that would give the nation "living space" to expand, dominate "lesser" races, and rid the continent of Jews.

Hitler portrayed himself as Germany's savior from the humiliation of having lost the Great War and the widespread suffering caused by the Great Depression. Appointed chancellor on January 30, 1933, five weeks before Franklin Roosevelt was first inaugurated, Hitler, like Mussolini, was idolized by the masses of voters. He declared himself absolute leader, or *Führer*, became president in 1934 and supreme commander of the armed forces, banned all



Fascist propaganda Benito Mussolini's headquarters in Rome's Palazzo Braschi, which bore an oversized reproduction of his head.



Adolf Hitler Hitler performs the Nazi salute at a rally. The giant banners, triumphant music, powerful oratory, and expansive military parades were all designed to stir excitement and allegiance among Nazis.

political parties except the Nazis, created a secret police force known as the *Gestapo*, and stripped people of voting rights. There would be no more elections, labor unions, or strikes.

During the mid-1930s, Hitler's brutal Nazi police state cranked up the engines of tyranny and terrorism, propaganda and censorship. Two million brown-shirted, brawling thugs, called "storm troopers," fanned out across the nation, burning books and persecuting, imprisoning, and murdering Communists, Jews, Gypsies—and their sympathizers.

THE EXPANDING AXIS As the 1930s unfolded, a catastrophic series of events in Asia and Europe sent the world hurtling toward disaster. In 1931–1932, some 10,000 Japanese troops had occupied Manchuria in north-east China, a territory rich in raw materials and deposits of iron ore and coal. At the time, China was fragmented by civil war between Communists led by Mao Zedong and Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek. The Japanese took advantage of China's weakness to proclaim Manchuria's independence, renaming it the "Republic of Manchukuo." In 1934, Japan began an aggressive military buildup in anticipation of conquering all of east Asia.

The next year, Mussolini launched Italy's reconquest of Ethiopia, a weak nation in eastern Africa that Italy had controlled until 1896. When the League of Nations branded Mussolini an aggressor and imposed economic sanctions on Italy, the racist Italian leader expressed surprise that European leaders would prefer a "horde of barbarian Negroes" in Ethiopia over Italy, the "mother of civilization."

In 1935, Hitler, in flagrant violation of the Versailles Treaty, began rebuilding Germany's armed forces. The next year, he sent 35,000 soldiers into the Rhineland, the demilitarized buffer zone between France and Germany. In a staged vote, 99 percent of the Germans living in the Rhineland approved Hitler's action. The failure of France and Great Britain to enforce the Versailles Treaty convinced Hitler that the western democracies were cowards and would not try to stop him from achieving his goal of German dominance.

The year 1936 also witnessed the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, which began when Spanish troops loyal to General Francisco Franco, with the support of the Roman Catholic Church, revolted against the fragile new republican government. Hitler and Mussolini rushed troops ("volunteers"), warplanes, and military and financial aid to support Franco's fascist insurgency.

While peace in Europe was unraveling, the Japanese government fell under the control of aggressive militarists. In 1937, a government official announced that the "tide has turned against the liberalism and democracy that once swept over the nation." On July 7, 1937, Japanese and Chinese soldiers clashed at China's Marco Polo Bridge, near Beijing. The incident quickly escalated into a full-scale conflict, the Sino-Japanese War.

By December, the Japanese had captured the Nationalist Chinese capital of Nanjing, whereupon the undisciplined soldiers ran amok, looting the city and mercilessly murdering and raping civilians. As many as 300,000 Chinese were murdered in what came to be called the Rape of Nanjing. Thereafter, the Sino-Japanese War bogged down into a stalemate.

FROM ISOLATIONISM TO INTERVENTION

Most Americans responded to the mounting crises abroad by deepening their commitment to isolationism. In his 1933 inaugural address, President Roosevelt announced that he would continue to promote what he called "the good neighbor policy" in the Western Hemisphere, declaring that no nation "has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another." True to his word, Roosevelt withdrew U.S. troops from Nicaragua and Haiti.

The nation's deeply rooted isolationist mood was reinforced by a prominent Senate inquiry into the role of bankers and businesses in the



Neutrality A 1938 cartoon shows U.S. foreign policy entangled by the serpent of isolationism.

American decision to enter World War I. Chaired by Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, the “Nye Committee” began hearings in 1934 that lasted until early 1936. The committee concluded that weapons makers and bankers (the “merchants of death”) had spurred U.S. intervention in the European conflict in 1917 and were continuing to “help frighten nations into military activity.”

U.S. NEUTRALITY In 1935, *Christian Century* magazine declared that “ninety-nine Americans out of a hundred would today regard as an imbecile anyone who might suggest that, in the event of another European war, the United States should again participate in it.” Such widespread isolationism led President Roosevelt to sign the first of several “**neutrality laws**” passed by Congress to help avoid the supposed mistakes that had led the nation into the First World War. The Neutrality Act of 1935 prohibited Americans from selling weapons or traveling on ships owned by nations at war. In 1936, Congress revised the Neutrality Act by banning loans to warring nations.

Roosevelt, however, was not so sure that the United States could or should remain neutral. In October 1937, he delivered a speech in Chicago, the heart-

land of isolationism, in which he called for international cooperation to “quarantine the aggressors” who were responsible for disturbing world peace. But his appeal fell flat.

The Neutrality Act of 1937 allowed Roosevelt to require that nonmilitary American goods bought by warring nations be sold on a cash-and-carry basis—that is, a nation would have to pay cash and then carry the American-made goods away in its own ships. This was intended to preserve America’s profitable trade with warring nations without running the risk of being drawn into the fighting.

THE AXIS ALLIANCE In 1937, Japan joined Germany and Italy in establishing the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo “**Axis**” alliance. Hitler and Mussolini vowed to create a “new order in Europe,” while the Japanese imperialists pursued their “divine right” to control all of east Asia by creating what they called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

ANNSCHLUSS In March 1938, Hitler forced the *Anschluss* (union) of Austria with Germany. Hitler’s triumphant return to his native country was greeted by pro-German crowds waving Nazi flags and tossing flowers. Soon, “Jews not Wanted” signs appeared in Austrian cities.

A month later, after arresting more than 70,000 opponents of the Nazis, German leaders announced that a remarkable 99.75 percent of Austrian voters had “approved” the forced annexation. (In fact, some 400,000 Austrians, mostly liberals and Jews, were prevented from voting.) Again, no nation stepped up to oppose Hitler, and soon the Nazi government in Austria began arresting or murdering opponents and imprisoning or exiling Jews, including the famed psychiatrist Sigmund Freud.

THE MUNICH PACT (1938) Hitler then threatened to annex the Sudeten territory (Sudetenland), a mountainous region in western Czechoslovakia along the German border where more than 3 million ethnic Germans lived. British and French leaders repeatedly tried to “appease” Hitler, hoping that if they agreed to his demands for the Sudeten territory he would stop his aggressions.

On September 30, 1938, the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, and the French prime minister, Édouard Daladier, joined Mussolini and Hitler in signing the notorious Munich Pact, which transferred the Sudetenland to Germany. In Prague, the capital, the Czechs listened to the official announcement of the Munich Pact with the excruciating sadness of people too weak to preserve their own independence. As pawns in the chess game of European politics, the

Czech people now faced a grim future. A disgusted President Roosevelt privately grumbled that Britain and France had left Czechoslovakia “to paddle its own canoe” and predicted that they would “wash the blood from their Judas Iscariot hands.” Hitler, he had decided, was a “wild man,” a “nut” with an insatiable desire for a new German empire.

Chamberlain claimed that the Munich treaty had provided “peace for our time. Peace with honor.” Winston Churchill, a member of the British Parliament who would become prime minister in May 1940, strongly disagreed. In a speech to the House of Commons, he claimed that “England has been offered a choice between war and shame. She has chosen shame, and will get war.” The Munich Pact, he predicted, would not end Hitler’s assaults. “This is only the beginning of the reckoning.”

Churchill was right. Hitler had already confided to aides that he had no intention of abiding by the Munich Pact. Although Hitler had promised that the Sudetenland would be his last territorial demand, he scrapped his pledge in March 1939, when he sent German tanks and soldiers to conquer the remainder of the Czech Republic. The European democracies, having shrunk their armies after the Great War, continued to cower in the face of his ruthless behavior and seemingly unstoppable military.

After German troops seized Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, Hitler announced it was “the greatest day of my life.” Jews were immediately lumped together with “thieves, criminals, swindlers, insane people, and alcoholics.” By the end of May, the Nazis were filling prisons with Czechs who resisted or resented the German occupation.

The rape of Czechoslovakia convinced Roosevelt that Hitler and Mussolini were “madmen” who “respect force and force alone.” Throughout late 1938 and 1939, Roosevelt tried to convince Americans, as well as British and French leaders, that the fascists would respond only to force, not words. He also persuaded Congress to increase military spending in anticipation of a possible war.

THE CONQUEST OF POLAND Later in 1939, the insatiable Hitler, having decided that he had “the world in my pocket,” turned to Poland, Germany’s eastern neighbor. Conquering Poland would give the German army a clear path to invade the Soviet Union, especially the fertile Ukraine region.

To ensure that the Soviets did not interfere with his plans, Hitler camouflaged his virulent anticommunism on August 23, 1939, when he signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact with Josef Stalin, the antifascist Soviet premier. The announcement of the treaty stunned a world that had understood fascism and communism to be enemies. The two tyrants agreed to divide

and a portion of Lithuania. Just nine days later, at dawn on September 1, an estimated 1.5 million German troops invaded Poland from the north, south, and west. Hitler ordered them “to kill without mercy men, women, and children of the Polish race or language.” He also ordered all terminally ill patients in German hospitals killed to make room for soldiers wounded in Poland.

This was the final straw for the western democracies. Having allowed Austria and Czechoslovakia to be seized by Hitler’s war machine, Great Britain and France now did an about-face. On September 3, they honored their commitment to defend Poland. Europe, the world’s smallest continent, was again embroiled in what would soon become another world war. The nations making up the British Empire and Commonwealth—Canada, India, Australia, New Zealand—joined the war. Americans watched in horror as

another world war erupted. “This nation,” declared Franklin Roosevelt, “will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or conscience.”

Sixteen days after German troops stormed across the Polish border, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east. Pressed from all sides, 700,000 poorly equipped Polish soldiers surrendered after a few weeks, having suffered 70,000 deaths and many more wounded. On October 6, 1939, the Nazis and Soviets divided Poland between them. Hitler’s goal was to obliterate Polish civilization, especially the Jews, and Germanize the country. For his part, Stalin wanted to recapture Polish territory lost during the First World War. Over the next five years, millions of Poles were arrested, deported, enslaved, or murdered. In April and May 1940, the Russians executed some 22,000 Polish military officers to ensure that its conquered neighbor would never mount a rebellion.

In late November 1939, the Soviets invaded neighboring Finland, leading President Roosevelt to condemn their “wanton disregard for law.” Outnumbered five to one, Finnish troops held off the invaders for three months before being



Josef Stalin Brutal leader of the Soviet Union who rose to power in the mid-1920s after the death of Vladimir Lenin.

REVISING THE NEUTRALITY ACT In September 1939, President Roosevelt decided that the United States must do more to stop “aggressor” nations. He summoned Congress into special session to revise the Neutrality Act. “I regret that Congress passed the Act,” the president said. “I regret equally that I signed the Act.”

After six weeks of heated debate, Congress passed the Neutrality Act of 1939, which allowed Britain and France to send their ships to the United States to bring back American military supplies. Public opinion supported such measures as long as other nations did the actual fighting.

WAR IN EUROPE The war in Europe settled into a three-month stalemate during early 1940, as Hitler’s generals waited out the winter. Then, in the early spring, Germany attacked again. At dawn on April 9, Nazi armies occupied Denmark and landed along the Norwegian coast. German paratroopers, the first ever used in warfare, seized Norway’s airports. Denmark fell in a day, Norway within a few weeks. On May 10, German forces invaded the Low Countries—Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands (Holland). Luxembourg fell the first day, the Netherlands three days later. Belgium lasted until May 28.

A few days later, German tanks roared into northern France. “The fight beginning today,” Hitler declared, “decides the fate of the German nation for the next thousand years!” His brilliant *Blitzkrieg* (“lightning war”) strategy centered on speed. Fast-moving columns of tanks, motorized artillery, and truck-borne infantry, all supported by warplanes and paratroopers, moved so fast that they paralyzed their stunned opponents.

British and French troops sent to help the Belgians were forced to make a frantic retreat to the English Channel coast, with the Germans in hot pursuit. On May 26, while German *Panzer* divisions (made up of tanks and other armored vehicles) followed Hitler’s surprising order to rest and refuel, Great Britain was able to organize a weeklong evacuation of British and French soldiers from the beaches at Dunkirk, on the northern French coast near the border with Belgium. Despite attacks from German warplanes, some 338,000 defeated and demoralized soldiers escaped to England, leaving behind vast stockpiles of vehicles, weaponry, and ammunition. “Wars are not won by evacuations,” observed Prime Minister Churchill, “but there was a victory inside this deliverance.”

While the evacuation was unfolding, German forces decimated the remaining French armies. Tens of thousands of panicked French refugees clogged the roads to Paris. The crumbling French war effort prompted Italy’s dictator, Mussolini, to

posed into Paris. Eight days later, French leaders surrendered, whereupon the Germans established a puppet fascist government in the city of Vichy.

The rapid fall of France stunned the world. In the United States, complacency about the Nazis turned to fear and even panic as people realized the Germans could eventually assault America. The Second World War was but ten months old, yet Germany ruled most of western Europe. Only the “neutral” nations of Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland had avoided the Nazi onslaught. Great Britain now stood alone against Hitler’s relentless military power. “The war is won,” an ecstatic Hitler bragged to Mussolini. “The rest is only a matter of time.”

AGGRESSION IN EUROPE, 1935–1939



→ Aggressive moves by Axis powers
 ■ Axis powers

- Keeping in mind the terms of the Treaty of Versailles ending the First World War, explain why Hitler began his campaign of expansion by invading the Rhineland and the Sudetenland.
- Why did the German attack on Poland begin the Second World War, whereas Hitler's previous invasions of Austria and Czechoslovakia did not?

PREPARING AMERICA FOR WAR As Hitler's armies conquered Europe, the United States found itself in no condition to wage war. After the First World War, the U.S. Army was reduced to a small force; by 1939, it numbered only 175,000. By contrast, Germany had almost 5 million soldiers. In promoting "military preparedness," President Roosevelt in May 1940 called for increasing the size of the army and producing 50,000 combat planes in 1942, a seemingly outlandish goal, since Germany was producing only 15,000 warplanes that year.

Roosevelt also responded to Winston Churchill's repeated requests for assistance by increasing military shipments to Great Britain and promising to provide all possible "aid to the Allies short of war." Churchill was focused on one strategic objective: to convince, coax, bluff, charm, seduce, or frighten the United States into entering the war.

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT Adding to Roosevelt's concerns was the possibility that Germany might have a secret weapon. The famous physicist Albert Einstein, a Jewish Austrian refugee from Nazism, had alerted Roosevelt in the fall of 1939 that the Germans were trying to create atomic bombs. In June 1940, Roosevelt set up the National Defense Research Committee to coordinate military research, including a top-secret effort to develop an atomic bomb—the Manhattan Project—before the Germans did. Almost 200,000 people worked on the Manhattan Project, including Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, who led the team of distinguished scientists scattered among thirty-seven secret facilities in thirteen states.

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN Having conquered western Europe, Hitler began planning the invasion of Great Britain ("Operation Sea Lion"), scheduled for September 1940. The late summer brought the Battle of Britain, as the Germans first sought to destroy Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF). The Nazis deployed some 2,500 warplanes,



Winston Churchill Prime Minister of Great Britain who led the nation during the Second World War.

outnumbering the RAF two to one. "Never has a nation been so naked before its foes," Churchill admitted.

Churchill became the symbol of Britain's determination to stop Hitler. With his bulldog face, ever-present cigar, and "V for Victory" gesture, he urged the British citizenry to make the war "their finest hour." He breathed defiance while preparing for a German invasion, building fortifications, laying mines, digging trenches and fashioning tank traps, and mobilizing the population. The British, he pledged, would confront Hitler's invaders with "blood, toil, tears, and sweat." They would "never surrender."

In July and August, 1940, the German air force (*Luftwaffe*) launched day and night bombing raids against military targets across southeast England. The pilots in the Royal Air Force (their average age was twenty-three), with the benefit of radar, a secret new technology, fended off the German assault, ultimately destroying 1,700 German warplanes. Hitler then ordered his bombers to target civilians and cities (especially London) in night raids designed to terrorize British civilians. In what came to be called "the Blitz" during September and October of 1940, the Germans caused massive damage in Britain's major cities, destroying a million homes and killing 40,000 civilians. "The last three



The London "Blitz" An aerial photograph of London set aflame by German bombing raids in 1940. Winston Churchill responded, "We shall never surrender."

nights in London,” reported the U.S. ambassador to Great Britain on September 10, “have been simply hell.”

The Blitz, however, enraged rather than demoralized the British people. A London newspaper headline summarized the nation’s courage and defiant mood: “Is That the Best You Can Do, Adolf?” The British success in the air proved decisive, for in October 1940, Hitler gave up his invasion plans. It was the first battle he had lost, and it was Britain’s finest hour.

“ALL AID SHORT OF WAR” During 1940, Franklin Roosevelt began a crucial campaign to convince Americans that isolationism was impractical and even dangerous. His phrase, all “aid short of war,” became the label for his efforts to help Great Britain. The president was especially concerned about a likely German invasion of the British Isles. “It is now most urgent,” Prime Minister Churchill cabled Roosevelt, “that you let us have the destroyers” needed to stop such an invasion. “This is a thing to do now!”

To address the challenge, Roosevelt and Churchill, whose mother was an American, negotiated a trade on September 2, 1940, called the Destroyers for Bases Agreement, by which fifty old U.S. warships went to the British Royal Navy in return for allowing the United States to build military bases on British island colonies in the Caribbean.

Two weeks later, on September 16, 1940, Roosevelt pushed through a reluctant Congress the first peacetime conscription (military draft) in American history. The Selective Training and Service Act required all 16 million men ages twenty-one to thirty-five to register for the draft at one of 6,500 local draft boards. (The minimum age was later reduced to eighteen.)

A SAVAGE DEBATE The world crisis transformed Roosevelt. Having been stalemated for much of his second term by congressional opposition to the New Deal, he was revitalized by the need to stop Nazism. Yet his efforts to aid Great Britain and prepare America for war outraged isolationists. A prominent Democrat remembered that the dispute between isolationists and so-called interventionists was “the most savage political debate during my lifetime.”

Isolationists, mostly midwestern and western Republicans, formed the America First Committee to oppose “military preparedness.” Charles Lindbergh, the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic ocean, led the isolationist effort. To Lindbergh, Roosevelt’s efforts to help Britain were driven primarily by Jews who owned “our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government.” Lindbergh assured Americans that Britain was doomed; they should join hands with Hitler.

ROOSEVELT’S THIRD TERM The isolationists sought to make the 1940 presidential campaign a debate about the war. In June, just as France was falling to Germany, the Republicans nominated Wendell L. Willkie of Indiana, a plainspoken corporate lawyer and former Democrat who had voted for Roosevelt in 1932.

Once the campaign started, Willkie warned that Roosevelt was a “war-monger” and predicted that “if you re-elect him you may expect war in April, 1941.” Roosevelt responded that he had “said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars.” In November 1940, Roosevelt won an unprecedented third term by 27 million votes to Willkie’s 22 million and by an even more decisive margin, 449 to 82, in the electoral college. Winston Churchill wrote Roosevelt that he had “prayed for your success and I am truly thankful for it.”

THE LEND-LEASE ACT Once reelected, Roosevelt found an ingenious way to provide more military aid to Britain, whose cash was running out. The



Lend-lease Members of the isolationist “Mother’s Crusade,” urging defeat of the lend-lease program, kneel in prayer in front of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. They feared the program aiding America’s allies would bring the United States into the wars in Europe and Asia.

Lend-Lease Act, introduced in Congress on January 10, 1941, allowed the president to lend or lease military equipment to “any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States.” It was a bold challenge to the isolationists. As Senator Hiram Johnson of California claimed, “This bill is war.”

Roosevelt responded to critics by arguing that “no nation can appease the Nazis. No man can turn a tiger into a kitten by stroking it.” The United States, he added, would provide everything the British needed while doing the same for China in its war against Japan, all in an effort to keep Americans from going to war themselves. “We must again be the great arsenal of democracy,” Roosevelt explained. Churchill shored up the president’s efforts by announcing that Britain did not need American troops to defeat Hitler: “Give us the tools and we will finish the job.” In early March, 1941, Congress approved the Lend-Lease Act. “Let not the dictators of Europe or Asia doubt our unanimity now,” Roosevelt declared.

Between 1941 and 1945, the Lend-Lease program would ship \$50 billion worth of supplies to Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, China, and other Allied nations. The Lend-Lease Act was Roosevelt’s most emphatic effort to move America from isolationism to interventionism and it gave a huge boost to British morale. Churchill called it the most generous “act in the history of any nation.”

GERMANY INVADES THE SOVIET UNION While Americans continued to debate Roosevelt’s efforts to help Great Britain, the European war expanded. In the spring of 1941, German troops joined Italian soldiers in Libya, forcing the British army in North Africa to withdraw to Egypt. In April 1941, Nazi forces overwhelmed Yugoslavia and Greece. With Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria also part of the Axis, Hitler controlled nearly all of Europe. But his ambition was unbounded.

On June 22, 1941, without warning, Hitler launched “Operation Barbarossa,” a shocking invasion of the Soviet Union, his supposed ally. Hitler’s objective in turning on Stalin was his long-standing obsession to destroy communism, enslave the vast population of the Soviet Union, open up new lands for German settlement, and exploit Russia’s considerable natural resources.

Hitler’s foolhardy decision was the defining moment of the European war. The 3 million German soldiers sent to the Soviet Union would eventually be worn down and thrown back. At first, however, the invasion seemed a great success, as the German armies raced across the vast plains of Ukraine and western Russia. Entire Soviet armies and cities were surrounded and destroyed. During the second half of 1941, an estimated 3 million Soviet soldiers, 50 percent of

the Soviet army, were captured. For four months, the Soviets retreated in the face of the German blitzkrieg.

During the summer of 1941, German forces surrounded Leningrad, now called St. Petersburg, and began a siege of the city. As weeks passed, food and supplies became scarce. Hunger alone would kill 800,000 people. Desperate people ate cats, dogs, rats, and even sawdust. As the bitterly cold winter set in, corpses were left to freeze in the snow. Still, the soldiers and civilians held out. Leningrad became known as the city that refused to die. By December, 1941, other German armies had reached the suburbs of Moscow, a thousand miles east of Berlin.

To American isolationists, Germany’s invasion of Russia confirmed that America should stay out of the war and let two dreadful dictatorships bleed each other to death. Roosevelt, however, insisted on including the Soviet Union in the Lend-Lease agreement; he and Churchill were determined to keep the Russians fighting Hitler so that Hitler could not concentrate on Great Britain.

Gradually, Stalin slowed the Nazi advance by forcing the Russian people to fight—or be killed by their own troops. During the Battle of Moscow, Soviet defenders showed their pitiless resolve by executing 8,000 civilians charged with “cowardice.”

Slowly, the tide started to turn against the Germans. By the winter of 1941–1942, Hitler’s generals were learning the same bitter lesson that the Russians had taught Napoléon and the French in 1812. Invading armies must contend not only with Russia’s ferocious fighters and enormous population but also vast distances, deep snow, and subzero temperatures.

THE ATLANTIC CHARTER By the late summer of 1941, the United States was no longer a “neutral” nation. In August, Roosevelt and Churchill drew up a joint statement of “common principles” known as the **Atlantic Charter**. The agreement pledged that after the “final destruction of the Nazi tyranny,” the victors would promote certain common values: the self-determination of all peoples, economic cooperation, freedom of the seas, and a new system of international security to be called the United Nations. Within weeks, eleven anti-Axis nations, including the Soviet Union, had endorsed the Atlantic Charter.

WAR IN THE ATLANTIC No sooner had Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter than U.S. warships came under fire. On September 4, 1941, the *Greer* was tracking a German submarine (“U-boat”) off the coast of Iceland and sharing the information with British warplanes when it was attacked. Roosevelt seized the opportunity to tell Americans that the ship was the victim of an unprovoked attack. In response, he essentially began an undeclared war in the Atlantic by ordering naval warships to provide protection for convoys all the way to Iceland, allowing them to “shoot on sight” any German submarines.

WORLD WAR II MILITARY ALLIANCES, 1942



- What was the Atlantic Charter?
- Compare and contrast the political/military alliances in the First World War with those in the Second World War.
- How were the German armies able to seize most of Europe so quickly?

Six weeks later, on October 17, 1941, a German U-boat sank the American warship *Kearny*. Eleven sailors were killed. “The shooting has started,” Roosevelt reported, “and history has recorded who fired the first shot.” Two weeks later, the destroyer *Reuben James* was torpedoed and sunk while escorting a convoy near Iceland, with a loss of 115 seamen.

The sinkings spurred Congress to change the 1939 Neutrality Act by allowing merchant vessels to be armed and to enter combat zones and the ports of nations at war (“belligerents”). Step by step, the United States had begun to engage in naval warfare against Nazi Germany. Still, Americans hoped to avoid all-out war.

THE STORM IN THE PACIFIC

In 1940, Japan and the United States had begun a series of moves that pushed them closer to war. Convinced that they were Asia’s “leading race,” the Japanese had forced the helpless Vichy French government, under German control, to permit the construction of Japanese airfields in French-controlled Indochina (now Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam). The United States responded with the Export Control Act of July 2, 1940, which authorized President Roosevelt to restrict the export of military supplies and other strategic materials crucial to Japan. Three weeks later, on July 26, Roosevelt ordered that all Japanese assets in the United States be frozen and that oil shipments be stopped.

THE TRIPARTITE PACT On September 27, 1940, the Imperial Japanese government signed a Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, by which each pledged to declare war on any nation that attacked any of them. Roosevelt called the pact an “unholy alliance” designed to “dominate and enslave the entire human race.” Several weeks later, the United States expanded its trade embargo against Japan to include iron ore, copper, and brass, deliberately leaving oil as the remaining bargaining chip.

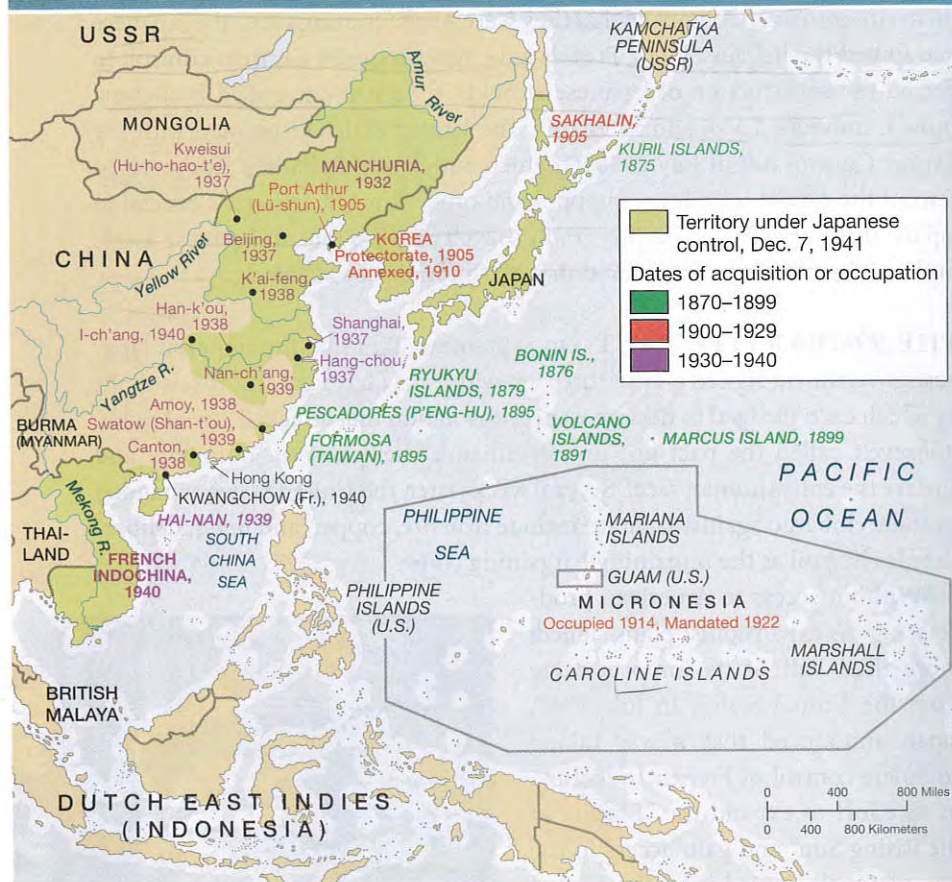
Without access to American products, Japan’s expansionist plans stalled; more than half of its imports came from the United States. In July 1941, Japan announced that it was taking complete control of French Indochina in its effort to expand the “Empire of the Rising Sun” and gain access to the raw materials denied it by the United States. Roosevelt responded by restricting oil exports to Japan. He also closed the Panama Canal to Japanese shipping and merged the Filipino army with the U.S. Army. *Time* magazine claimed that Roosevelt was “waging the first great undeclared war in U.S. history.”



Hideki Tōjō Prime minister and war minister of Japan simultaneously until 1944, one year before Japan’s unconditional surrender.

THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR On October 16, 1941, Hideki Tōjō became the Japanese prime minister. Viewing war with the United States as inevitable, he ordered

JAPANESE EXPANSION BEFORE THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR



- Why did the Japanese want to control French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies?
- Why did Japan sign the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy?

a powerful fleet of Japanese warships to prepare for a secret attack on the U.S. bases in Hawaii. The Japanese naval commander, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, knew that his country could not defeat the United States in a long war; its only hope was “to decide the fate of the war on the very first day” by launching a “fatal attack” on the U.S. Navy.

On November 5, 1941, the Japanese asked the Roosevelt administration to end its embargo or “face conflict.” The American secretary of state, Cordell Hull, responded on November 26 that Japan must remove its troops from China



Explosion of the USS Shaw The destroyer exploded after being hit by Japanese warplanes at Pearl Harbor. The *Shaw* was repaired shortly thereafter and went on to earn eleven battle stars in the Pacific campaign.

before the United States would lift its embargo. The Japanese then ordered a fleet of warships to begin steaming toward Hawaii. By this time, political and military leaders on both sides considered war inevitable. Yet Hull continued to meet with Japanese diplomats in Washington, privately dismissing them as being as “crooked as a barrel of fish hooks.”

In late November, Roosevelt told his “war cabinet” that the United States or Great Britain was “likely to be attacked, perhaps next Monday.” He and others expected the Japanese to attack Singapore or the Philippines. The U.S. Navy Department sent an urgent message to its commanders in the Pacific: “Negotiations with Japan . . . have ceased, and an aggressive move by Japan is expected within the next few days.”

Roosevelt staked his desperate hope for a peaceful solution on a last-minute message to Japan’s Emperor Hirohito. “Both of us,” Roosevelt said, “have a sacred duty to restore traditional amity [cooperation] and prevent further death and destruction in the world.”

By the time Roosevelt's message arrived, Japanese warplanes were already headed for U.S. bases in Hawaii. In the early morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese planes began bombing the unsuspecting U.S. fleet at **Pearl Harbor**. Of the eight American battleships, all were sunk or disabled, along with eleven other ships. Japanese bombers also destroyed 180 American warplanes. The raid, which lasted less than two hours, killed more than 2,400 American servicemen (mostly sailors) and civilians, and wounded nearly 1,200 more. At the same time that the Japanese were attacking Pearl Harbor, they were assaulting U.S. military facilities in the Philippines and on Guam and Wake islands in the Pacific, as well as British bases in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaya.

The surprise attack actually fell short of military success in two important ways. First, the bombers ignored the maintenance facilities and oil storage tanks that supported the U.S. fleet, without which the surviving ships might have been forced back to the West Coast. Second, the Japanese missed the U.S. aircraft carriers that had left port a few days earlier. In the naval war to come, aircraft carriers, not battleships, would prove to be decisive.

In a larger sense, the attack on Pearl Harbor was a spectacular miscalculation, for it brought the American isolationist movement to an abrupt end. Even the Japanese admiral who planned the attack had misgivings amid his officers' celebrations: "I fear that we have only succeeded in awakening a sleeping tiger."

At half past noon on December 8, President Roosevelt delivered his war message to Congress: "Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." He asked Congress to declare a "state of war." The Senate approved the resolution twenty-five minutes after Roosevelt finished speaking; the House followed immediately thereafter.

Three days later, on December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on what Hitler called the "half Judaized and the other half Negrified" United States. After learning of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hitler shouted that "it is impossible for us to lose the war." The separate wars in Asia, Europe, and Africa had now become one global conflict. Roosevelt told the American people in a radio address that "it will not only be a long war. It will be a hard war." Yet he assured everyone that "we are going to win, and we are going to win the peace that follows."

ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY

Waging war against Germany and Japan required all of America's immense industrial capacity. On December 18, 1941, Congress passed the War Powers Act, which gave the president far-reaching authority to reorganize government

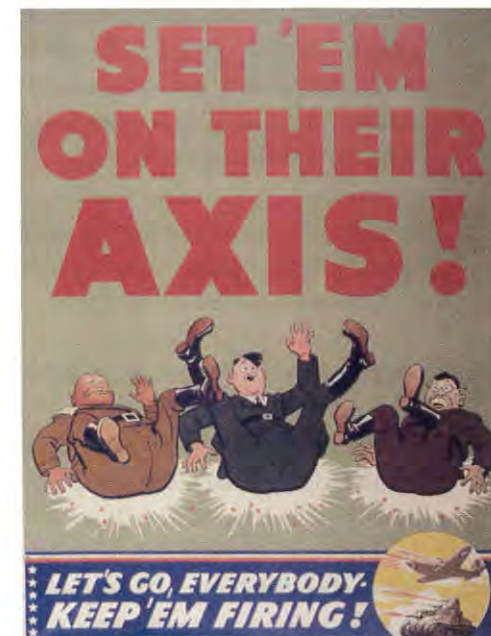
agencies and create new ones, regulate business and industry, and even censor mail and other forms of communication. With the declaration of war, men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were drafted.

Some 16 million men and several hundred thousand women served in the military during the war. The average American soldier or sailor in the Second World War was twenty-six years old, stood five feet eight, and weighed 144 pounds, an inch taller and eight pounds heavier than the typical recruit in the First World War. Only one in ten had attended college and only one in four had graduated from high school.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler had scoffed at the idea that the United States could produce 50,000 warplanes a year, claiming that America was nothing but "beauty queens, millionaires, and Hollywood." His ignorance of America's industrial potential proved fatal. By the end of 1942, U.S. war production had already exceeded the *combined* output of Germany, Japan, and Italy. At an Allied planning conference in Iran in 1943, Josef Stalin raised a glass to toast "American production, without which this war would have been lost."

The **War Production Board**, created by Roosevelt in 1942, directed the conversion of industries to war production. In 1941, more than 3 million automobiles were manufactured in the United States; only 139 were built during the next four years, as automobile plants began making huge numbers of tanks, jeeps, trucks, and warplanes. "Something is happening that Hitler doesn't understand," announced *Time* magazine in 1942. "It is the Miracle of production."

In making the United States the "great arsenal of democracy," the Roosevelt administration transformed the nation's economy into the world's most efficient military machine. By 1945, the year the war ended, the United States would be manufacturing half of the goods produced in the world. American factories, many running twenty-four hours a day, seven



War Production Board This 1942 poster features caricatures of Mussolini, Hitler, and Tōjō, who—according to the poster—will fall on their "axis" if Americans continued their relentless production of military equipment.

days a week, produced 300,000 warplanes, 89,000 tanks, 3 million machine guns, and 7 million rifles.

FINANCING THE WAR To cover the war's huge cost (more than \$3 trillion in today's values), Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1942 (also called the Victory Tax). Whereas in 1939 only about 4 million people (about 5 percent of the workforce) filed tax returns, the new act made most workers taxpayers. By the end of the war, 90 percent of workers were paying income tax. Tax revenues covered about 45 percent of military costs from 1939 to 1946; the government borrowed the rest, mostly through a massive promotional campaign that sold \$185 billion worth of government war bonds, which paid interest to purchasers. By the end of the war, the national debt was six times what it had been at the start.

The size of the federal government soared during the war. More than a dozen new federal agencies were created, and the number of civilian federal workers quadrupled from 1 million to 4 million. Jobs were suddenly plentiful as millions quit work to join the military. The nation's unemployment rate plummeted from 14 percent in 1940 to 2 percent in 1943.

People who had long lived on the margins of the economic system, especially women, were now brought into the labor force. Stubborn pockets of poverty did not disappear, but for most civilians, especially those who had lost their jobs and homes in the Depression, the war spelled a better life. Some 24 million Americans moved during the war to take advantage of new job opportunities. Many headed to the West Coast, where shipyards and airplane factories were hiring nonstop.

ECONOMIC CONTROLS The need for the United States not only to equip and feed its own military forces but also provide massive amounts of food, clothing, and weapons to its allies created shortages of virtually all consumer goods that caused sharp price increases. In 1942, Congress responded by authorizing the Office of Price Administration to set price ceilings. With prices frozen, basic goods had to be allocated through rationing, with coupons doled out for limited amounts of sugar, coffee, gasoline, automobile tires, and meat.

The government promoted patriotic conservation by urging every family to become a "fighting unit on the home front." Posters featured slogans such as "Save Your Stuff to Make Us Tough," "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without," and "Save Your Scraps to Beat the Japs." People collected scrap metal and tin foil, rubber, and cardboard for military use. Households were even encouraged to save cooking fat, from which glycerin could be extracted to make explosives.

Businesses and workers often grumbled about the wage and price controls, and on occasion the government seized industries threatened by strikes. Despite these problems, the effort to stabilize wages and prices succeeded. By the end of the war, consumer prices had risen about 31 percent, far better than the rise of 62 percent during the First World War.

A CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH For all of the patriotism inspired by the war effort, criticism of government actions such as rationing increased with each passing year. In the 1942 congressional elections, Republicans gained forty-six seats in the House and nine in the Senate. During the 1940s, a coalition of conservatives from both parties dismantled "nonessential" New Deal agencies such as the Work Projects Administration (originally the Works Progress Administration), the National Youth Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

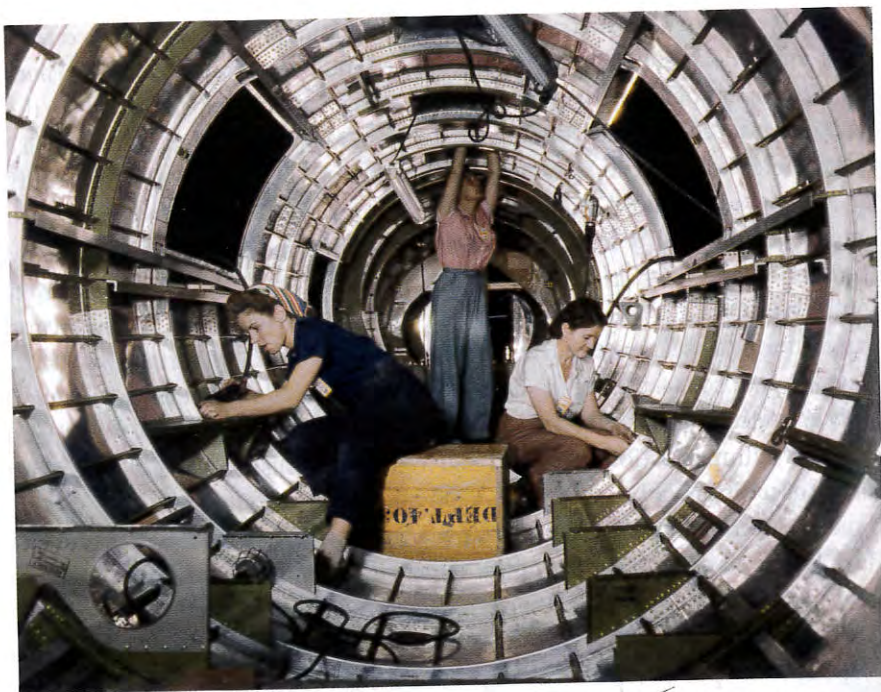
Organized labor, despite substantial gains in membership and power during the war, felt the impact of the conservative trend. In the spring of 1943, when 400,000 coal miners went on strike demanding a \$2-a-day wage increase, conservatives in Congress passed, over Roosevelt's veto, the Smith-Connally War Labor Disputes Act, which authorized the government to seize plants and mines and keep them operating if workers went on strike.

THE WAR AT HOME

The Second World War transformed life at home as it was being fought abroad. Housewives went to work as welders and riveters, and farmers joined industrial unions. Some 3.5 million rural folk from the South left farms for cities. The federal government paid for a national day-care program for young children to enable their mothers to work full-time. The dramatic changes required by the war also caused unexpected changes in many areas of social life, the impact of which would last long after the war's end.

WOMEN IN THE WAR The war marked a watershed in the status of women. During the war, nearly 350,000 women served in the **Women's Army Corps (WAC)**, the navy's equivalent, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, and the Army Air Force.

With millions of men going into military service, the demand for civilian workers shook up old prejudices about gender roles. Sidney Hillman, appointed by Roosevelt to find workers for defense plants, announced that "war is calling on the women of America for production skills." More than 8 million women entered the civilian workforce. To help recruit women for



Women of the workforce, 1942 At the Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach, California, three women assemble the tail section of a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber.

traditionally male jobs, the government launched a promotional campaign featuring the story of “Rosie the Riveter,” a woman named Rosina Bonavita, who excelled as a riveter at an airplane factory.

Many men opposed the surge of women taking traditionally male jobs. A disgruntled male legislator asked who would handle traditional household tasks if women flocked to factories: “Who will do the cooking, the washing, the mending, the humble homey tasks to which every woman has devoted herself; who will rear and nurture the children?” Many women, however, were eager to escape the grinding routines of domestic life and earn good wages. A female welder remembered that her wartime job “was the first time I had a chance to get out of the kitchen and work in industry and make a few bucks. This was something I had never dreamed would happen.”

AFRICAN AMERICANS While President Roosevelt focused on military strategy, his wife Eleanor focused on organizing the home front. She insisted that the government’s wartime partnership with business not neglect the needs

of workers, argued that America could not fight racism abroad while tolerating it at home, and championed the mass influx of women into the once-male work force during the war.

More than a half million African Americans left the South for better opportunities during the war years, and more than a million blacks nationwide joined the industrial workforce for the first time. Lured by jobs and higher wages in military-related plants and factories, African Americans from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana headed west, where the dramatic expansion of defense-related jobs had significant effects on the region’s population. During the war years, the number of African Americans rose sharply in western cities such as Seattle, Portland, and Los Angeles.

At the same time, the war provided a boon to southern textile mills by requiring millions of military uniforms. Manufacturing jobs led thousands of



Bigotry at home During the Detroit Riots of 1943, police officers do nothing when a white thug hits a black man.



Tuskegee Airmen The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African American military pilots. Here, the first graduates are reviewed at Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1941.

“dirt poor” sharecroppers and tenant farmers, many of them African Americans, to leave the land for steady work in new mills and factories. Sixty of the 100 army camps created during the war were in southern states, further transforming local economies. During the war, the U.S. rural population decreased by 20 percent.

RACIAL TENSION AT HOME The most volatile social issue ignited by the war was African American participation in the military. Although the armed forces were still racially segregated in 1941, African Americans rushed to enlist after the attack on Pearl Harbor. As African American Joe Louis, the world heavyweight boxing champion, put it, “Lots of things [are] wrong with America, but Hitler ain’t going to fix them.” Altogether, about a million African Americans—men and women—served in the armed forces during

Black soldiers and sailors, assigned to racially segregated units, were initially excluded from combat units. They loaded ships, drove trucks, dug latrines, and handled supplies and mail. Black officers could not command white soldiers or sailors. Henry L. Stimson, the secretary of war, claimed that “leadership is not embedded in the negro race.” Military bases had segregated facilities—and experienced frequent racial “incidents.”

In late 1944, however, the need for more troops led the government to revisit its racial policies. Under pressure from the African American community as well as Eleanor Roosevelt, General Dwight Eisenhower, commander of the U.S. forces in Europe, agreed to let black volunteers fight in fifty-two all-black fifty-man platoons commanded by white officers. A black officer said the decision was “the greatest” for African Americans “since enactment of the constitutional amendments following the Civil War.”

The black soldiers earned the reputation of being fierce fighters. The same was true of some 600 African American pilots trained in Tuskegee, Alabama. The so-called **Tuskegee Airmen** flew more than 15,000 missions, and their unquestionable excellence spurred military and civilian leaders to desegregate the armed forces after the war. At war’s end, however, the U.S. Army reimposed segregation. It would be several more years before the military was truly integrated.

MEXICAN AMERICANS As rural dwellers moved west, many farm counties experienced a labor shortage. In an ironic about-face, local and federal authorities who before the war had forced migrant laborers back across the Mexican border now recruited them to harvest crops on American farms. The Mexican government would not consent to provide the laborers, however, until the United States promised to ensure them decent working and living conditions. The result was the creation of the **bracero program** in 1942, whereby Mexico agreed to provide seasonal farmworkers on year-long contracts. Under the bracero program, some 200,000 Mexican farmworkers entered the western United States, mostly packed in cattle cars on trains. At least that many more crossed the border as undocumented workers.

The rising tide of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles prompted a stream of anti-Mexican editorials and ugly racial incidents. Even though some 300,000 Mexican Americans served in the war and earned a higher percentage of Congressional Medals of Honor than any other minority group, racial prejudices still prevailed. In southern California, there was constant conflict between white servicemen and Mexican American gang members and teenage “zoot-suiters.” (Zoot suits were flamboyant clothing worn by some young Mexican American men.) In 1943, several thousand off-duty sailors and soldiers, joined



Off to court Latinos dressed in zoot suits are loaded onto a Los Angeles County Sheriff's bus for a court appearance in June 1943.

by hundreds of local whites, rampaged through Los Angeles, assaulting Hispanics, African Americans, and Filipinos. The weeklong violence came to be called the “Zoot Suit Riots.”

NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE MILITARY Indians supported the war effort more fully than any other group in American society. Almost a third of eligible Native American men served in the armed forces. Many others worked in defense-related industries, and thousands of Indian women volunteered as nurses or joined the WAVES. As was the case with African Americans, Indians benefited from the experiences afforded by the war by gaining vocational skills and a greater awareness of how to succeed within mainstream society.

Why did so many Native Americans fight for a nation that had stripped them of their land and ravaged their heritage? Some felt that they had no choice. Mobilization for the war effort ended many New Deal programs that had provided Indians with jobs. At the same time, many viewed the Nazis and Japanese warlords as threats to their own homeland. Whatever their motivations, Indians distinguished themselves in the military. Unlike their African American counterparts, Indian servicemen were integrated into regular units with whites. Perhaps their most distinctive role was serving as “code talkers”: every military branch used Indians, especially Navajos, to encode and decipher messages using Indian languages unknown to the Germans and Japanese.



Navajo code talkers The complex Navajo language made it impossible for the Germans and Japanese to decode American messages. Here, a code talker relays messages for U.S. marines in the Battle of Bougainville in the South Pacific in 1943.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST JAPANESE AMERICANS The attack on Pearl Harbor ignited a hunger for vengeance against the nisei—people of Japanese descent living in the United States. Many Americans saw no difference between the Japanese who attacked Pearl Harbor and Japanese Americans. As Idaho’s governor declared, “A good solution to the Jap problem would be to send them all back to Japan, then sink the island.”

Such hysteria helps explain why the U.S. government sponsored one of the worst violations of civil liberties during the twentieth century, when more than 120,000 nisei were forcibly removed from their homes and transported to ten “war relocation camps.” Forced to sell their farms and businesses at great loss within forty-eight hours, ordered to bring with them only what they could carry, the internees were sent by train and bus to ten barbed-wire enclosed internment camps scattered across remote areas in the western states. They lost not only their property but also their liberty.

President Roosevelt initiated the relocation when he issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, authorizing the forcible removal of all

ethnic Japanese living on the Pacific coast. It was perhaps his worst decision as president. Roosevelt called his action a “military necessity” although not a single incident of espionage involving Japanese Americans was proved. As it turned out, more than 70 percent of those affected were U.S. citizens.

On Evacuation Day, Burt Wilson, a white schoolboy in Sacramento, California, was baffled as soldiers ushered the nisei children out of his school:

We wondered what had happened. They took somebody out of eighth grade, a boy named Sammy, who drew wonderful cartoons. He was my friend, and one day he was there and the next day he was gone. And that was very difficult for us to understand because we didn't see Sammy or any Japanese American—at least I didn't—as the enemy.

Few if any nisei were disloyal. In fact, 39,000 Japanese Americans served in the armed forces during the war, and others worked as interpreters and translators. But all were victims of fear and racial prejudice. Not until 1983 did the government acknowledge the injustice of the internment policy. Five years later,



A farewell to civil rights American troops escorted Japanese Americans by gunpoint to remote internment camps, some of which were horse-racing tracks, whose stables served as housing.

it granted those nisei still living \$20,000 each in compensation, a tiny amount relative to what they had lost during four years of confinement.

THE ALLIED DRIVE TOWARD BERLIN

By mid-1942, the “home front” was hearing good news from Europe. U.S. naval forces had been increasingly successful at destroying German U-boats off the Atlantic coast. Up to that point, German submarines had sunk hundreds of Allied cargo vessels, killing 2,500 sailors. Stopping the submarine attacks was important because the Grand Alliance—Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—called for the defeat of Germany first. Defeating the Japanese could wait.

WAR AIMS AND STRATEGY

A major consideration for Allied military strategy was the fighting on the vast Eastern Front in the Soviet Union. During 1941–1942, the Nazis and Soviets waged colossal battles. The Soviet population—by far—bore the brunt of the war against the Nazis, leading Josef Stalin to insist that the Americans and British relieve the pressure on his troops by attacking the Germans in western Europe, thereby forcing Hitler to pull units away from the Russian Front.

Meanwhile, with most of the German army deployed on the Russian Front, the British and American air forces, flying from bases in England, would bomb military and industrial targets in German-occupied western Europe, and especially in Germany itself, while American and British generals prepared plans to attack Nazi troops in North Africa, Italy, and France.

Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill agreed that they needed to create a second front in western Europe, but they could not agree on the timing or location of an invasion. U.S. military planners wanted to attack the Germans in France before the end of 1942. The British, however, were wary of moving too fast. An Allied defeat on the French coast, Churchill warned, was “the only way in which we could possibly lose this war.” Finally, Roosevelt decided to accept Churchill’s compromise proposal for a joint Anglo-American invasion of North Africa, which was occupied by German and Italian armies not nearly as strong as those in Europe.

THE NORTH AFRICA CAMPAIGN On November 8, 1942, British and American forces landed in Morocco and Algeria on the North African

coast (“Operation Torch”). They were led by an untested, little-known U.S. general, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Farther east, British armies were pushing the Germans and Italians back across Libya.

The Americans lost badly in early battles. In early 1943, however, Eisenhower, soon known by his nickname, “Ike,” found an audacious field commander in General George Patton, who said he loved war “more than my life.” Armed with ivory-handled pistols and brimming with bravado, Patton showed American troops how to fight a war of speed and daring. Corporal Morris Zimmerman, a soldier fighting under Patton, wrote his mother from North Africa, “This is your son reporting from the land of Arabs and wine, sticky flies and red sand. I have always wanted to cross an ocean to see what was on the other side and darned if I didn’t.”

Hammered from all sides and unable to retreat, some 250,000 Germans and Italians surrendered on May 12, 1943, leaving all of North Africa in Allied control. The “continent had been redeemed,” said Winston Churchill. Ernie Pyle, a war correspondent embedded with the American army, reported that



Major General George S. Patton Patton commanded the U.S. invasion of Sicily, the largest amphibious action in the war up to that point. He believed that war “brings out all that is best in men.”

the U.S. troops “fought like veterans. They were well handled. We had enough of what we needed. Everything meshed perfectly, and the end was inevitable. . . . Tunisia has been a good warm-up field for our armies.” But, he added, “the worst was yet to come.”

THE CASABLANCA CONFERENCE Five months earlier, in January 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Anglo-American military chiefs met at a seaside resort near Casablanca, the largest city in French Morocco. It was a historic occasion. No U.S. president had ever flown abroad while in office, and none had ever visited Africa. Stalin chose to stay in the Soviet Union, but he sent a message which again urged the Allies to invade Nazi-controlled western Europe to relieve the pressure on the Russians.

At the Casablanca conference, the British convinced the Americans that they should follow up the anticipated victory in North Africa with an assault on the Italian island of Sicily before attacking Italy itself. Roosevelt and Churchill also decided to step up the bombing of Germany and to increase shipments of military supplies to the Soviet Union and the Nationalist Chinese forces fighting the Japanese.

Before leaving the Casablanca conference, Roosevelt announced, with Churchill’s blessing, that the war would end only with the “unconditional surrender” of all enemy nations. This decision was designed to quiet Soviet suspicions that the Americans and British might negotiate separately with Hitler to end the war in western Europe. The announcement also reflected Roosevelt’s determination that “every person in Germany should realize that this time Germany is a defeated nation.” Whatever its impact on Soviet morale or enemy resistance, however, the decision to require unconditional surrender ensured the destruction of Germany and Japan that would create power vacuums along the western and eastern borders of the Soviet Union.

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC While fighting raged in North Africa, the Battle of the Atlantic reached its climax. Great Britain desperately needed more food and military supplies from the United States, but German submarines operating in groups called “wolfpacks” were sinking the British vessels transporting American goods faster than British shipyards could replace them. There could be no invasion of German-occupied France until the U-boat menace was defeated. By July 1942, some 230 Allied ships and almost 5 million tons of war supplies had been lost. “The only thing that ever frightened me during the war,” recalled Churchill, “was the U-boat peril.”

By the end of 1942, however, the British and Americans had discovered ways to defeat the U-boats. British experts cracked the German naval radio

codes, enabling Allied convoys to steer clear of U-boats or to hunt them down with long-range warplanes (called “subchasers”) and anti-submarine weapons deployed on warships. New technology also helped, as sonar and radar allowed Allied ships to track submarines. Yet the best tactic against U-boats was to group cargo vessels into tightly bunched convoys so that warships could protect them more effectively. In May 1943, the Allies destroyed forty-one U-boats. Thereafter, the U-boats were on the defensive, and Allied shipping losses fell significantly.

SICILY AND ITALY On July 10, 1943, following the Allied victory in North Africa, about 250,000 British and American troops landed on the coast of Sicily. General Eisenhower called it the “first page of the liberation of the European continent.” The island was in Allied hands by August 17, bringing to an end Benito Mussolini’s twenty years of fascist rule in Italy.

On July 25, 1943, the Italian king had dismissed Mussolini as prime minister and had him arrested. The new Italian government startled the Allies when it offered not only to surrender but also to switch sides. To prevent them from doing so, Hitler sent German armies into Italy.

The Italian campaign thereafter became a series of stalemated battles that left people wondering if it had been worth the cost. Winter came early to southern Italy, making life even more miserable for the soldiers. The Germans positioned themselves behind formidable defenses and rugged terrain that enabled them to slow the Allied advance to a crawl. “Italy was one hill after another,” said a U.S. soldier, “and when it was wet, you were either going up too slow or down too fast, but always the mud. And every hill had a German [machine] gun on it.” Allied casualties soared as the stalemate continued.

By February 1944, the two sides were, in the words of U.S. commander Mark W. Clark, like “two boxers in the ring, both about to collapse.” Mussolini, plucked from prison by a daring German airborne commando raid, became head of a puppet fascist government in northern Italy as Allied forces finally took control of the rest of the country. On June 4, 1944, the U.S. Fifth Army entered Rome, just two days before D-day on the coast of France. “We were woken by trucks moving through the street,” one overjoyed Italian remembered. “At first I thought it was the Germans, but then I heard American accents. . . . By dawn people were lining the streets. I cried.”

THE TEHRAN CONFERENCE Late in the fall of 1943, in Tehran, Iran, Churchill and Roosevelt had their first joint meeting with Josef Stalin. Their discussions focused on the planned invasion of Nazi-controlled France and a simultaneous Russian offensive westward across eastern Europe. The three

leaders agreed to create an international organization—the United Nations—to maintain peace after the war. Upon arriving back in the United States, Roosevelt confided to Churchill his distrust of Stalin, saying that it was a “ticklish” business keeping the “Russians cozy with us” because of the tension between communism and capitalism. As General Eisenhower stressed, however, the fate of Britain and the United States depended on the Soviets’ survival as an ally. “The prize we seek,” he said in 1942, “is to keep 8 million Russians [soldiers] in the war.”

THE STRATEGIC BOMBING OF EUROPE Months of preparation went into the long-anticipated Allied invasion of German-occupied France. While waiting for D-day (the day the invasion would begin), the U.S. Army Air Force tried to pound Germany into submission with an air campaign that dropped thousands of bombs and killed some 350,000 civilians. Yet the air offensive failed to shatter either German morale or war-related production. Many bombs missed their targets because of thick clouds, high winds, and inaccurate navigational systems, and many Allied planes were shot down. The bombing campaign, however, did force the Germans to commit precious resources to air-raid defense and eventually wore down their air force. With Allied air supremacy assured by 1944, the much-anticipated invasion of Hitler’s “Fortress Europe” could move forward.

PLANNING AN INVASION In early 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower arrived in London with a new title: Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF) that would invade Nazi-controlled western Europe. Eisenhower faced enormous challenges, ranging from creating an effective command structure to handling disagreements between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill.

Eisenhower also faced the daunting task of planning **Operation Overlord**, the daring assault on Hitler’s “Atlantic Wall,” a formidable array of fortifications, mines, machine guns, barbed wire, and jagged beach obstacles along the French coastline. An attack by sea against heavily fortified defenders was the toughest of military operations. The planned invasion gave Churchill nightmares: “When I think of the beaches . . . choked with the flower of American and British youth . . . I see the tides running red with their blood. I have my doubts. I have my doubts.”

For months, Eisenhower, neither an experienced strategist nor a combat commander, dedicated himself to planning the risky invasion and managing the complex political and military rivalries among the Allied leaders. Well-organized and efficient, he was a high-energy perfectionist, impatient and



General Dwight D. Eisenhower Eisenhower visiting with U.S. paratroopers before they began the D-day assault in Operation Overlord.

often short-tempered with his staff. He attended to every detail, including the amassing of 5 million tons of military equipment and munitions and thousands of warplanes and ships.

As D-day approached, Eisenhower's chief of staff predicted only a fifty-fifty chance of success. The seaborne invasion was the greatest gamble and most complex military operation in history. "I am very uneasy about the whole operation," admitted Sir Alan Brooke, head of British forces. "It may well be the most ghastly disaster of the whole war." Eisenhower was so concerned that he carried in his wallet a note to be circulated if the Allies failed. It read: "If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone."

D-DAY AND AFTER Operation Overlord succeeded in part because it surprised the Germans. The Allies made elaborate efforts—including the positioning of British decoy troops and making misleading public statements—to fool the Nazis into believing that the invasion would come at Pas-de-Calais, on the French-Belgian border, where the English Channel was narrowest. Instead, the landings would occur along fifty miles of shoreline in northern Normandy, a French coastal region almost 200 miles south.

On the blustery evening of June 5, 1944, Eisenhower visited some of the 16,000 American paratroopers preparing to drop behind the German lines in France. The soldiers, their faces blackened by burnt cork and heads shaved to resemble Indian warriors, noticed Eisenhower's concern and tried to lift his spirits. "Now quit worrying, General," one of them said, "we'll take care of this thing for you." A sergeant said, "We ain't worried. It's Hitler's turn to worry." After the planes took off, Eisenhower returned to his car with tears in his eyes. He later confided to an aide: "I hope to God I know what I'm doing." As he got into bed that night, Winston Churchill, with tears running down his cheeks, asked his wife: "Do you know that by the time you wake up in the morning, 20,000 men may have been killed?"

As the planes carrying the paratroopers arrived over France, thick clouds and German anti-aircraft fire disrupted the formations. Some soldiers were dropped miles from their landing sites, some were dropped far out at sea, and some were dropped so low that their parachutes never opened. Yet the U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions outfought three German divisions during the chaotic night and prepared the way for the main invasion by destroying bridges and capturing artillery positions and key road junctions.

Donald Burgett, a nineteen-year-old paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division, recalled dropping into France in the dark of night and being alone: "My throat went dry and I swallowed, but nothing went down. My heart pounded, sending blood throbbing through my temples and causing a weak-feeling in the pit of my stomach." But he had no time for fear. As he stumbled upon others who had survived the landing, they soon found themselves embroiled in combat.

THE NORMANDY LANDINGS As the gray, misty light of dawn broke on D-day, June 6, 1944, the biggest invasion fleet in history—some 5,300 Allied ships carrying 370,000 soldiers and sailors—filled the horizon off the Normandy coast. Sleepy German soldiers guarding the beaches awoke to see the breathtaking array of ships. "I saw an armada like a plague of locusts," said a German officer. "The number of ships was uncountable."

Major battles often depend on luck. (When asked what kind of generals he preferred, Napoléon said "lucky ones.") Eisenhower was lucky on D-day, for the Germans misinterpreted the Normandy landings as a diversion for the "real" attack at Pas-de-Calais. It helped that the German commander, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, assuming that the weather was too rough for an invasion, had gone home to Germany to celebrate his wife's June 6 birthday. "How stupid of me," Rommel said when he heard the news. "How stupid of me!" By one in the afternoon, he was racing back to France.



The landing at Normandy D-Day, June 6, 1944. Before they could huddle under a seawall and begin to dislodge the Nazi defenders, U.S. soldiers on Omaha Beach had to cross a fifty-yard stretch that exposed them to machine guns housed in concrete bunkers.

When Hitler learned of the Allied landings, he boasted that “the news couldn’t be better. As long as they [the Allied armies] were in Britain, we couldn’t get at them. Now we have them where we can destroy them.” In the United States, word that the long-anticipated liberation of Nazi Europe had begun captured the nation’s attention. Businesses closed, church bells tolled, and traffic was stopped so that people could pray in the streets. Stalin cabled to Churchill and Roosevelt that the news brought “joy to us all.”

Resilience and creativity are crucial virtues amid the confusion of great battles (the “fog of war”), which rarely go according to plan. Despite Eisenhower’s meticulous preparations, the huge operation almost failed. During the first day, foul weather and rough seas caused injuries and nausea and capsized dozens of landing craft. More than 1,000 men, weighed down by seventy pounds of equipment, drowned as they stepped off landing craft into water up to their necks.

Some of the boxy, flat-bottomed landing craft delivered their often seasick troops to the wrong locations. “We have landed in the wrong place,” shouted fifty-six-year-old Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (son of the former president), who would receive the Medal of Honor for his courage that day. “But we will start the war from here.”

The noise was deafening as shells exploded across the beach and in the surf. The bodies of the killed, wounded, and drowned piled up amid wrench-

ing cries for help. “As our boat touched sand and the ramp went down,” Private Harry Parley remembered, “I became a visitor to Hell” as German gunners fired on the attacking soldiers.

The first U.S. units ashore at Omaha Beach, beneath 130-foot-tall cliffs defended by German machine guns and mortars, lost more than 90 percent of their men. In one company, 197 of the 205 men were killed or wounded within ten minutes. Officers struggled to rally the exhausted, bewildered troops pinned down on the beach. “Two kinds of men are staying on this beach,” shouted cigar-smoking Colonel George Taylor on Omaha Beach. “The dead and those who are going to die. Get up! Move in! Goddammit! Move in and die! Get the hell out of here!” He then began to run forward and his men followed, stumbling across the deadly beach into the dunes.

Inch by inch, backed by waves of reinforcements, the U.S. soldiers pushed across the beach and up the cliffs. By nightfall, 170,000 Allied soldiers—57,000 of them Americans—were scattered across fifty miles of windswept Normandy coastline. So too were the bodies of some 10,724 dead or wounded Allied soldiers.

On June 13, a week after the Normandy landings, Erwin Rommel, the German commander, told his wife that the “battle is not going at all well for us.” Within three weeks, the Allies had landed more than 1 million troops, 566,000 tons of supplies, and 171,000 vehicles. “Whether the enemy can still be stopped at this point is questionable,” German headquarters near Paris warned Hitler. “The enemy air superiority is terrific and smothers almost every one of our movements. . . . Losses in men and equipment are extraordinary.”

Operation Overlord was the greatest seaborne invasion in the annals of warfare, but it was small when compared with the offensive launched by the Soviet army in Russia a few weeks later. Between June and August 1944, the Soviets killed, wounded, or captured more German soldiers (350,000) than were stationed in all of western Europe.

Still, the Normandy invasion was a turning point in the war. With the beachhead secured, the Allied leaders knew that victory was just a matter of time, as Hitler’s armies were caught between the Soviets advancing from the east and the Allied forces from the west. “What a plan!” Churchill exclaimed to the British Parliament. Even Stalin applauded the invasion’s “vast conception and masterly execution.”

For all of the Allied success, however, Eisenhower privately struggled with the daily casualty reports. “How I wish this cruel business of war could be completed quickly,” he wrote his wife. “War demands real toughness of fiber—not only in the soldiers [who] must endure, but in the homes that must sacrifice their best.”

THE LIBERATION OF PARIS It would take seven more weeks and 37,000 more lives for the Allied troops to gain control of Normandy; the Germans lost more than twice that many, and some 19,000 French civilians were killed. Then, on July 25, 1944, American armies broke out from Normandy and headed east toward Paris. On August 15, a joint American-French invasion force landed on the Mediterranean coast and raced up the Rhone Valley in eastern France.

WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE AND AFRICA, 1942–1945



- What was the Allied strategy in North Africa, and why was it important for the invasion of Italy?
- Why did Eisenhower's D-day plan succeed?
- What was the role of strategic bombing in the war? Was it effective?

German resistance collapsed after only ten weeks of ferocious fighting. On D-day, one German unit, the 21st Panzer Division, boasted 12,000 men and 127 tanks; ten weeks later, having retreated across France, it had 300 men and just 10 tanks. A division of the Free French Resistance, aided by American units, had the honor of liberating Paris on August 25. As U.S. soldiers marched through the cheering crowds, a reporter said that he had never “seen in any place such joy as radiated from the people of Paris this morning.”

By mid-September, most of France and Belgium had been cleared of German troops. Meanwhile, the Soviet army moved relentlessly westward along a 1,200-mile front, pushing the Germans out of Russia. Between D-day and the end of the war in Europe a year later, 1.2 million Germans were killed and wounded.

ROOSEVELT’S FOURTH TERM In 1944, amid the largest war in history, the calendar required another presidential election. The Republicans nominated New York governor Thomas E. Dewey, who argued that it was time for a younger man to replace the “tired” Democratic leader. Voters, however, preferred the seasoned Franklin Roosevelt. On November 7, 1944, the president was elected for a fourth term, this time by a popular vote of 25.6 million to 22 million and an electoral vote of 432 to 99.

THE RACE TO BERLIN By the time Franklin Roosevelt was reelected, Allied armies were approaching the German border from the east and west. Churchill, worried that if the Soviets arrived first in Berlin, the German capital, Stalin would control the postwar map of Europe, urged Eisenhower to beat the Soviets to Berlin. Eisenhower, however, decided it was not worth the estimated 100,000 Americans who would be killed or wounded in such an operation.

THE YALTA CONFERENCE As the Allied armies converged on Berlin, Stalin hosted Roosevelt and Churchill at the **Yalta Conference** (February 4–11, 1945) in Crimea, on the Black Sea. The leaders agreed that, once Germany surrendered, the Soviets would occupy eastern Germany, and the Americans and British would control western Germany. Berlin, the German capital within the Soviet zone, would be subject to joint occupation. The Americans and British later created a fourth occupation zone in Germany for the French to administer.

Stalin’s goals at Yalta were to retrieve former Russian territory transferred to Poland after the First World War and to impose Soviet control over the countries of eastern and central Europe. Roosevelt, exhausted and in failing health, agreed to Stalin’s proposals because he needed the Soviets to support the creation of a new international peacekeeping organization, the United

Nations, and to help defeat Japan. Military analysts estimated that Japan could hold out for eighteen months after the defeat of Germany unless the Soviets joined the war in the Pacific. Stalin agreed to do so but the price was high: he demanded territories from Japan and China.

Roosevelt and Churchill got Stalin to sign the Yalta Declaration of Liberated Europe, which called for free and open elections in the liberated nations of eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the wily Stalin would fail to live up to his promises. When the Red Army “liberated” Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and eastern Germany, it plundered and sent back to Russia anything of economic value, dismantling thousands of factories and mills and rebuilding them in the Soviet Union. To ensure control over eastern Europe, the Soviets shipped off to prison anyone who questioned the new Communist governments they created.

Roosevelt viewed the Yalta meeting as a test of whether the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union would survive once the conflict ended. He staked his hopes for postwar cooperation on the creation of the United Nations (UN).



The Yalta Conference Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin (with their respective foreign ministers behind them) confer on plans for the postwar world in February 1945.

At Yalta, the “Big Three” agreed to hold organizational meetings for the UN beginning on April 25, 1945. Like Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt was determined to replace America’s “outdated” isolationism with an engaged internationalism. But to get Stalin’s approval of the UN, Roosevelt gave in to his demands for territory held by Japan in northeast Asia.

Republicans later savagely attacked Roosevelt for “giving” eastern Europe over to Soviet domination. Some blamed his behavior on his declining health. (He would die in a few weeks.) But even a robust Roosevelt could not have dislodged the Soviet army from its control of eastern Europe. The course of the war shaped the outcome at Yalta, not Roosevelt’s failed diplomacy. The United States had no real leverage. As a U.S. diplomat admitted, “Stalin held all the cards.” “I didn’t say the result

was good,” Roosevelt said after returning from the Yalta Conference. “I said it was the best I could do.”

DEATH OF A PRESIDENT By early 1945, Nazi Germany was on the verge of defeat, but sixty-three-year-old Franklin Roosevelt would not live to join the victory celebrations. In the spring of 1945, he went to the “Little White House” in Warm Springs, Georgia, to rest up for the conference that would create the United Nations. On the morning of April 12, 1945, he complained of a headache but seemed to be in good spirits. It was nearly lunchtime when he said to an artist painting his portrait, “Now we’ve got just about 15 minutes more to work.” Then, as she watched him reading some documents, he groaned, saying that he had “terrific pain” in the back of his head. Suddenly he slumped over and fell into a coma. He died two hours later.

On hand to witness the president’s death was Lucy Mercer Rutherford, the woman with whom Roosevelt had an affair thirty years before. Eleanor Roosevelt was in Washington, D.C., when Franklin died, unaware of the president’s guest. Although Franklin had promised in 1918 to end all communications with Mercer, he had in fact secretly stayed in touch, even enabling her to attend his presidential inauguration in 1933.

Roosevelt’s death shocked and saddened the world, in part because few people were aware that he was sick. Even his sharpest critics were devastated. Ohio senator Robert Taft, known as “Mr. Republican,” called Roosevelt’s death one of the worst tragedies in the nation’s history. “The President’s death removes the greatest figure of our time at the very climax of his career. . . . He dies a hero of the war, for he literally worked himself to death in the service of the American people.” By contrast, Hitler viewed Roosevelt’s death as a “great miracle.” “The war is not lost,” he told an aide. “Read it. Roosevelt is dead!”

A U.S. soldier was on a warship in the Pacific when he heard the news of Roosevelt’s death. “I felt a great sense of loss,” he said, for Roosevelt had been president almost all his life. “He was our leader, but he was also, in some way, our friend.” In the short term, he worried about the military implications of Roosevelt’s death. “How will we go on fighting the war when our Commander in Chief is dead?”

THE COLLAPSE OF NAZISM Adolf Hitler’s shrinking Nazi empire collapsed less than a month later. In Berlin on April 28, as Soviet troops prepared to enter the city, Hitler married his mistress, Eva Braun, in an underground bunker. That same day, Italian freedom fighters captured Mussolini and his mistress. Despite his plea to “Let me live, and I will give you an empire,”



May 8, 1945 The celebration in New York City's Times Square on V-E day.

Mussolini and his mistress were shot and hung by their heels from a girder above a Milan gas station. On April 30, Hitler and his wife retired to their underground bedroom, where she poisoned herself and he put a bullet in his head. Their bodies were taken outside, doused with gasoline, and burned.

On May 2, Berlin fell. Axis forces in Italy surrendered the same day. Five days later, on May 7, the chief of staff of the German armed forces agreed to unconditional surrender. So ended Nazi domination of Europe, little more than twelve years after Hitler had come to power proclaiming his “Thousand-Year Reich.”

On May 8, V-E day (“Victory in Europe”) generated massive celebrations. In Paris, an American bomber pilot flew his plane through the Eiffel Tower. In New York City, 500,000 people celebrated in the streets. But the elation was tempered by the ongoing war against Japan and the immense challenges of helping Europe rebuild. The German economy had to be revived, a new democratic government had to be formed, and millions of displaced Europeans had to be clothed, housed, and fed.

THE HOLOCAUST The end of the war in Europe revealed the horrific extent of the **Holocaust**, Hitler’s systematic effort to destroy the Jews and other racial, political, sexual, and religious “undesirables,” including Communists and prostitutes. Reports of the Nazis’ methodical slaughter of Jews

had appeared as early as 1942, but the gruesome stories seemed beyond belief until the Allied armies liberated the hundred or so “death camps” where the Germans had imposed their shocking “Final Solution”: the wholesale extermination of some 6 million Jews, along with more than 1 million other captured peoples. At the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in Poland, 865,000 were killed as soon as they arrived, and up to 6,000 were gassed in a single day.

The Allied troops were appalled by what they discovered in the huge extermination camps. Bodies were piled as high as buildings; survivors were living skeletons. General Eisenhower reported to his wife that the evidence of “starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick.”

American officials, even some Jewish leaders, had dragged their feet in acknowledging the Holocaust during the war for fear that relief efforts for Jewish refugees might stir up anti-Semitism at home. Under pressure, President Roosevelt had set up a War Refugee Board early in 1944. It managed to rescue about 200,000 European Jews and some 20,000 others. But the president refused appeals to bomb the concentration camp at Auschwitz, arguing that the Nazis would simply build another one. Overall, the Allied response to the



Holocaust survivors American troops liberate survivors of the Mauthausen concentration camp in May 1945. The Nazis tattooed the prisoners with identification numbers on their wrists or chests, as seen on the man at left.

Nazi atrocities was inept at best and disgraceful at worst. In 1944, Churchill called the Holocaust the “most horrible crime ever committed in the history of the world.” He did not know at the time that Stalin’s death camps killed more people than Hitler’s.

THE PACIFIC WAR

For months after the attack on Pearl Harbor at the end of 1941, the news from the Pacific was “all bad,” as President Roosevelt acknowledged. With stunning speed, the Japanese captured numerous territories in Asia, including the British colonies of Hong Kong, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, and the French colony of Indochina. “Everywhere in the Pacific,” said Winston Churchill, “we were weak and naked.”

THE PHILIPPINES In the Philippines, U.S. forces and their Filipino allies were overwhelmed by Japanese invaders. On April 10, 1942, the Japanese gathered some 12,000 captured American troops along with 66,000 Filipinos and forced them to march sixty-five miles in six days up the Bataan peninsula. Already underfed, ravaged by tropical diseases, and provided with little food and water, the prisoners were brutalized in what came to be known as the Bataan Death March. Those who fell out of line were bayoneted or shot. Others were beaten, stabbed, or shot for no reason. More than 10,000 died along the way. News of the Bataan Death March outraged Americans and contributed to the Pacific war’s ferocious emotional intensity and mutual atrocities.

By the summer of 1942, Japan had seized control of a vast Asian empire and was on the verge of assaulting Australia when its naval leaders succumbed to what one admiral called “victory disease.” Intoxicated with easy victories and lusting for more, they pushed into the South Pacific, intending to isolate Australia and strike again at Hawaii.

CORAL SEA AND MIDWAY During the spring of 1942, U.S. forces in the Pacific finally had some success. In the Battle of the Coral Sea (May 2–6, 1942), U.S. naval warplanes forced a Japanese fleet headed toward the island of New Guinea to turn back after sinking an aircraft carrier and destroying seventy planes.

A few weeks later, Admiral Yamamoto steered his main Japanese battle fleet of eighty-six warships toward Midway, the westernmost of Hawaii’s inhabited islands, from which he hoped to strike Pearl Harbor again. This time, however, the Japanese were taken by surprise. Americans had broken the



General Douglas MacArthur MacArthur theatrically coming ashore at the island of Leyte in the Philippines, October 1944.

Japanese military radio code, allowing Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of the U.S. central Pacific fleet, to learn where Yamamoto’s fleet was heading.

The first Japanese attack hit Midway hard on June 4, 1942, but at the cost of about a third of their warplanes. American planes from the *Yorktown* and *Enterprise* then struck back, crippling the Japanese fleet. The **Battle of Midway** was the first major defeat for the Japanese navy in 350 years and the turning point of the Pacific war. The American victory blunted Japan’s military momentum, eliminated the threat to Hawaii, and bought time for the United States to organize its massive industrial productivity for a wider war.

MACARTHUR’S PACIFIC STRATEGY American and Australian forces were jointly under the command of the imperious General Douglas MacArthur, a military genius with tremendous willpower and courage who constantly irritated his superiors in Washington with his “unpleasant personality” and his repeated efforts to embellish his image. MacArthur had retired in 1937 but was called back into service in mid-1941, in part because he was such a brilliant strategist. In 1942, he assumed command of the Allied forces in the southwest Pacific.

On August 7, 1942, after first pushing the Japanese back in New Guinea, MacArthur landed 16,000 U.S. Marines on Guadalcanal Island, one of

the so-called Solomon Islands, where the Japanese had built an air base. The U.S. commander was optimistic that his undersupplied troops could defeat the entrenched Japanese, even though, he said, there were “a hundred reasons why this operation should fail.” But it did not fail. The savage fighting on Guadalcanal lasted through February 1943 but resulted in the Japanese army’s first defeat and a loss of 20,000 men, compared to 1,752 Americans. “I had never heard or read of this kind of fighting,” said a U.S. Marine. “These people refuse to surrender.”

The Japanese were skilled defensive fighters who rarely surrendered, and they controlled most of the largest islands in the Pacific. Their suicidal intensity led General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz to adopt a shrewd “leapfrogging” strategy whereby they focused on the most important islands and used airpower and sea power to bypass the others, leaving the isolated Japanese bases to “wither on the vine,” as Nimitz put it. For example, when U.S. warplanes destroyed the Japanese airfield at Rabaul in eastern New Guinea, 135,000 Japanese troops were left stranded on the island, cut off from resupply by air or sea. What the Allies did to Rabaul set the pattern for the “island-hopping” strategy in the Pacific.

BATTLES IN THE CENTRAL PACIFIC On June 15, 1944, just days after the D-day invasion, U.S. forces liberated Tinian, Guam, and Saipan, three Japanese-controlled islands. Saipan was strategically important because it allowed the new American B-29 “Superfortress” bombers to strike Japan itself. The struggle for the island lasted three weeks. Some 20,000 Japanese were killed compared to 3,500 Americans. But 7,000 more Japanese soldiers committed suicide upon the order of their commanding general, who killed himself with his sword.

General MacArthur’s forces invaded the Japanese-held Philippines on October 20. The Japanese, knowing that the loss of the Philippines would cut them off from essential raw materials, brought in warships from three directions to battle the U.S. fleet.

The four battles fought in the Philippine Sea from October 23 to October 26, 1944, came to be known collectively as the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval engagement in history and the worst Japanese defeat of the war. Some 216 U.S. warships converged to engage 64 Japanese ships. By the end of the first day, 36 Japanese warships, including 4 aircraft carriers, had been destroyed.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf included the first Japanese *kamikaze* (“divine wind”) attacks, in which young suicide pilots deliberately crashed their bomb-laden planes into American warships. From the fall of 1944 to the war’s end in the summer of 1945, an estimated 4,000 kamikaze pilots died on suicide missions. One in seven hit an American ship, thirty-four of which were sunk.



“Kamikazes just poured at us, again and again,” a sailor remembered. “It scared the shit out of us.”

As MacArthur waded ashore with the U.S. troops liberating the Philippines, he reminded reporters of his 1942 pledge—“I shall return”—when he was evacuated from the islands in the face of the Japanese invasion. Now he announced with great fanfare: “People of the Philippines, I have returned! The hour of your redemption is here. . . Rally to me.”

A WAR TO THE DEATH The closer the Allied forces got to Japan, the fiercer the resistance they encountered. While fighting continued in the Philippines, 30,000 U.S. Marines landed on Iwo Jima, a volcanic atoll 760 miles from Tokyo. The Americans thought Iwo Jima was needed as a base for fighter planes to escort bombers over Japan. The Japanese fought with suicidal intensity, and it took nearly six weeks to secure the tiny island at a cost of nearly 7,000 American lives—and 21,000 of the 22,000 Japanese soldiers. In the end, the furious battle was fought for an air base that never materialized.

The assault on the Japanese island of Okinawa, which began on Easter Sunday, April 1, was even bloodier. Only 360 miles from the main Japanese islands, Okinawa was strategically important because it would serve as the staging area for the planned Allied invasion of Japan. The conquest of Okinawa was the largest amphibious operation of the Pacific war, involving some 300,000 troops and requiring almost three months of brutal fighting. More than 150,000 Japanese were killed; the remaining 7,871 were either captured or surrendered. A third of U.S. pilots and a quarter of submariners lost their lives at Okinawa.

As the fighting raged on Okinawa, Allied commanders began planning Operation Downfall—the invasion of Japan itself. To weaken the Japanese defenses, destroy their war-related industries, and erode civilian morale, the Allied command began bombing raids in the summer of 1944. In early 1945, General Curtis Lemay, head of the U.S. Bomber Command, ordered devastating “firebomb” raids upon Japanese cities: “Bomb and burn ‘em till they quit.”

On March 9, some 300 B-29 bombers dropped napalm bombs on Tokyo. The attack incinerated sixteen square miles of the city and killed some 100,000 people while rendering a million homeless. By then, American military leaders had lost all moral qualms about targeting civilians. The kamikaze attacks, the Japanese savagery toward prisoners of war, the burning of Manila that killed 100,000 civilians, and the “rape” of China had eroded almost all sympathy for the island nation. By August 1945, sixty-six Japanese cities had been firebombed. Secretary of War Henry Stimson called the lack of public outcry in the United States over the raids “appalling.”

THE ATOMIC BOMB Still, the Japanese leaders showed no willingness to surrender. In early 1945, new U.S. president Harry S. Truman learned of the first successful test of an atomic bomb in New Mexico. Now that military planners knew the bomb would work, they selected two Japanese cities as targets. The first was **Hiroshima**, a port city and army headquarters in southern Japan. On July 25, 1945, Truman, who knew nothing about the devastating effects of



The aftermath of Little Boy This image shows the wasteland that remained after the atomic bomb “Little Boy” decimated Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945.

radiation poisoning, ordered that the atomic bomb be used if Japan did not surrender before August 3.

Although an intense debate emerged over the decision to drop the bomb—spurred by Truman’s chief of staff, Admiral William D. Leahy, who argued that the “Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender”—Truman said that he “never had any doubt that it should be used.” He later recalled that “we faced half a million casualties trying to take Japan by land. It was either that or the atom bomb, and I didn’t hesitate a minute, and I’ve never lost any sleep over it since.”

To Truman and others, the use of atomic bombs seemed a logical next step to end the war. As it turned out, scientists greatly underestimated the physical effects of the bomb. Their prediction that 20,000 people would be killed proved much too low.

In mid-July 1945, the Allied leaders met in Potsdam, Germany, near Berlin. There they issued the Potsdam Declaration. In addition to outlawing Nazism, it demanded that Japan surrender by August 3 or face “prompt and utter destruction.” Truman left Potsdam optimistic about postwar relations with the



Bombing of Nagasaki A 20,000-foot tall mushroom cloud enveloped the city of Nagasaki after the atomic bombing on August 9, 1945.

Soviet Union. “I can deal with Stalin,” he wrote. “He is honest—but smart as hell.” (Truman would soon change his mind about Stalin’s honesty.)

The deadline calling for Japan’s surrender passed, and on August 6, 1945, a B-29 bomber named *Enola Gay* (after the pilot’s mother) took off at 2:00 a.m. from the island of Tinian and headed for Hiroshima. At 8:15 a.m., flying at 31,600 feet, the *Enola Gay* released the five-ton, ten-foot-long uranium bomb nicknamed “Little Boy.”

Forty-three seconds later, the bomb exploded at an altitude of 1,900 feet, creating a blinding flash of light followed by a fireball towering to 40,000 feet. The tail gunner on the *Enola Gay* described the scene: “It’s like bubbling molasses down there . . . the mushroom is spreading out . . . fires are springing up everywhere . . . it’s like a peep into hell.”

The bomb’s incredible shock wave and firestorm killed some 78,000 people, including thousands of Japanese soldiers and 23 American prisoners of

war housed in the city. By the end of the year, the death toll would reach 140,000, as people died of injuries or radiation poisoning. In addition, of the city’s 76,000 buildings, only 6,000 were left standing, and four square miles of the city were turned to rubble.

President Truman was aboard the battleship *Augusta* returning from the Potsdam conference when news arrived that the atomic bomb had been dropped. “This is the greatest thing in history!” he exclaimed. In the United States, Americans greeted the news with similar joy. To them, the atomic bomb promised a quick end to the long nightmare of war. “No tears of sympathy will be shed in America for the Japanese people,” the *Omaha World-Herald* predicted. “Had they possessed a comparable weapon at Pearl Harbor, would they have hesitated to use it?” Others reacted more soberly when they considered the implications of atomic warfare. “Yesterday,” journalist Hanson Baldwin wrote in the *New York Times*, “we clinched victory in the Pacific, but we sowed the whirlwind.”

Two days after the Hiroshima bombing, an opportunistic Soviet Union, hoping to share in the spoils of victory, hastened to enter the war in the Pacific by sending hundreds of thousands of troops into Japanese-occupied Manchuria along the border between China and the Soviet Union. Truman and his aides, frustrated by the stubborn refusal of Japanese leaders to surrender and fearful that the Soviet Union’s entry would complicate negotiations, ordered a second atomic bomb (“Fat Man”) to be dropped on Japan. On August 9, the city of Nagasaki, a shipbuilding center, experienced the same nuclear devastation that had destroyed Hiroshima. Five days later, on August 14, 1945, the Japanese emperor accepted the terms of surrender. The formal surrender ceremony occurred on an American warship in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945.

Upon learning of the unexpected Japanese decision to surrender, Paul Fussell, one of the American soldiers preparing for the dreaded invasion of Japan, said he went into his tent and pulled the zipper closed. “And I sat there in silence for at least a full day before I could compose myself because my joy was such that I knew I couldn’t survive it in public.” Then he came out and cheered and danced with everyone else.

A NEW AGE IS BORN

Thus ended the costliest war in history. It was a *total* war in its scope, intensity, and numbers. Including deaths from war-related disease and famine, some 50 million civilians and 22 million combatants died.

The Second World War was more costly for the United States than any other foreign war: 292,000 combat deaths and 114,000 noncombat deaths among soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. A million more were wounded, with half of them seriously disabled. In proportion to its population, however, the United States suffered far fewer losses than did the other major Allies or their enemies, and American territory escaped the devastation suffered in so many parts of the world. For every American killed in the Second World War, for example, some fifty-nine Soviets died.

The war was the pivotal event of the turbulent twentieth century. It engulfed five continents, leveled cities, reshaped societies, and transformed international relations. German and Italian fascism as well as Japanese militarism were destroyed. The war set in motion the fall of China to communism in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War a year later. Colonial empires in Africa and Asia rapidly crumbled as the conflict unleashed independence movements. The Soviet Union emerged from the war as a new global superpower, while the United States, as Winston Churchill told the House of Commons, stood “at the summit of the world.”

WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN? Many factors contributed to the Allied victory. Roosevelt and Churchill were better at coordinating military efforts and maintaining national morale than were Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese emperor, Hirohito. By 1944, Hitler had grown increasingly unstable and unpredictable and more withdrawn from the German people, especially after a failed attempt by high-ranking officers to assassinate him that July.

In the end, however, what turned the tide was the awesome productivity of American industry and the ability of the Soviet Union to absorb the massive German invasion and then push back all the way to Berlin. By the end of the war, Japan had run out of food and Germany had run out of fuel. By contrast, the United States was churning out more of everything. As early as 1942, just a few weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Fritz Todt, a Nazi engineer, told Hitler that the war against the United States was already lost because of America's ability to out-produce all the other warring nations combined.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL WAR Like the First World War, the Second World War had far-reaching effects. It shattered the old world order and created a new international system, and nations such as France, Germany, Great Britain, and Japan were left devastated or impoverished. Henry Luce, the powerful publisher of *Time* magazine, said that the war had demonstrated the “moral and practical bankruptcy of all forms of Isolationism.” Internationalism was now the dominant outlook, as most Americans acknowledged that the United States had profound responsibilities for global stability and security. It had emerged from the war with the most powerful military in the world—and as the only nation with atomic weapons.

The expansion of the federal government spurred by the war effort continued after 1945, and presidential authority increased enormously at the expense of congressional and state power. The war also ended the Great Depression and launched a long period of unprecedented prosperity and global economic domination. Big businesses grew into gigantic corporations as a result of huge government contracts for military weapons and supplies. New technologies and products developed for military purposes—radar, computers, electronics, plastics and synthetics, jet engines, rockets, atomic energy—transformed the private sector, as did new consumer products generated from war-related innovations. And the opportunities created by the war for women as well as for African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other minorities set in motion major social changes that would culminate in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the feminist movement of the 1970s.

In August 1945, President Truman announced that the United States had “emerged from this war the most powerful nation in this world—the most

powerful nation, perhaps, in all history.” But the Soviet Union, despite its profound human losses and physical destruction, had gained much new territory, built massive armed forces, and enhanced its international influence, making it the greatest power in Eurasia. A little over a century after Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville had predicted that Europe would eventually be overshadowed by the United States and Russia, his prophecy had come to pass.

CHAPTER REVIEW

SUMMARY

- **Fascism and the Start of the War** In Italy, Benito Mussolini assumed control by promising law and order. Adolf Hitler rearmed Germany in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. By March 1939, Nazi Germany had annexed Austria and seized Czechoslovakia. Hitler then invaded Poland with the *blitzkrieg* strategy in September 1939, after signing a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. The British and French governments declared war.
- **America Goes to War** The United States issued “*neutrality laws*” to avoid being drawn into wars in Europe and Asia, but with the fall of France, Roosevelt accelerated military aid to Great Britain through the *Lend-Lease Act*. In 1941, the United States and Great Britain signed the *Atlantic Charter*, announcing their aims in the war. After Japan joined with Germany and Italy to form the “*Axis*” alliance, President Roosevelt froze Japanese assets in the United States and restricted oil exports to Japan, which frustrated the Japanese, who decided to launch a surprise attack at *Pearl Harbor*, Hawaii.
- **The Second World War and American Society** The war had profound social effects. Americans—white, black, and brown—migrated west to take jobs in defense industry factories; unemployment was soon a thing of the past. Farmers recovered, supported by Mexican labor through the *bracero program*. The federal government, through agencies such as the *War Production Board*, took control of managing the economy. Many women took nontraditional jobs. About 1 million African Americans served in the military in segregated units. More than 100,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly interned in “*war relocation camps*.”
- **Road to Allied Victory in Europe** By 1943, the Allies had defeated the German and Italian armies occupying North Africa. From there, they launched attacks on Sicily and then the mainland of Italy. Stalin, meanwhile, demanded a full-scale Allied attack on the Atlantic coast of France to ease pressure on the Russian Front, but *Operation Overlord* was delayed until June 6, 1944. German resistance slowly crumbled. The “Big Three” Allied leaders—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—met at the *Yalta Conference* in February 1945, where they decided that a conquered Germany would be divided into four occupation zones. In May, Soviet forces captured Berlin, and Germany surrendered. After the war, Allied forces discovered the extent of the *Holocaust*—the Nazis’ systematic effort to exterminate the Jews.
- **The Pacific War** The Japanese advance across the Pacific was halted in June 1942 with the *Battle of Midway*. Fierce Japanese resistance at Iwo Jima and Okinawa and Japan’s refusal to surrender after the firebombing of Tokyo led the new president, Harry S. Truman, to order the use of atomic bombs on the cities of *Hiroshima* and *Nagasaki*.
- **Postwar World** The Soviet Union and the United States emerged from the war as global superpowers, with the United States possessing the world’s strongest

economy. The opportunities for women and minorities during the war also increased their aspirations and would contribute to the emergence of the civil rights and feminist movements.

CHRONOLOGY

1933	Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany
1937	War between China and Japan begins
1939	Non-Aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union
September 1939	German troops invade Poland
1940	Battle of Britain
June 1941	Germany invades Soviet Union
August 1941	United States and Great Britain sign the Atlantic Charter
December 7, 1941	Japanese launch surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
June 1942	Battle of Midway
January 1943	Roosevelt and Churchill meet at Casablanca
November 1943	Roosevelt and Churchill meet Stalin in Tehran
June 6, 1944	D-day
February 1945	Yalta Conference
April 1945	Roosevelt dies; Hitler commits suicide
May 8, 1945	Nazi Germany surrenders; V-E day
August 1945	Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
September 2, 1945	Japan surrenders; V-J day

KEY TERMS

fascism p. 1152	Tuskegee Airmen p. 1179
“neutrality laws” p. 1156	bracero program p. 1179
“Axis” alliance p. 1157	“war relocation camps” p. 1181
Lend-Lease Act (1941) p. 1166	Operation Overlord p. 1187
Atlantic Charter (1941) p. 1167	Yalta Conference (1945) p. 1193
Pearl Harbor p. 1172	Holocaust p. 1196
War Production Board p. 1173	Battle of Midway p. 1199
Women’s Army Corps (WAC) p. 1175	Hiroshima p. 1202



INQUIZITIVE

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27 The Cold War and the Fair Deal

1945–1952



Duck and cover A "duck-and-cover" air-raid drill in 1951 that was commonplace in schools across the country during the cold war. The drills began in 1949, when the Soviet Union set off its first nuclear weapon. Pictured above are American schoolchildren practicing ducking and covering in February 1951.

No sooner did the Second World War end than a prolonged "cold war" between communism and capitalism began. The awkward wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union collapsed during the spring and summer of 1945. With the elimination of their common enemy, Nazism, the two nations became intense global rivals who could not bridge their ideological differences over basic issues such as human rights, individual liberties, democratic elections, and religious freedom.

Mutual suspicion and a race to gain influence over "nonaligned" nations in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America further distanced the two former allies. The defeat of Japan and Germany had created power vacuums in Europe and Asia that sucked the Soviet Union and the United States into an unrelenting war of words fed by clashing strategic interests and political ideologies.

The postwar era also brought anti-colonial liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East that would soon strip Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States of their global empires. The Philippines, for example, gained its independence from America in 1946. The next year, Great Britain withdrew from Hindu-dominated India after carving out two new Islamic nations, Pakistan and Bangladesh (originally called East Pakistan). The emergence of Communist China (the People's Republic) in 1949 further complicated global politics.

The mere possibility of nuclear holocaust also cast a cloud of anxiety over the postwar era. The advent of atomic weapons made the very idea of warfare

focus questions

1. Why and how did the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union develop after the Second World War?
2. What was the impact of American efforts to contain the Soviet Union and the expansion of communism during Truman's presidency?
3. How did Truman expand the New Deal? How effective was his own "Fair Deal" agenda?
4. What were the major international developments during 1949–1950, and how did they alter U.S. foreign policy?
5. How did the Red Scare emerge after the Second World War? How did it impact American politics and society?

unthinkably horrific, which in turn made national leaders more cautious in handling disputes.

TRUMAN AND THE COLD WAR

In April 1945, less than three months after Harry S. Truman had begun his new role as vice president, Eleanor Roosevelt calmly informed him, “Harry, the President is dead.” When Truman asked what he could do to help her, the First Lady replied: “Is there anything we can do for *you*? For you are the one in trouble now.” Truman was largely unknown outside of Washington. What everyone did know, however, was that he was not Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Truman had no wealthy family, had not traveled the world, and had not attended Harvard or Columbia. In fact, he had not gone to college.

Born in 1884 in western Missouri, Truman grew up in Independence, near Kansas City. Bookish and withdrawn, he was, he recalled, a bit of “a sissy” as a boy. He moved to his grandmother’s farm after high school, spent a few years working in Kansas City banks, and grew into an outgoing young man.

During the First World War, Truman served in France as captain of an artillery battery. Afterward, he and a partner started a clothing business, but it failed miserably in the recession of 1922, leaving him in debt for the next twenty years. Truman then entered local politics under the tutelage of Kansas City’s Democratic machine. In 1934, Missouri sent him to the U.S. Senate, where he remained obscure until he chaired a committee investigating fraud in the war-mobilization effort.

Truman was a plain, decent, lovable man who lacked Roosevelt’s dash, charm, brilliance, and creativity. On his first full day as president, Truman was awestruck. “Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now,” he told reporters. “I don’t know whether you fellows ever had a load of hay fall on you, but when they told me yesterday what had happened, I felt like the moon, the stars and all the planets had fallen on me.”

Washington politicians had low expectations of Roosevelt’s successor. As Truman was seated waiting to be sworn in as the grieving nation’s new president, a Democratic official said “he looked to me like a very little man as he sat” in a huge leather chair. An unreflective man whose famed decisiveness was rarely troubled by doubts or moral ambiguities, Truman was famously short-tempered, profane, and dismissive, and was notorious for his scrappy press conferences. (“If you ask smart-aleck questions, I’ll give you smart-aleck answers.”) He called publisher William Randolph Hearst “the No. 1 whore monger of our time,” columnist Westbrook Pegler “the greatest character assas-

sin in the United States,” and Richard Nixon “a shifty-eyed god-damned liar.”

The plain-speaking man from Missouri resembled his hero Andrew Jackson in his decisiveness, bluntness, folksy manner, salty language, and raw courage. Despite his lack of executive experience, Truman was confident and self-assured—and he needed to be. Managing the transition from war to peace both at home and abroad was a monumental task. He was expected to lead America into a postwar era complicated by the cold war and the need to rebuild Europe and Asia.

He ended up doing better than anyone expected. A common man who became president at an uncommon time, Truman rose above his limitations to do extraordinary things. He never pretended to be something he was not; as he admitted, he was “an ordinary human being who has been lucky.” During a visit in 1952, British leader Winston Churchill confessed to Truman that initially he had held him “in very low regard. I loathed your taking the place of Franklin Roosevelt. I misjudged you badly. Since that time, you, more than any other man, have saved Western civilization.”



Harry S. Truman The successor to Franklin Roosevelt who led the United States out of the Second World War and into the Cold War.

ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR Historians have long debated the unanswerable question: Was the United States or the Soviet Union more responsible for the onset of the cold war? The conventional view argues that the Soviets, led by Josef Stalin, a ruthless Communist dictator, set out to dominate the globe after 1945. The United States had no choice but to defend democratic capitalist values. By contrast, “revisionist” historians insist that instead of continuing Roosevelt’s efforts to collaborate with the Soviets, President Truman pursued a confrontational foreign policy that aggravated tensions. Yet such an interpretation fails to recognize that Truman inherited a deteriorating relationship with the Soviets. Both sides in the postwar world were captives of a nuclear nightmare of fear, suspicion, and posturing.

In retrospect, the onset of the cold war seems to have been inevitable. America’s commitment to capitalism, political self-determination, and religious freedom conflicted dramatically with the Soviet Union’s preference for controlling

its neighbors, enforcing ideological conformity, and prohibiting religious practices. Insecurity, as much as Communist ideology, drove much of Soviet behavior after the Second World War. Russia, after all, had been invaded by Germany twice in the first half of the twentieth century, and some 23 million people died as a result. Soviet leaders were determined to create loyal nations on their borders for protection. The people of Eastern Europe were caught in the middle.

CONFLICTS WITH THE SOVIETS The wartime military alliance against Nazism disintegrated after 1945 as the Soviet Union violated the promises it had made at the Yalta Conference and imposed military control and the Communist political system on the nations of Eastern Europe it had liberated. On May 12, 1945, four days after victory in Europe, Winston Churchill asked Truman: “What is to happen about Europe? An **iron curtain** is drawn down upon [the Russian] front. We do not know what is going on behind [it].” Churchill and Truman wanted to lift the “iron curtain” and help those nations develop democratic governments. But events during the second half of 1945 dashed those expectations.

As early as the spring of 1945 and continuing for the next two years, the Soviet Union systematically imprisoned half of the European continent. The Red Army ran amok, raping and killing the “liberated” citizens of Eastern Europe. Thereafter, the Soviets systematically installed “puppet” governments across central and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia). Totalitarian regimes essentially turned once-proud nations into Soviet colonies. In their ruthless pursuit of total control, the Soviets eliminated all political parties except the Communists, created secret police forces, took control of intellectual and cultural life (including the mass media), undermined the Roman Catholic Church, and organized a process of ethnic cleansing whereby whole populations—12 million Germans, as well as Poles and Hungarians—were relocated from their homes in Eastern Europe, usually to West Germany or to prisons. More than 500,000 of the refugees died in the process. Anyone who opposed the Soviet-installed regimes was exiled, silenced, executed, or imprisoned.

Stalin’s promises at the Yalta Conference to allow open elections in the nations of Eastern Europe controlled by Soviet armies had turned out to be lies. In a fit of candor, he admitted that “a freely elected government in any of these countries would be anti-Soviet, and that we cannot allow.”

U.S. secretary of state James F. Byrnes tried to use America’s monopoly on atomic bombs to pressure the Soviets to abide by the Yalta accords. In April 1945, he suggested to President Truman that nuclear weapons “might well put us in position to dictate our own terms [with the Soviets] at the end of

the war.” The Soviets, however, paid little attention, in part because their spies had kept them informed of what American scientists had been doing and in part because they were developing their own atomic bombs.

Throughout the spring of 1945, the Soviets created “friendly governments” in Eastern Europe, arguing that the United States had done the same in Italy and Japan after those nations had surrendered. The difference was that the Soviets prevented non-Communists from participating in the political process.

A few days before the opening of the conference to organize the United Nations in April, Truman met with Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov. The Soviets had just put in place a pro-Communist government in Poland in violation of Stalin’s pledge at Yalta to allow free elections. Truman directed Molotov to tell Stalin that the United States expected the Soviet leader to live up to his agreements. “I have never been talked to like that in my life,” Molotov angrily replied. “Carry out your agreements,” Truman snapped, “and you won’t get talked to like that.”

Later, in July 1945, when Truman met Stalin at the Potsdam Conference, he wrote his mother that he had never seen “such pig-headed people as are the Russians.” He later acknowledged that the Soviets broke their promises “as soon as the unconscionable Russian Dictator [Stalin] returned to Moscow!” Truman added, with a note of embarrassment, “And I liked the little son of a bitch.”

THE CONTAINMENT POLICY

By the beginning of 1947, relations with the Soviet Union had grown ice cold. A year before, in February 1946, Stalin had proclaimed the superiority of the Soviet Communist system of government and declared that peace was impossible “under the present capitalist development of the world economy.” His provocative statement suggesting an inevitable war between communism and capitalism led the State Department to ask for an analysis of Soviet communism from forty-two-year-old George Frost Kennan, the best-informed expert on the Soviet Union, then working in the U.S. embassy in Moscow.

Kennan responded on February 22, 1946, with a famous 5,000-word “Long Telegram”—the longest in the history of the State Department. He included considerable detail about Russian history, the pillars of Soviet policy, Stalin’s “neurotic view of world affairs,” and Russia’s historic determination to protect its western border with Europe.

Kennan explained that the Soviet Union was founded on a rigid ideology (Marxism-Leninism), which saw a fundamental global conflict between Communist and capitalist nations and helped Soviet rulers justify their amoral



George F. Kennan A specialist in the history and behavior of the Soviet Union, American diplomat George Kennan developed the rationale for containment at the heart of the Truman Doctrine.

actions. They could not imagine “permanent peaceful coexistence” with capitalist nations and were “fanatically” committed to the necessity of perpetual tension and conflict. In this regard, Kennan implied, Franklin Roosevelt had mistakenly assumed that his personal diplomacy with Stalin would ensure that the Soviets behaved. Kennan insisted instead that Stalin needed external enemies to maintain his totalitarian power at home.

The Soviet goal, according to Kennan, was to build military strength while subverting the stability of the capitalist democracies. The best way for the United States to deal with such an ideological foe, he advised, was through patient, persistent, and firm “containment” efforts to “contain” Soviet expansionism, without resorting to war. The economic power of capitalist democracies was their greatest asset. Creating “unalterable counterforce” to Communist expansionism, Kennan

predicted, would eventually cause “either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power” because communism, in Kennan’s view, was an inherently unstable system that would eventually collapse.

New secretary of state George C. Marshall, the austere but much revered commander of the U.S. armed forces during the war, was so impressed by Kennan’s analysis that he put him in charge of the State Department’s Policy Planning office. No other American diplomat at the time forecast so accurately what would happen to the Soviet Union some forty years later. As Kennan recalled, “my reputation was made. My voice now carried.”

Kennan later acknowledged that his “Long Telegram” suffered from excessive optimism and occasional vagueness. In its broadest dimensions, its call for “firm and vigilant **containment**” echoed the outlook of Truman and his advisers and would guide U.S. foreign policy for decades.

But how exactly were the United States and its allies to “contain” the Soviet Union’s expansionist tendencies? How should the United States respond to

Soviet aggression around the world? Kennan left the task of “containing” communism to Truman and his advisers, most of whom, unlike Kennan, considered containment to be as much a *military doctrine* as a *political strategy*.

In 1946, civil war broke out in Greece between an authoritarian monarchy backed by the British and a Communist-led insurgency supported by the Soviets. On February 21, 1947, the financially strapped British informed the U.S. government that they could no longer provide economic and military aid to Greece and would withdraw in five weeks. Truman quickly conferred with congressional leaders, one of whom, Republican senator Arthur Vandenburg of Michigan, warned the president that he would need to “scare the hell out of the American people” about the menace of communism to gain public support for his aid program. Truman was eager to do so, for he had grown tired of “babying the Russians.”

THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE On March 12, 1947, President Truman gave a national radio speech in which he asked Congress for \$400 million for economic and military assistance for Greece and Turkey. More important, the president announced what came to be known as the **Truman Doctrine**. To ensure congressional support, he intentionally exaggerated the danger of a Communist takeover in Greece. Like a row of dominoes, Truman predicted, the fall of Greece would topple the other nations of the eastern Mediterranean, then Western Europe. To prevent such a catastrophe, he said, the United States must “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”

In this single sentence, the president established the foundation of U.S. foreign policy for the next forty years. In essence, he was declaring war on communism everywhere. In Truman’s view, shared by later presidents, the assumptions of the “domino theory” made an aggressive “containment” strategy against communism a necessity.

Truman’s speech generated widespread public support. The *New York Times* said that his message was clear: “The epoch of isolation is ended. It is being replaced by an epoch of American responsibility.” At the State Department, Secretary of State Marshall announced that “we are now concerned with the peace of the entire world.”

Still, Marshall and others feared that Truman’s speech was unnecessarily provocative. George Kennan cringed at the president’s “grandiose” commitment to “contain” communism *everywhere*. In Kennan’s view, Truman’s “militarized view of the Cold War” was a foolish *crusade*, an open-ended ideological confrontation without limits rather than a *policy* with an accompanying program of steps capable of implementation. Efforts to “contain” communism needed to



Marshall Plan The Marshall Plan, which distributed massive amounts of economic aid throughout postwar Europe, is represented in this cartoon as a rope wrapped around a tree that Europe is desperately trying to hold onto as it dangles off a cliff.

be selective rather than universal, political and economic rather than military; the United States could not intervene in every “hot spot” around the world. Walter Lippmann, the nation’s leading political journalist, characterized Truman’s policy of global anti-communism as a “strategic monstrosity” that would entangle the United States in endless international disputes and force it to partner with right-wing dictatorships—as turned out to be the case. Truman and his advisers rejected such concerns. In 1947, Congress approved the president’s request for economic and military assistance to Greece and neighboring Turkey.

THE MARSHALL PLAN In the spring of 1947, most of postwar Europe remained broke, shattered, and desperate. Factories had been bombed to rubble; railroads and bridges had been destroyed; millions were homeless,

starving, and jobless; and political unrest was growing. By 1947, Socialist and Communist parties were emerging in many European nations, including Italy, France, and Belgium. The crises among the struggling European democracies required bold action.

The United States stepped into the breach. In May 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall delivered a speech at Harvard University in which he outlined America’s policy toward Europe in nonideological terms. Building upon suggestions given him by George Kennan and others, he called for massive financial and technical assistance to rescue Europe, including the Soviet Union.

What came to be known as the **Marshall Plan** was intended to reconstruct the European economy, neutralize Communist insurgencies, and build up foreign markets for American products. As Truman said, “the American [capitalist] system can survive only if it is part of a world system.” But the Marshall Plan was also part of Truman’s effort to contain the expansionist tendencies

of the Soviet Union by reestablishing a strong Western Europe anchored in American values. The Americans, said a British official, “want an integrated Europe looking like the United States of America.”

In December 1947, Truman submitted Marshall’s proposal to Congress. Initially, Republican critics dismissed it as “New Dealism” for Europe. However, two months later, on February 25, 1948, a Communist-led coup in Czechoslovakia, the last nation in Eastern Europe with a democratic government, ensured the Marshall Plan’s passage.

From 1948 until 1951, the Marshall Plan provided \$13 billion to sixteen European nations. The Soviet Union, however, refused to participate and forced the Eastern European countries under its control—Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia—to refuse to participate as well.

The Marshall Plan (officially called the European Recovery Plan) worked as hoped. By 1951, Western Europe’s industrial production had soared to 40 percent above prewar levels, and its farm output was larger than ever. England’s *Economist* magazine called the Marshall Plan “an act without peer in history.” It became the most successful peacetime diplomatic initiative in American history.

DIVIDED GERMANY Although the Marshall Plan drew the nations of Western Europe closer together, it increased tensions with the Soviet Union, as Stalin saw it as a way to weaken Soviet influence in the region. The breakdown of the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union also left the problem of postwar Germany unsettled. In 1945, Berlin, the German capital, had been divided into four sectors, or zones, each governed by one of the four principal allied nations—the United States, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.

The devastated German economy continued to languish, requiring the U.S. Army to provide food and basic necessities to millions of civilians. Slowly, the Allied occupation zones evolved into functioning governments. In 1948, the British, French, and Americans united their three administrative zones into one and developed a common currency to be used in West Germany as well as in West Berlin, a city of 2.4 million people, which was more than 100 miles inside the Soviet occupation zone of East Germany. The West Germans also organized state governments and began drafting a federal constitution.

The political unification of West Germany and its economic recovery infuriated Stalin, who was determined to keep Germany weak. And the status of divided Berlin had become a powder keg. In March 1948, Stalin prevented the new West German currency from being delivered to Berlin. Then, on June 23, he ordered the Soviet army occupying eastern Germany to stop all road and



Family reunion A girl gives her grandmother a kiss through the barbed wire fence that divides the Dutch-German frontier in 1947.

rail traffic into West Berlin. The blockade, he hoped, would force the United States and its allies to leave the divided city.

The Americans interpreted Stalin's blockade as a tipping point in the cold war. "When Berlin falls," predicted General Lucius D. Clay, the U.S. Army commander in Germany, "western Germany will be next. Communism will run rampant." The United States thus faced a dilemma: risk a third world war by using force to break the Soviet blockade or begin a humiliating retreat from West Berlin, leaving the residents to be swallowed up by communism.

Truman, who prided himself on his decisiveness ("the buck stops here"), made clear his stance: "We stay in Berlin—period." The United States announced an embargo against all goods exported from Soviet-controlled eastern Germany and began organizing a massive airlift to provide food and supplies to West Berliners.

By October 1948, the U.S. and British air forces were flying in 7,000 tons of food, fuel, medicine, coal, and equipment to Berlin each day. To support the airlift and prepare for a possible war, thousands of former military pilots were called back into service. Truman revived the military draft, and Congress provided emergency funds to increase military spending.



Through the iron curtain German children greet a U.S. cargo plane as it flies into West Berlin to drop off much-needed food and supplies.

At times it seemed that the two superpowers were on the verge of war. For all the threats and harsh words, however, the **Berlin airlift** went on for eleven months without any shots being fired. Finally, on May 12, 1949, the Soviets lifted their blockade, in part because bad Russian harvests had made them desperate for food grown in western Germany. The Berlin airlift was the first major "victory" for the West in the cold war, and the unprecedented efforts of the United States and Great Britain to supply West Berliners transformed most of them from defeated adversaries into devoted allies. In May 1949, as the Soviet blockade was ending, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) was founded. In October, the Soviet-controlled German Democratic Republic (East Germany) came into being.

FORMING ALLIANCES The Soviet blockade of Berlin convinced the United States and its allies that they needed to act together to stop further Communist expansion into Western Europe. On April 4, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed by twelve nations: the United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, and Portugal. Greece and Turkey joined the alliance in 1952, West Germany in 1955, and Spain in 1982.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the largest defensive alliance in the world, declared that an attack against any one of the members would be considered an attack against all. The creation of NATO marked the high point of efforts to “contain” Soviet expansion. In 1949, Congress provided \$1 billion in military equipment to NATO members. By joining NATO, the United States—for the first time since its alliance with France during the Revolutionary War—committed itself to go to war on behalf of its allies. Isolationism was dead.

THE OCCUPATION OF GERMANY AND AUSTRIA



- How did the Allies decide to divide postwar Germany at the Yalta Conference?
- What was the “iron curtain”?
- Why did the Allies airlift supplies to West Berlin?

REORGANIZING THE MILITARY The onset of the cold war and the emergence of nuclear weapons led Truman to restructure the way the U.S. armed forces were managed. In 1947, Congress passed the **National Security Act**, which created a Department of Defense to oversee the three military branches—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—and the National Security Council (NSC), an advisory group of the government’s top specialists in international relations. The act made permanent the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a wartime innovation bringing together the leaders of all branches of the armed forces. It also established the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to coordinate global intelligence-gathering activities.

In 1952, Truman created the National Security Agency (NSA) within the Defense Department. Its charge was to “encrypt” government communications to ensure their privacy and to intercept the communications of other nations. The NSA also provided surveillance of Americans targeted as potential threats.

A JEWISH NATION: ISRAEL At the same time that the United States was helping to form new alliances, it was helping to form a new nation. Palestine, the biblical Holy Land, had been a British protectorate since 1919. For hundreds of years, Jews throughout the world had dreamed of returning to their ancestral homeland of Israel and its ancient capital Zion, a part of Jerusalem. Many Zionists—Jews who wanted a separate Jewish nation—had migrated there. More arrived during and after the Nazi persecution of European Jews. Hitler’s effort to exterminate the Jews convinced many that their only hope for a secure future was to create their own nation.

Late in 1947, the United Nations voted to divide (“partition”) Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. The Jews readily agreed, but the Arabs were fiercely opposed. Palestine was their ancestral home, too; Jerusalem was as holy to Muslims as it was to Jews and Christians. Arabs viewed the creation of a Jewish nation in Palestine as an act of war, and they attacked Israel in early 1948. Hundreds were killed before the Haganah (Jewish militia) won control of most of Palestine. When British oversight of Palestine officially expired on May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the Jewish leader in Palestine, proclaimed Israel’s independence. President Truman officially recognized the new Israeli nation within minutes, as did the Soviet Union.

One million Jews, most of them European immigrants, now had their own nation. Early the next morning, however, the Arab League nations—Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt—invaded Israel, beginning a period of nearly constant warfare in the Holy Land. Mediators from the UN gradually worked out a truce agreement, restoring an uneasy peace by May 11, 1949, when Israel

joined the United Nations. Israel was allowed to keep all its conquered territories, including the whole Palestine coast.

The Palestinian Arabs lost everything. Most of them became stateless refugees who scattered into neighboring Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. Stored-up resentments and sporadic warfare between Israel and the Arab states have festered ever since, complicating U.S. foreign policy, which has tried to maintain friendships with both sides but has usually tilted toward Israel.

EXPANDING THE NEW DEAL

For the most part, Republicans and Democrats in Congress cooperated with President Truman on issues related to the cold war, though often grudgingly. Senator Claude Pepper, a liberal Democrat from Florida, insisted that if Franklin Roosevelt were still alive, “we’d be getting on better with Russia.” Republican senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio accused Truman of “appeasing Russia, a policy which has sacrificed throughout Eastern Europe and Asia the freedom of many nations and millions of people.” On domestic issues, however, Truman faced widespread opposition. The cost-cutting Republicans in Congress hoped that they could end the New Deal as the war drew to a close.

FROM WAR TO PEACE In September 1945, Truman called Congress into a special emergency session at which he presented a twenty-one-point program to guide the nation’s “reconversion” from wartime back to peacetime. Massive government spending during the war had ended the Great Depression and brought about full employment, but Truman’s postwar challenge was to ensure that the peacetime economy absorbed the millions of men and women who had served in the armed forces and were now seeking civilian jobs. During the second half of 1945 and throughout 1946, some 700,000 people in uniform, mostly men, returned to civilian life. By 1947, the armed forces had shrunk from 12 million to 1.5 million.

Fears of massive unemployment in defense-related industries led people to worry about another depression. A *New York Times* headline predicted: “5,000,000 EXPECTED TO LOSE ARMS JOBS!” Truman called for unemployment insurance to cover more workers, a higher minimum wage, construction of massive low-cost public housing projects, regional development projects to put military veterans to work, and much more. A powerful Republican congressman named Joseph W. Martin was stunned by the scope of Truman’s proposals. “Not even President Roosevelt,” he gasped, “ever asked for so much at one sitting.”



Drugstore in Bronxville, NY. America quickly demobilized after the long war effort, turning its attention to the pursuit of abundance.

Truman’s primary goal was to “prevent prolonged unemployment” while avoiding the “bitter mistakes” that had produced wild price inflation and a recession after the First World War. He also wanted to retain, for a while, the wartime controls on wages, prices, and rents, as well as the rationing of scarce food items. Most of all, he wanted to minimize unemployment as workers in defense plants were laid off and millions of military veterans went looking for civilian jobs. Truman called on Congress to *guarantee* every American a job.

Congress refused to go that far. Instead, it approved the Employment Act of 1946, which authorized Truman and the federal government “to promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power.” Liberals were disappointed by the new president’s inability to win over legislators. “Alas for Truman,” said the *New Republic*, there was “no bugle note in his voice” to rally public opinion. “What one misses,” said Max Lerner, an influential journalist, “is the confident sense of direction that Roosevelt gave, despite all the contradictions of his policy.”

Throughout 1946, Republicans and conservative southern Democrats in Congress balked at most of Truman’s efforts to revive or expand New Deal

programs. The Great Depression was over, critics stressed. Different times demanded different programs—or none at all.

The end of the war caused short-term economic problems but not the postwar depression many had feared. Many women who had been recruited to work in defense industries were shoved out as men took off uniforms and looked for jobs. At a shipyard in California, the foreman gathered the women workers and told them to go welcome the troop ships as they pulled into port. The next day, all of the women were let go to make room for male veterans.

Still, several shock absorbers cushioned the economic impact of demobilization. They included federal unemployment insurance (and other Social Security benefits) and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill of Rights, under which the federal government spent \$13 billion on military veterans for education, vocational training, medical treatment, unemployment insurance, and loans for building houses and starting new businesses.

WAGES, PRICES, AND LABOR UNREST The most acute economic problem Truman faced was the postwar spike in prices charged for consumer goods. During the war, the government had frozen wages and prices and banned strikes by labor unions. When wartime economic controls were removed, prices for scarce consumer items shot up, spurring labor unions to demand pay increases. When raises were not provided, a record number of postwar strikes erupted in 1945–1946, exacerbating the shortages of consumer goods. Workers at General Motors went on strike for almost four months, making it much more difficult for people to buy a car. Never before or since had so many American workers walked off the job in one year.

Labor disputes crippled the crucial coal and railroad industries. Like Theodore Roosevelt before him, Truman grew frustrated with the stubbornness of both management and labor leaders. He took federal control of the coal mines, whereupon the mine owners agreed to union demands. In May 1946, Truman threatened to draft striking railroad workers into the military if they did not go back to work. His threat, probably illegal, did the trick, but it embittered many workers who had long voted Democratic. A leading union official announced that organized labor “is through with Truman.”

Truman's efforts to control rising prices were equally controversial. On June 30, 1946, he lifted wartime controls on consumer prices. Within days, prices for groceries skyrocketed, rising in two weeks as much as they had risen in the previous three years. So Truman restored price controls. Ranchers were so upset by the president's change of course that they refused to sell their cattle for slaughter. Suddenly, there was a “beefsteak” crisis as consumers complained that the supply of food was worse than it had been during the war.

Time magazine's Washington-based political reporter alerted his editor that Truman was so unpopular “he could not carry Missouri now.”

On October 14, just three weeks before the midterm congressional elections, Truman announced that he was removing price controls on meat. Steaks and hamburger meat soon appeared on grocery shelves, but prices again soared. A Republican political strategist loved the turn of events, telling his colleagues that “the tide is sweepin' our way.” And it was.

POLITICAL COOPERATION AND CONFLICT During the congressional election campaigns in 1946, Republicans adopted a simple, four-word slogan: “Had Enough? Vote Republican!” Using loudspeakers, Republicans drove through city streets saying, “Ladies, if you want meat, vote Republican.” A union leader tagged Truman “the No. 1 Strikebreaker,” while much of the public, upset by the unions, price increases, food shortages, and the scarcity of automobiles and affordable housing, blamed the strikes on the White House.

Labor unions had emerged from the war with more power than ever before. Some 14.5 million workers, more than a third of the workforce, were now unionized. Members had tended to vote Democratic, but not in the 1946 elections, which gave the Republicans majorities in both houses of Congress for the first time since 1928. “The New Deal is kaput,” one newspaper editor crowed. The *Chicago Tribune* claimed that Americans had “won the greatest victory for the Republic since Appomattox.” The president, taunted the *United States News*, “is a one-termer.” Even many Democrats had soured on Truman, circulating a slogan that expressed their frustration: “I'm just Mild about Harry.”

The new Republican Congress that convened in early 1947 reflected the national discontent. It curbed the power of unions by passing the **Taft-Hartley Labor Act** of 1947 (officially called the Labor-Management Relations Act). The law allowed employers to campaign against efforts to form unions and outlawed unions from coercing workers to join or refusing to negotiate grievances.

The Taft-Hartley Act also required union leaders to take “loyalty oaths” declaring that they were not members of the Communist party, banned strikes by federal employees, and imposed a “cooling-off” period of eighty days on any strike that the president deemed dangerous to the public welfare. Yet the most troubling element of the new bill was a provision that allowed state legislatures to pass “right-to-work” laws that ended the practice of forcing all wage workers at a company to join a union once a majority voted to unionize.

In a show of support for organized labor, Truman vetoed the Taft-Hartley bill, which unions called “the slave-labor act.” He denounced the “shocking” bill as “bad for labor, bad for management, and bad for the country.” Working-class



Fight for desegregation Demonstrators led by activist A. Philip Randolph (left) picket the Democratic National Convention on July 12, 1948, calling for racial integration of the armed forces.

Democrats were delighted. Many unionists who had gone over to the Republicans in 1946 returned to the Democrats because of Truman's strong support. Journalist James Wechsler reported that "Mr. Truman has reached the crucial fork in the road and turned unmistakably to the left."

Congress, however, overturned the president's veto, and Taft-Hartley became law. The number of strikes dropped sharply thereafter, and representatives of management and labor learned to work together. At the same time, by 1954, fifteen state legislatures, mainly in the South and West, had used the Taft-Hartley Act to pass "right-to-work" laws forbidding union-only workplaces. Those states thereafter recruited industries to relocate because of their low wages and "nonunion" policies.

CIVIL RIGHTS Another of Truman's challenges was the bigotry faced by returning African American soldiers. When one black veteran arrived home in a uniform decorated with combat medals, he was welcomed by a white neighbor who said: "Don't you forget . . . that you're still a nigger."

The Second World War had changed America's racial landscape in important ways, however. As a *New York Times* editorial explained in early 1946, "This is a particularly good time to campaign against the evils of bigotry, prejudice,

and race hatred because we have witnessed the defeat of enemies who tried to found a mastery of the world upon such cruel and fallacious policy."

African Americans had fought in large numbers to overthrow the Nazi regime of government-sponsored racism, and returning veterans were unwilling to put up with racial abuse at home. The cold war also gave political leaders added incentive to improve race relations. The Soviets often compared racism in the United States to the Nazis' brutalization of the Jews. In the ideological contest against capitalism, Communists highlighted examples of American racism to win influence among the newly emerging nations of Africa.

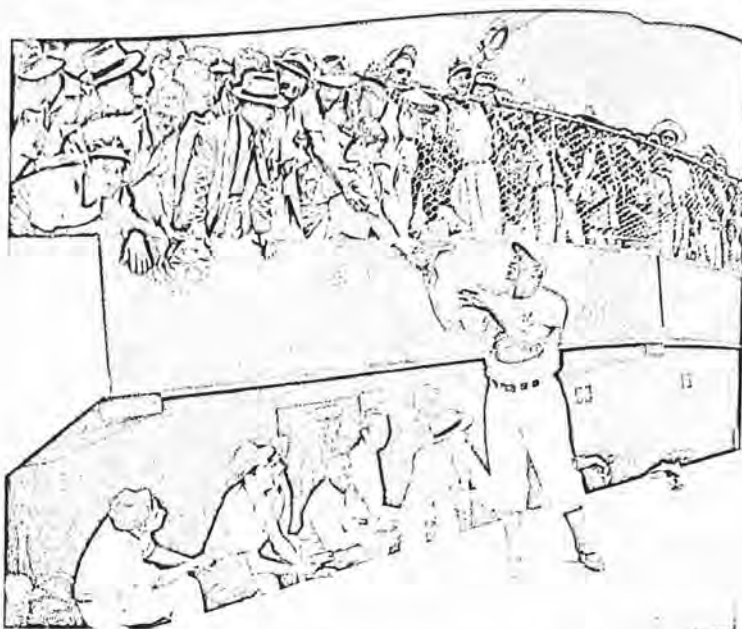
Black veterans who spoke out against racial bigotry often risked their lives. In 1946, two African American couples in rural Georgia were gunned down by a white mob. One of the murderers explained that George Dorsey, one of the victims, was "a good nigger" until he went into the army. "But when he came out, he thought he was as good as any white people."

In the fall of 1946, a delegation of civil rights activists urged President Truman to condemn the Ku Klux Klan and the lynching of African Americans. The delegation graphically described incidents of torture and intimidation against blacks in the South. Truman was horrified: "My God! I had no idea that it was as terrible as that! We've got to do something."

Truman thereupon appointed a Committee on Civil Rights to investigate violence against African Americans. A year later, with Truman's endorsement, the commission issued a report, "To Secure These Rights," which called for a federal anti-lynching bill, abolition of the poll tax designed to keep poor blacks from voting, a voting rights act, an end to racial segregation in the armed forces, and a ban on racial segregation in public transportation. Southern Democrats were furious. South Carolina governor J. Strom Thurmond warned Truman that the southern Democratic vote was no longer "in the bag." Thurmond would soon leave the party to form the Dixiecrats in opposition to Truman.

On July 26, 1948, Truman took a bolder step when he banned racial discrimination in the federal government. Four days later, he issued an executive order ending racial segregation in the armed forces. The air force and navy quickly complied, but the army dragged its feet until the early 1950s. By 1960, however, the armed forces were the most racially integrated of all national organizations. Desegregating the military was, Truman claimed, "the greatest thing that ever happened to America."

JACKIE ROBINSON Meanwhile, racial segregation was being dismantled in a much more public area: professional baseball. In April 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers roster included the first African American to play major



Jackie Robinson Robinson's unfaltering courage and superior athletic skills prompted the integration of sports, drawing African American and Latino spectators to the games. Here, he greets his Dominican fans at Trujillo High School in Santo Domingo.

league baseball: Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson. He was born in 1919 in a Georgia sharecropper's cabin, the grandson of slaves. Six months later, his father left town with a neighbor's wife, never to return. Robinson's mother moved the family to Pasadena, California, where Jackie became a marvelous all-around athlete. At UCLA, he was the first athlete in school history to letter in four sports: baseball, basketball, football, and track. After serving in the army during World War II, he began playing professional baseball in the so-called Negro Leagues. He did so well that major league scouts reported that he could play in the big leagues.

At that point, Branch Rickey, the president and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, interviewed Robinson for three hours on August 28, 1945. Rickey asked Robinson if he could face racial abuse without losing his temper. Robinson was shocked: "Are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?" Rickey replied that he needed a pathbreaking "Negro player" with "guts enough *not* to fight back." Robinson assured him he was the best candidate to integrate baseball: "If you want to take this gamble, I will promise there will be no incident." He then signed Robinson to a contract for \$600 a month. Rickey

explained to his critics that he had found a terrific player who was a strong, quiet warrior of incomparable courage capable of looking the other way when provoked. And he was often provoked.

Soon after Robinson arrived for preseason practice, many of his white Dodger teammates refused to take the field with him. Manager Leo Durocher would have none of that. As he told the team, "I don't care if the guy is yellow or black, or if he has stripes . . . I'm the manager of this team, and I say he plays."

During the 1947 season, teammates and opposing players viciously baited Robinson. Pitchers hit him, base runners spiked him, and spectators booed him and drenched him in beer, even as he led the Dodgers to the National League championship and eventually six World Series appearances. In Cincinnati, Reds fans posted a sign reading: "Robinson: We are going to kill you if you attempt to enter a ball game as Crosley Field." Hotels refused him rooms, and restaurants denied him service. Hate mail arrived by the bucketful. One sportswriter called Robinson "the loneliest man I have ever seen in sports."

On the other hand, black spectators were electrified by Robinson's courageous example and turned out in droves to watch him play. A headline in a Boston newspaper expressed the prevailing sentiment: "Triumph of Whole Race Seen in Jackie's Debut in Major League Ball." As time passed, Robinson won over many fans and players with his courage, wit, grit, and talent. As sportswriter Red Smith observed, Robinson was an example of "the unconquerable doing the impossible." During his first season with the Dodgers, Robinson stole twice as many bases as anyone else in the National League, and he was named Rookie of the Year. Between 1949 and 1954, Robinson had a batting average of .327, among the best in baseball. Yankees catcher Yogi Berra said "he could beat you in a lot of ways."

Robinson's very presence on the field with lily-white teams forced spectators sitting in racially divided bleachers to confront the hypocritical reality of segregation. Other teams soon began signing black players. Racial attitudes were changing—slowly. In 1947, Robinson was voted the second most popular American, behind singer Bing Crosby. "My life," Robinson remembered, "produced understanding among whites, and it gave black people the idea that if I could do it, they could do it, too, that blackness wasn't subservient to anything."

MEXICAN AMERICANS In the Far West, Mexican Americans (often grouped with other Spanish-speaking immigrants as *Hispanics* or *Latinos*) continued to experience ethnic prejudice. Schools in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and California routinely segregated Mexican American children from whites. The 500,000 Latino veterans were especially frustrated that their efforts in the war were not rewarded with equality at home. They were frequently

denied access to educational, medical, and housing benefits available to white servicemen. Some mortuaries even denied funeral services to Mexican Americans killed in combat. As a funeral director in Texas explained, “the Anglo people would not stand for it.”

To fight such prejudicial treatment, Mexican American war veterans led by Dr. Hector Perez García, a U.S. Army major who had served as a combat surgeon, organized the American GI Forum in Texas in 1948. Soon there were branches across the nation. García, born in Mexico in 1914 and raised in Texas, stressed the importance of formal education to Mexican Americans. The organization’s motto read: “Education Is Our Freedom and Freedom Should Be Everybody’s Business.”

At a time when Mexican Americans in Texas averaged no more than a third-grade education, García and five of his siblings had completed medical school and become physicians. Yet upon his return from the war, he encountered “discrimination everywhere. We had no opportunities. We had to pay [poll taxes] to vote. We had segregated schools. We were not allowed to go into public places.”

García and the GI Forum initially focused on veterans’ issues but soon expanded the organization’s scope to include fostering equal opportunities and equal treatment for all people. The GI Forum lobbied to end poll taxes, sued for the right of Latinos to serve on juries, and developed schools for jobless veterans. In 1984, García received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor.

SHAPING THE FAIR DEAL During 1947, after less than three years in the White House, Truman had yet to shake the widespread impression that he was not up to the job. Critics proclaimed that “to err is Truman.” The editors of *Time* magazine reflected the national sentiment when they wrote, “Mr. Truman has often faced his responsibilities with a cheerful, dogged courage. But his performance was almost invariably awkward, uninspired, and above all, mediocre.” Voters, they added, believed that Truman “means well, but he doesn’t do well.” Most political analysts assumed that the president would lose his effort to win another term.

Truman, too, feared that he would lose. In July 1947, he met with General Dwight D. Eisenhower as he was preparing to retire as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Worried that General Douglas MacArthur, a self-described “right-wing Republican,” might be the Republican presidential nominee in 1948, Truman urged Eisenhower to run as the Democratic nominee and even offered to be his vice-presidential running mate. Eisenhower declined, explaining that he was going to become president of Columbia University in New York City.

With the president’s popularity sinking, the Democratic party was about to split in two. Southern conservatives resented Truman’s outspoken support of civil rights, while the left wing of the party resented the firing of Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace for publicly criticizing the administration’s anti-Soviet policies. “Getting tough [with the Soviet Union],” Wallace had argued, “never brought anything real and lasting—whether for schoolyard bullies or world powers. The tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get.”

Wallace had said that the United States had “no more business in the *political affairs* of Eastern Europe than Russia has in the *political affairs* of Latin America.” The danger of another world war, he said, “is much less from communism than it is from [American] imperialism.” Wallace’s comments so outraged the leaders of the State Department that Truman felt he had no choice but to get rid of him.

Despite the gloomy predictions for 1948, Truman mounted an intense reelection campaign. His first step was to shore up the major elements of the New Deal coalition of working-class voters: farmers, labor unionists, and African Americans.

In his 1948 State of the Union message, Truman announced that the programs he would later call his “Fair Deal” (to distinguish them from Roosevelt’s New Deal) would build upon the efforts of the New Deal to help all Americans. The first goal, Truman said, was to ensure civil rights for all Americans. He added proposals to increase federal aid to education, expand unemployment and retirement benefits, create a comprehensive system of national health insurance, enable more rural people to connect to electricity, and increase the minimum wage.

THE ELECTION OF 1948 The Republican-controlled Congress dismissed Truman’s proposals, an action it would later regret. At the Republican convention, New York governor Thomas E. Dewey won the presidential nomination on the third ballot. While the platform endorsed most of the New Deal reforms and approved the administration’s bipartisan foreign policy, Dewey promised to run things more efficiently.

In July, glum Democrats gathered for their convention in Philadelphia. Everyone assumed a Republican victory in November. A reporter wrote that they behaved “as though they [had] accepted an invitation to a funeral.” Some party leaders, including Roosevelt’s son James, a California congressman, tried to convince Dwight Eisenhower to accept the Democratic nomination, and many others joined his “dump Truman” effort. The popular war hero declined, however, explaining that his refusal was “final and complete.”

Delegates who expected to do little more than go through the motions of nominating Truman were doubly surprised, first by the battle on the conven-



Birth of the Dixiecrats Alabama delegates stand to boo Truman's call for civil rights before they walked out of the 1948 Democratic National Convention.

tion floor over civil rights and then by Truman's endorsement of civil rights for African Americans in his acceptance speech. Liberal Democrats led by Minnesota's Hubert Humphrey commended Truman "for his courageous stand on the issue of civil rights" and declared that the "time has arrived for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of civil rights." White segregationist delegates from Alabama and Mississippi walked out in protest. The solidly Democratic South had fractured over race.

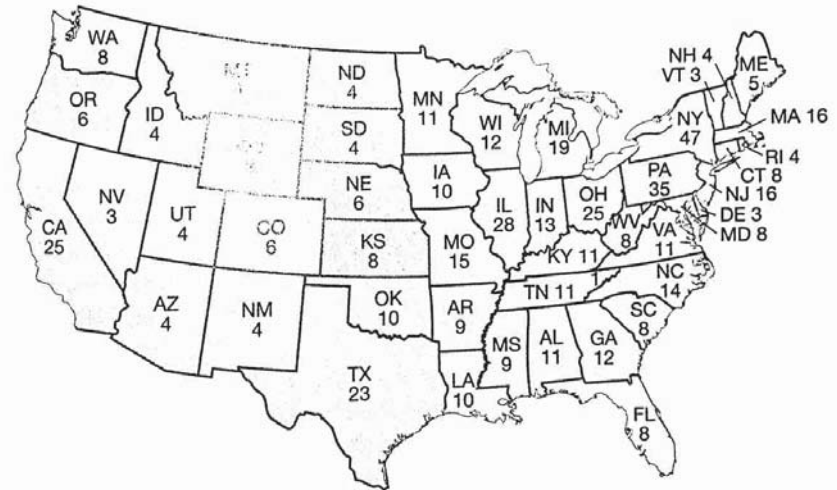
On July 17, a group of rebellious southern Democrats met in Birmingham, Alabama. While waving Confederate flags and singing "Dixie," they nominated South Carolina's segregationist governor, Strom Thurmond, on a States' Rights Democratic party ticket, quickly dubbed the "Dixiecrat party." The Dixiecrats denounced Truman's "infamous" civil rights initiatives and championed states' rights against federal efforts to change the tradition of white supremacy in the South.

A few days later, on July 23, the left wing of the Democratic party gathered in Philadelphia to form a new Progressive party and nominate for president Henry A. Wallace, Roosevelt's former secretary of agriculture and vice president, whom Truman had fired as secretary of commerce. One Democratic leader asked Truman to withdraw from the race to help the party's chances. He replied: "I was not brought up to run from a fight."

The splits in the Democratic ranks seemed to spell the final blow to Truman, but he refused to give in. He was finally renominated long after midnight. By the time he entered the auditorium, it was 2 A.M., but he aroused the faithful by promising that "I will win this election and make the Republicans like it!" He pledged to bring Congress into special session and demand that it confront the housing crisis and boost the minimum wage.

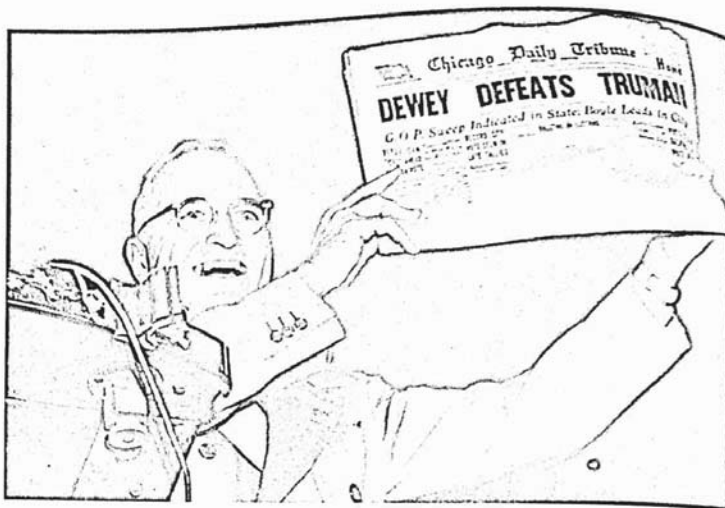
Within days, an invigorated Truman set out on a 22,000-mile "whistle-stop" train tour, making ten speeches a day scolding the "do-nothing" Eightieth Congress. The plain-talking president attracted huge crowds. The Republicans,

THE ELECTION OF 1948



	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote
Harry S. Truman (Democrat)	303	24,200,000
Thomas E. Dewey (Republican)	189	22,000,000
J. Strom Thurmond (States' Rights Democrat)	39	1,200,000
Henry A. Wallace (Progressive)	0	1,160,000

- Why did the political experts predict a Dewey victory?
- Why was civil rights such a divisive issue at the Democratic convention?
- How did the candidacies of Strom Thurmond and Henry Wallace end up helping Truman?



"Dewey Defeats Truman" Truman's victory in 1948 was such a surprise that this early edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Dewey had won.

he charged, "have the propaganda and the money, but we have the people, and the people have the votes. *That's why we're going to win.*" Friendly audiences loved his fighting spirit and dogged courage, shouting, "Pour it on, Harry!" and "Give 'em hell, Harry." Truman responded: "I don't give 'em hell. I just tell the truth and they think it's hell."

The polls predicted a sure win for Dewey, but on Election Day Truman pulled off the biggest upset in history, taking 24.2 million votes (49.5 percent) to Dewey's 22 million (45.1 percent) and winning a thumping margin of 303 to 189 in the electoral college. Democrats also regained control of both houses of Congress. Thurmond and Wallace each received more than 1 million votes, but the revolt of right and left had worked to Truman's advantage. The Dixiecrat rebellion backfired by angering black voters, who turned out in droves to support Truman, and the Progressive party's radicalism made it hard for Republicans to tag Truman as soft on communism. Thurmond carried four southern states (South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana).

THE FAIR DEAL REJECTED Truman viewed his surprising victory as a mandate for expanding the social welfare programs established by Franklin Roosevelt. His State of the Union message in early 1949 repeated the agenda he had set forth the year before. "Every segment of our population and every individual," he declared, "has a right to expect from our government a *fair deal*."

Truman's Fair Deal promised "greater economic opportunity for the mass of the people."

Most of the Fair Deal proposals that gained congressional approval were extensions or enlargements of New Deal programs: a higher minimum hourly wage, expansion of Social Security coverage to 10 million workers not included in the original 1935 bill, and a large slum-clearance and public-housing program. Despite enjoying Democratic majorities in Congress, however, Truman ran up against the same alliance of conservative southern Democrats and Republicans who had worked against Roosevelt in the late 1930s. The bipartisan conservative coalition nixed most of Truman's new programs. Congress rejected several civil rights bills, national health insurance, federal aid to education, and a new approach to subsidizing farmers. It also turned down Truman's requested repeal of the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act. Yet the Fair Deal was not a complete failure. It laid the foundation for programs that the next generation of reformers would promote.

THE COLD WAR HEATS UP

As during Harry Truman's first term, global concerns during his second term would again distract him from domestic issues. In his 1949 inaugural address, Truman called for a vigilant anti-Communist foreign policy resting on three pillars: the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, and NATO. None of them could help resolve the civil war in China, however.

"LOSING" CHINA One of the thorniest postwar problems, the Chinese civil war, was fast coming to a head. Chinese Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, had been fighting Mao Zedong and the Communists since the 1920s. After the Second World War, the Communists won over most of the peasants. By the end of 1949, the Nationalist government was forced to flee to the island of Formosa, which it renamed Taiwan. Truman's critics—mostly Republicans—asked bitterly, "Who lost China to communism?" What they did not explain was how Truman could have prevented a Communist victory without a massive U.S. military intervention, which would have been risky, unpopular, and expensive. After 1949, the United States continued to recognize the Nationalist government on Taiwan as the official government of China, delaying formal relations with "Red China" (the People's Republic of China) for thirty years.

THE SOVIETS DEVELOP ATOMIC BOMBS As the Communists were gaining control of China, news that the Soviets had detonated a nuclear weapon in 1949 frightened people around the world and led Truman to speed



Mao Zedong Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and the founder of the People's Republic of China.

up the design of a hydrogen “super-bomb,” a weapon far more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. That the Soviets now possessed atomic weapons greatly intensified every cold war confrontation. “There is only one thing worse than one nation having an atomic bomb,” said Nobel Prize-winning physicist Harold C. Urey. “That’s two nations having it.” The fear of nuclear annihilation joined the fear of communism in deepening the Red Scare.

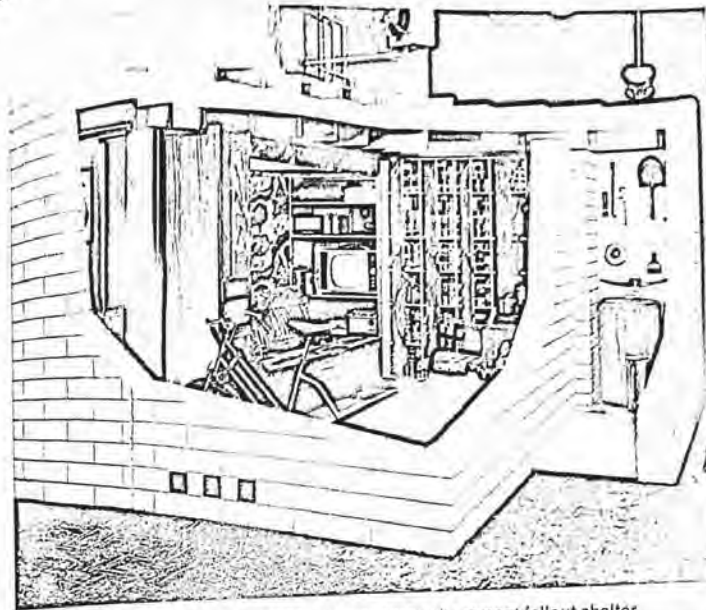
NSC-68 In January 1950, President Truman grew so concerned about the Soviets possessing atomic weapons that he asked the National Security Council to assess America’s changing role in the cold war world. Four months later, the Council submitted a top-secret report, NSC-68. The document called for an even more robust effort to “contain” the spread of communism. In alarmist tones, NSC-68 revealed the major

assumptions that would guide U.S. foreign policy for the next twenty years: “The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself.”

NSC-68 endorsed George Kennan’s “containment” strategy. But where he had focused on political and economic counterpressure, the report’s tone was global and militaristic, calling for “a policy of calculated and gradual coercion” against Soviet expansionism—everywhere.

Paul Nitze, Kennan’s successor as director of policy planning for the State Department, was the report’s primary author. He claimed that the Soviets, driven to impose their will “on the rest of the world,” were becoming increasingly “reckless” and would invade Western Europe by 1954, by which time they would have enough nuclear weapons to destroy the United States.

By signing NSC-68, Truman explained that it would mean “doubling or tripling the budget, increasing taxes heavily, and imposing various kinds of economic controls. It meant a great change in our normal peacetime way of doing things.” NSC-68 became the guidebook for future American policy,



Shelter for sale On display in a 1950s showroom is a basement fallout shelter, complete with a television, library, and exercise bike, intended to help a family survive a nuclear attack.

especially as the United States became involved in an unexpected war in Korea that ignited into open combat the smoldering animosity between communism and capitalism around the world.

WAR IN KOREA

By the mid-1950s, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union in Europe had temporarily eased as a result of the “balance of terror” created by both sides having atomic weapons. In Asia, however, the situation remained turbulent. The Communists had gained control of mainland China and were threatening to destroy the Chinese Nationalists, who had taken refuge on Taiwan.

Japan, meanwhile, was experiencing a dramatic recovery from the devastation caused by U.S. bombing raids during the Second World War. Douglas MacArthur showed deft leadership as the consul in charge of U.S.-occupied Japan. He oversaw the disarming of the Japanese military, the drafting of a

democratic constitution, and the nation's economic recovery, all of which were turning Japan into America's friend.

To the east, however, tensions between North and South Korea threatened to erupt into civil war. The Japanese had occupied the Korean Peninsula since 1910, but after they were defeated and withdrew in 1945, the victorious Allies had faced the difficult task of creating an independent Korean nation.

A DIVIDED KOREA Complicating that effort was the presence of Soviet troops in northern Korea. They had accepted the surrender of Japanese forces above the 38th parallel, which divides the Korean Peninsula, while U.S. forces had overseen the Japanese surrender south of the line. The Soviets quickly organized a Communist government, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). The Americans countered by helping to establish a democratic government in the more populous south, the Republic of Korea (South Korea). By the end of 1948, separate regimes had appeared in the two sectors, Soviet and American forces had withdrawn, and some 2 million North Koreans had fled to South Korea.

WAR ERUPTS On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson gave a speech to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in which he said he was often asked, "Has the State Department got an Asian policy?" He stressed that the United States had assumed "the necessity of . . . the military defense of Japan." He then added that America had created a "defensive perimeter" running along the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska to Japan to the Ryukyu Islands to the Philippines. Where "other areas in the Pacific are concerned," Acheson added, "it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack."

Acheson's statement came back to haunt him. On June 24, 1950, the secretary of state telephoned President Truman: "Mr. President," he reported, "I have very serious news. The North Koreans have invaded South Korea." With the encouragement of the Soviet Union and Communist China, the Soviet-equipped North Korean People's Army had rapidly forced the South Korean forces into a headlong retreat. Within three days, Seoul, the South Korean capital, was captured, and only 22,000 of the 100,000 South Korean soldiers were still capable of combat. People then and since have argued that Acheson's clumsy reference to the "defensive perimeter" in Asia may have convinced the North Koreans and Soviets that the United States would not resist an invasion of South Korea.

When reporters asked Truman how he would respond to the invasion, the president declared: "By God, I'm going to let them have it!" He assumed, correctly, that the North Korean attack had been encouraged by the Soviets. "There's no telling what they'll do if we don't put up a fight right now," Truman predicted. He then made a critical decision: without consulting the Joint



Fight and flight American soldiers and Korean civilian refugees march into the Nakdong River region in the south.

Chiefs of Staff or the Congress, he decided to wage war through the backing of the United Nations rather than by seeking a declaration of war from Congress. He knew that a congressional debate over a war in Korea would take so long that it may then be too late to stop the Communists.

An emergency meeting of the UN Security Council in late June 1950 censured the North Korean "breach of peace." By sheer coincidence, the Soviet delegate, who held a veto power, was at the time boycotting the council because it would not seat Communist China in place of Nationalist China. On June 27, the Security Council called on UN members to "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area."

Truman then ordered U.S. air, naval, and ground forces into action and appointed seventy-year-old Douglas MacArthur supreme commander of the UN forces. The attack on South Korea, Truman said, made "it plain beyond all doubt that the international Communist movement is prepared to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations." Truman's decisive steps gained strong bipartisan approval, but neither the nation nor the administration were united on the objectives of the war or its conduct.

against North Korean aggression had become an unlimited war against the North Koreans and China's People's Liberation Army.

MACARTHUR CROSSES THE LINE The Chinese intervention caught MacArthur wholly unprepared. He now asked for thirty-four atomic bombs and proposed air raids on China, explaining to President Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that "If we lose the war to communism in Asia, the fall of Europe is inevitable." His plans horrified the military leadership in Washington, D.C. It would be, said General Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong enemy." Truman agreed.

In late 1950, the UN forces rallied. By January 1951, they had secured their lines below Seoul and launched a counterattack. When Truman began negotiations with North Korea to restore the prewar boundary, MacArthur undermined the president by issuing an ultimatum for China to make peace or suffer an attack. On April 5, on the floor of Congress, the Republican minority leader read a letter from MacArthur that criticized the president and said that "there is no substitute for victory." Such open insubordination left Truman only two choices: he could accept MacArthur's aggressive demands, or fire him.

SACKING A HERO On April 11, 1951, with civilian control of the military at stake, Truman removed MacArthur and replaced him with General Matthew B. Ridgway, a commander who better understood how to conduct a modern war in pursuit of limited objectives. "I believe that we must try to limit the war to Korea," Truman explained. "A number of events have made it evident that General MacArthur did not agree with that policy. I have therefore considered it essential to relieve General MacArthur so that there would be no doubt or confusion as to the real purpose and aim of our policy."

Truman's sacking of MacArthur, the army's only five-star general, divided the nation. Dean Acheson, the secretary of state, had warned the president that "if you relieve MacArthur, you will have the biggest fight of your administration." *Time* magazine reported that "seldom had a more unpopular man fired a more popular one." Senator Joseph McCarthy called the president a "son of a bitch" for sacking MacArthur. In his diary, Truman noted the ferocious backlash against him: "Quite an explosion. . . . Letters of abuse by the dozens." Sixty-six percent of Americans initially opposed Truman's decision.

Douglas MacArthur was a larger-than-life military hero and was greeted by adoring crowds upon his return to the United States. Republicans in Congress protested his removal, but Truman stood firm: "I fired him because he wouldn't respect the authority of the President. I didn't fire him because he was a dumb

son of a bitch, although he was, but that's not against the law for generals. If it was, half to three-quarters of them would be in jail!" That all of the top military leaders supported Truman's decision deflated much of the criticism. "Why, hell, if MacArthur had had his way," the president warned, "he'd have had us in the Third World War and blown up two-thirds of the world."

A CEASE-FIRE On June 24, 1951, the Soviet representative at the United Nations proposed a cease-fire in Korea along the 38th parallel, the original dividing line between North and South. Secretary of State Acheson accepted the cease-fire (armistice) with the consent of the United Nations. China and North Korea responded favorably.

Truce talks started on July 10, 1951, at Panmunjŏm, only to drag on for two years while sporadic fighting continued. The chief snags were exchanges of prisoners (many captured North Korean and Chinese soldiers did not want to go home) and South Korea's insistence on unification of the two rival Koreas. Syngman Rhee, the South Korean leader, explained that "an armistice without national unification [is] a death sentence without protest."

By the time a truce was reached, on July 27, 1953, Truman had retired and Dwight D. Eisenhower was president. No peace treaty was ever signed, and Korea, like Germany, remained divided. The inconclusive war, incredibly mindless in the way it began, often reckless in the way it was managed, and largely fruitless in the way it ended, cost the United States more than 33,000 battle deaths and 103,000 wounded or missing. South Korean casualties were about 2 million, and North Korean and Chinese casualties were an estimated 3 million.

THE IMPACT OF THE KOREAN WAR To most Americans, the North Korean attack on South Korea provided concrete proof that there was an international Communist conspiracy guided by the Soviet Union to control the world.



Firing of MacArthur In this 1951 cartoon by L. J. Roche, President Harry Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and the Pentagon dance in the American public's proverbial frying pan for the removal of General Douglas MacArthur from his post as the supreme commander of U.N. forces in Korea.

Truman's assumption that Stalin and the Soviets were behind the invasion of South Korea led him to deepen the American commitment to stop communism. "The interests of the United States are global in character," he explained. "A threat to the peace of the world *anywhere* is a threat to our security." Fearful that the Soviets would use the Korean conflict as a diversion to invade Western Europe, he ordered a major expansion of U.S. military forces in Europe—and around the world. Truman also increased assistance to French troops fighting a Communist independence movement in the French colony of Indochina (which included Vietnam), starting America's deepening military involvement in Southeast Asia.

ANOTHER RED SCARE

The Korean War excited another Red Scare at home, as people grew fearful that Communists were infiltrating American society. Since 1938, the **House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)** had kept up a drumbeat of accusations about supposed Communist agents in the federal government.

On March 21, 1947, President Truman signed an executive order (also known as the Loyalty Order) requiring federal government workers to undergo a background investigation to ensure they were not Communists or even associated with Communists (or other "subversive" groups).

Truman knew that the "loyalty program" violated civil liberties, but he felt he had no choice. He was responding to pressure from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and Attorney General Tom Clark, both of whom were convinced that there were numerous spies working inside the federal government. Truman was also eager to blunt criticism that he was not doing enough to ensure that Soviet sympathizers were not working in government.

Truman thought that the fear about Communist subversives was misplaced. "People are very much wrought up about the communist 'bugaboo,'" he wrote to Pennsylvania governor George Earle, "but I am of the opinion that the country is perfectly safe so far as Communism is concerned." By early 1951, the federal Civil Service Commission had cleared more than 3 million people, while only 378 had been dismissed for doubtful loyalty. Others, however, had resigned for fear they would be dismissed. In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower revoked the Loyalty Order.

THE HOLLYWOOD TEN Charges that Hollywood was a "hotbed of communism" led the House Committee on Un-American Activities to launch a full-blown investigation of the motion-picture industry. The HUAC subpoenaed dozens of actors, producers, and directors to testify at its hearings, held in Los Angeles in October 1947. Ten witnesses refused to testify, arguing that



The Red Scare and Hollywood Several courageous movie stars attended the HUAC hearings to support their friends and colleagues who were accused of being Communists. Left to right: Danny Kaye, Julie Hayoc, Humphrey Bogart, and Lauren Bacall (seated).

the questioning violated their First Amendment rights. When asked if he were a member of the Communist party, screenwriter Ring Lardner Jr. replied: "I could answer, but I would hate myself in the morning." Another member of the so-called Hollywood Ten, screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, shouted as he left the hearings, "This is the beginning of an American concentration camp." All ten were cited for contempt, given prison terms, and blacklisted (banned) from the film industry.

The witch hunt launched by the HUAC inspired playwright Arthur Miller, who himself was blacklisted, to write *The Crucible*, an award-winning play produced in 1953. It is a dramatic account of the notorious witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts, at the end of the seventeenth century, intended to alert audiences about the dangers of the anti-Communist hysteria.

ALGER HISS The spy case most damaging to the Truman administration involved Alger Hiss, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who had served in several government agencies. Whittaker Chambers, a former Soviet spy and later an editor of *Time* magazine who reversed himself and became an informer testifying against supposed Communists in the

government, told the HUAC in 1948 that Hiss had given him secret documents ten years earlier, when Chambers was spying for the Soviets and Hiss was working in the State Department. Hiss sued for libel, and Chambers produced microfilms of the State Department documents that he said Hiss had passed to him. Although Hiss denied the accusation, he was indicted and, after one mistrial, convicted in 1950. The charge was perjury, but he was convicted of lying about espionage, for which he could not be tried because the statute of limitations on the crime had expired.

More cases of Communist infiltration surfaced. In 1949, eleven top leaders of the Communist party of the United States were convicted under the Smith Act of 1940, which outlawed any conspiracy to advocate the overthrow of the government. The Supreme Court upheld the law under the doctrine of a “clear and present danger,” which overrode the right to free speech.

ATOMIC SPYING In 1950, the FBI unearthed a spy network involving both American and British Communists who had secretly passed information about the development of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. The disclosure led to the arrest of Klaus Fuchs, a German-born English nuclear physicist who had worked in the United States during the war and helped to develop the atomic bomb.

As it turned out, a New York couple, former Communists Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, were part of the same Soviet spy ring. Their claims of innocence were undercut by the confession of Ethel’s brother, who admitted he was a spy along with his sister and brother-in-law.

The convictions of Fuchs and the Rosenbergs fueled Republican charges that Truman’s administration was not doing enough to hunt down Communist agents. The Rosenberg case, called the crime of the century by J. Edgar Hoover, also heightened fears that a vast Soviet network of spies and sympathizers was operating in the United States—and had “given” Stalin the secret of building atomic weapons. Irving Kaufman, the federal judge who sentenced the Rosenbergs to death, explained that “plain, deliberate murder is dwarfed . . . by comparison with the crime you have committed.” They were the first Americans executed for spying.

MCCARTHY’S WITCH HUNT Evidence of Soviet spying encouraged some to exploit fears of the Communist menace. Early in 1950, a little-known Republican senator, Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin, surfaced as the most ruthless manipulator of anti-Communist anxieties.

McCarthy, eager to attract media attention through his “bare-knuckle” tactics, took up the cause of anti-communism with a fiery speech to a women’s Republican club in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, in which he

charged that the State Department was infested with Communists. He claimed to have their names, although he never provided them.

McCarthy’s stunt got him what he wanted most: publicity. As the *New York Times* said, “It is difficult, if not impossible, to ignore charges made by Senator McCarthy just because they are usually proved exaggerated or false.” During the next four years, McCarthy made more wild accusations, initially against many Democrats, whom he smeared as “dupes” or “fellow travelers” of the “Com-mies,” then against officers in the U.S. Army.

Truman privately denounced McCarthy as “just a ballyhoo artist who has to cover up his shortcomings with wild charges,” but McCarthy was not so easily dismissed. He enjoyed the backing of fellow Republicans eager to hurt Democrats in the 1950 congressional elections by claiming they were not being tough enough in fighting communism. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas said McCarthy was “the sorriest senator” in Washington. “But he’s riding high now, he’s got people scared to death. . . .”

By the summer of 1951, however, **McCarthyism** had gotten out of control. McCarthy’s feverish excesses were revealed for all to see when he outrageously accused George Marshall, the former secretary of state and war hero, of making “common cause with Stalin” by “being an instrument of the Communist conspiracy.” Concerns about truth or fair play did not faze McCarthy; his focus was on creating a reign of terror through groundless accusations. Truman called him a “pathological character assassin.”

However sincere McCarthy’s desire was to purify America of Communist sympathizers, his unholy war never uncovered a single Communist agent. But his relentless smear campaign, which tarnished many lives and reputations and had a chilling effect on free speech, went largely unchallenged until the end of the Korean War. During the Red Scare, thousands of left-wing Americans were “blacklisted” from employment because of past political associations, real or rumored. Movies with titles like “I Married a Communist” fed the hysteria, and magazine stories warned of “a Red under every bed.”



Joseph R. McCarthy The crusading senator who was determined to identify any Communists serving in the federal government.

THE MCCARRAN ACT Fears of Soviet spies working with American sympathizers led Congress in 1950 to pass the McCarran Internal Security Act over President Truman's veto, making it unlawful "to combine, conspire, or agree with any other person to perform any act which would substantially contribute to . . . the establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship." Communist organizations had to register with the attorney general. Would-be immigrants who had belonged to totalitarian parties in their home countries were barred from entering the United States. And during any future national emergencies, American Communists were to be herded into concentration camps. The McCarran Internal Security Act, Truman said in his veto message, would "put the government into the business of thought control."

THE RED SCARE AND THE COLD WAR Playing upon the fears of the American public did not make for good policy in 1919, nor did it work well in the early fifties. Both Red Scares ended up violating the civil liberties of innocent people.

President Truman may have erred in 1947 by creating a government loyalty program that aggravated the anti-Communist hysteria. Truman's own attorney general, Tom Clark, contended that there were "so many Communists in America" that they "were everywhere—in factories, offices, butcher shops, on street corners, in private businesses—and each carries with him the germs of death for society."

Truman also overstretched American resources when he pledged to "contain" communism everywhere. Containment itself proved hard to contain amid the ideological posturing of Soviet and American leaders. Its chief theorist, George F. Kennan, later confessed that he was partly to blame because he had failed at the outset to clarify the limits of the containment policy and to stress that the United States needed to prioritize its responses to Soviet adventurism.

A COLD WAR GOVERNMENT The years after the Second World War were unlike any other postwar period in American history. Having taken on global burdens, the United States became committed to a permanently large national military establishment, along with shadowy new government agencies such as the National Security Council (NSC), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The federal government—and the presidency—grew larger, more powerful, and more secretive, fueled by the actions of both major political parties as well as by the intense lobbying efforts of what Dwight D. Eisenhower would later call the *military-industrial complex*.

Fears of communism and concerns about a Soviet spy network in the United States mushroomed into politically motivated paranoia. Long-standing prejudices against Jews fed the hysteria; indeed, many Communist sympathizers were Jews from Eastern Europe.

The Red Scare also provided a powerful tool for Republicans to claim that Democrats were "soft on Communism." One of the worst effects of the Red Scare was to encourage widespread conformity of thought and behavior. By 1950, it had become dangerous to criticize anything associated with the American way of life.

ASSESSING HARRY TRUMAN On March 30, 1952, Harry Truman announced that he would not seek another presidential term, in part because it was unlikely he could win. Less than 25 percent of voters surveyed said that he was doing a good job, the lowest presidential approval rating in history. Although Americans applauded Truman's integrity and courage, the unrelenting war against communism, at home and abroad, led people to question his strategy. Negotiations to end the war in Korea had bogged down, the "red-baiting" of McCarthyism was expanding, and conservative southern Democrats, members of Truman's own party, had defeated most of his Fair Deal proposals. The war had also brought higher taxes and higher prices for American consumers, many of whom blamed the president. Only years later would people (and historians) fully appreciate how effectively Truman had dealt with so many complex problems.

To the end of his presidency, Truman, a plainspoken man who made decisions based on his "gut-feeling" about what was "right," viewed himself as an ordinary person who had been given opportunities to do extraordinary things. "I have tried my best to give the nation everything I have in me," Truman told reporters at one of his last press conferences. "There are a great many people . . . who could have done the job better than I did it. But I had the job and had to do it." And it was not a simple job, by any means. At the end of one difficult day in the White House, Truman growled while sipping a bourbon and water: "They [his critics] talk about the power of the President, how I can just push a button to get things done. Why, I spend most of my time kissing somebody's ass."

By the time Truman left the White House in early 1953, the cold war had become an accepted part of the American way of life. But fears about the spread of communism were counterbalanced by the joys of unexpected prosperity. Toward the end of Truman's presidency, the economy began to grow at what would become the fastest rate in history, transforming social and cultural life and becoming the marvel of the world. The booming economy brought with it the "nifty" fifties.

CHAPTER REVIEW

SUMMARY

- **The Cold War** The cold war was an ideological contest between the Western democracies (especially the United States) and the Communist countries. At the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union established “friendly” governments in the Eastern European countries it occupied behind an *iron curtain* of totalitarian control and secrecy.
- **Containment** President Truman responded to the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe with the policy of *containment*, the aim of which was to halt the spread of communism by opposing it wherever it emerged. With the *Truman Doctrine* (1947), he proposed giving economic and military aid to countries facing Communist insurgencies, such as Greece and Turkey; he also convinced Congress to approve the *National Security Act*, which reorganized the U.S. armed forces and created the Central Intelligence Agency. With the *Marshall Plan*, Truman offered redevelopment aid to all European nations. In 1948, the *Berlin airlift* overcame a Soviet blockade of supplies to West Berlin. In 1949, the United States became a founding member of the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), a military alliance of Western democracies united primarily against the Soviet Union.
- **Truman’s Fair Deal** Truman’s *Fair Deal* was proposed to expand the New Deal despite intense Republican opposition in Congress. Truman could not stop the *Taft-Hartley Act*, a Republican-backed measure to curb the power of labor unions. Truman was more successful in expanding Social Security and, through executive orders, desegregating the military and banning racial discrimination in the hiring of federal employees. After winning a second term in 1948, he proposed a civil rights bill, national health insurance, federal aid to education, and new farm subsidies. Despite the Democrats’ majority in Congress, however, conservative Republicans and southern Democrats (*Dixiecrats*) joined forces to defeat these initiatives.
- **The Korean War** Containment policies proved less effective in East Asia, as Communists won a long civil war in China in 1949 and ignited a war in Korea. In response, Truman authorized NSC-68, a comprehensive blueprint for American foreign and defense policies that called for a dramatic increase in military spending and nuclear arms. When North Korean troops invaded South Korea in June 1950, Truman quickly decided to go to war under the auspices of the United Nations. After a year of major gains and reverses by both sides and then two years of stalemate, a truce, concluded in July 1953, established a demilitarized zone in Korea.
- **The Red Scare** The onset of the cold war inflamed another Red Scare. Investigations by the *House Committee on Un-American Activities* (HUAC) sought to find “subversives” within the federal government. Starting in 1950, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy exploited fears of Soviet spies infiltrating the highest levels of the U.S. government.

McCarthyism flourished in the short term because the threat of a world dominated by Communist governments seemed all too real to many Americans.

CHRONOLOGY

- November 1946 Republicans win control of both houses of Congress
- February 1946 George Kennan urges a containment policy toward the Soviet Union
- March 1947 The Truman Doctrine promises financial and military assistance to countries resisting Communist takeover
- May 1947 The Marshall plan provides massive financial assistance to European nations
- June 1947 Congress passes the Taft-Hartley Labor Act over Truman’s veto
- July 1947 National Security Council (NSC) is established
- May 1948 Israel is proclaimed an independent nation
- July 1948 Truman’s executive order ends segregation in the U.S. armed forces
- October 1948 United States and Great Britain airlift supplies to West Berlin
- November 1948 Truman defeats Dewey in the presidential election
- April 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is created
- October 1949 Cliche “falls” to communism
- February 1950 Senator Joseph McCarthy begins his crusade against suspected Communists in the federal government
- June 1950 United States and other UN members go to war in Korea

KEY TERMS

- iron curtain p. 1218
- containment p. 1220
- Truman Doctrine (1947) p. 1221
- Marshall Plan (1948) p. 1222
- Berlin airlift (1948) p. 1225
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) p. 1226
- National Security Act p. 1227
- Taft-Hartley Labor Act (1947) p. 1231
- Fair Deal (1949) p. 1237
- Dixiecrats p. 1238
- NSC-68 (1950) p. 1242
- House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) p. 1250
- McCarthyism p. 1253

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