

Nazism on Trial

In October 1945, a historic trial unlike any other began. The 21 defendants were the cream of the Third Reich, leaders of Hitler's war machine and architects of the Holocaust. Robert Jackson, the American prosecutor, scoffed as men like Hermann Goring, Hitler's handpicked successor, claimed to be tools of Hitler, unaware of his true plans. In his closing speech, Jackson turned the spotlight not on the defendants alone, but on the future of humanity:

“No half-century ever witnessed slaughter on such a scale, such cruelties and inhumanities. . . . If we cannot eliminate the causes and prevent the repetition of these barbaric events, it is not an irresponsible prophecy to say that this twentieth century may yet succeed in bringing the doom of civilization.”

—Robert Jackson, closing speech, Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, 1946

▲ Defendant Hermann Goring (right) at the Nuremberg Trials

Effects of the War

Objectives

- Evaluate the goals that Allied leaders set for the postwar world.
- Describe the steps that the United States and other nations took toward international cooperation.
- Explain the impact of World War II on the postwar United States.

Terms and People

Yalta Conference
superpower
GATT
United Nations

Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Geneva Convention
Nuremberg Trials

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Understand Effects As you read, look for various developments in the postwar world that resulted from World War II.



Why It Matters World War II changed the nation in profound ways. Many Americans came home determined to extend the ideals of democracy and freedom at home as well as abroad. In addition, the United States emerged from the war prepared to take on the complex and vital role in world affairs that it still holds today. **Section Focus Question:** What were the major immediate and long-term effects of World War II?

Allies Set Postwar Goals

World War II differed from World War I in several ways. One major difference was that it was fought to the bitter end. In 1918, the Kaiser had surrendered before the Allies could invade Germany. By contrast, in World War II, Japan and Germany kept fighting long after their defeat was certain. In the last year of the war, they lost battle after battle, retreated from the lands they had conquered, and saw the slow destruction of their military forces. Allied bombing devastated their cities and industries. Yet Germany fought on until Hitler committed suicide, and Japan refused to surrender until after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Allies Make Plans at Yalta The protracted fighting gave the Allies time to make plans for a postwar world. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met at Yalta on the Black Sea in February 1945 to discuss final strategy and crucial questions concerning postwar Germany, Eastern Europe, and Asia. At the **Yalta Conference**, the Big Three agreed that Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania would hold free elections. However, Stalin later reneged on this promise.

Roosevelt and Churchill were not in a good position to press Stalin too hard. The Red Army already occupied much of Eastern Europe, and Roosevelt wanted Soviet help in the war against Japan. Vague promises were about as much as Stalin would give.

Truman Faces Stalin at Potsdam A dramatically altered Big Three met in July 1945 in the Berlin suburb of Potsdam. Although Stalin remained in power in the Soviet Union, Harry S. Truman had become U.S. President upon the death of FDR. After the start of the conference, Clement Atlee replaced Churchill as prime minister of Britain.

While in Potsdam, Truman learned of the successful test of the atomic bomb. But he was more focused on Europe and the Soviet Union than on Asia. At the meeting, the Big Three formalized the decision to divide Germany into four zones of occupation: Soviet, American, British, and French. They agreed to new borders and free elections for Poland, and they recognized the Soviets' right to claim reparations for war damages from the German sector they controlled. Stalin also reaffirmed his Yalta pledge to enter the war against Japan.



Checkpoint What goals did the Allies set for Eastern Europe at the Yalta Conference?

A New World Takes Shape

After the war ended in August 1945, plans for the postwar world had to be turned into realities. However, the changes that took place were not often what the Allies had envisioned at Yalta and Potsdam.

The World Map Changes World War II altered the political realities of the world. The borders of Poland, for example, shifted slightly to the west. In time, as you will read in the next chapter, differences between the Soviet Union and its former Allies led to the division of Germany into two countries: communist East Germany and noncommunist West Germany. Nearly all the nations of Eastern Europe became communist states under Soviet control.

Other countries experienced profound political changes. Communist and noncommunist interests clashed in Eastern Europe. In China, a long-standing civil war between Nationalists and communists resumed.

In Japan, General Douglas MacArthur headed an American military occupation and supervised the writing of a new constitution. It abolished the armed forces except for purposes of defense, gave women the right to vote, enacted democratic reforms, and established the groundwork for full economic recovery.

Imperialism Goes Into Decline

The war also marked the end of Western European domination of the world.

The Big Three at Yalta

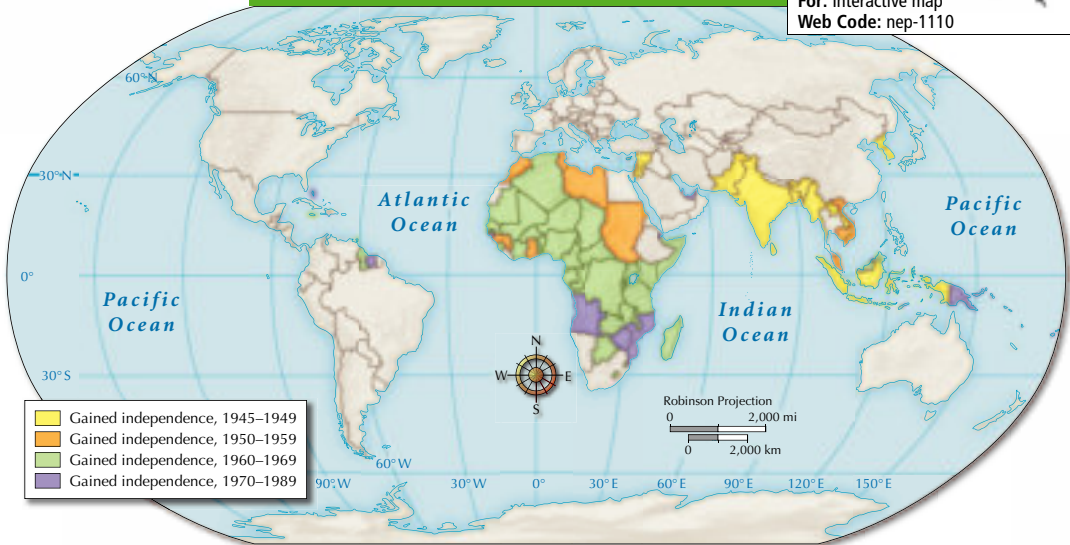
This famous photo shows (left to right) Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin at the Yalta Conference. Their glum looks seem to say: Here are not victors, but potential enemies. In addition, FDR looks ill and tired—he died only months after this picture was taken.



The Decline of Imperialism, 1945–1989

Geography Interactive

For: Interactive map
Web Code: nep-1110



Map Skills In the decades following World War II, the Age of Imperialism ended as colony after colony won independence.

- 1. Locate:** (a) Europe, (b) Africa, (c) Asia, (d) the Soviet Union
- 2. Regions** On what continent did the largest number of nations win independence?

- 3. Predict Consequences** How might the appearance of so many new nations affect the balance of power in the postwar world?

Since the 1500s, nations such as Britain, France, and Spain had exerted paramount influence on global developments. They colonized much of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. They had controlled world trade and finance, led the industrial revolution, and stood at the forefront of world military power.

The aggressive acquisition of territories by Japan and Germany underscored the abuses of imperialism. After World War II, colonial peoples renewed their drive for independence from European powers. Freed from Japanese domination, the East Indies had no interest in returning to Dutch colonial status. Nor did Indochina want to see the return of French rule. India, Burma, colonies in the Middle East and Africa—all had their sights set on independence.

By the end of the war, it was clear that the Age of Imperialism was in the twilight of its existence. The British Empire, the predominant power of the nineteenth century, came out of the war suffering severe economic shortages and, within decades, would see the loss of most of its colonies.


The Balance of Power Shifts Into the power vacuum stepped the United States and the Soviet Union. They had played the most decisive roles in defeating the Axis Powers, and they emerged from the war confident and strong. Indeed, they so dominated the postwar world that they became known as **superpowers**.

Of the two superpowers, the United States was clearly the stronger. Except for the attack on Pearl Harbor, no major battle had been fought on U.S. soil. In addition, American industry had boomed during the war. By 1945, America was wealthy, militarily powerful, and confident. By contrast, much of the war had

Vocabulary Builder

predominant—(pree DAHM uh nuhnt) *adj.* having the greatest amount of authority or dominance

been fought on Soviet soil. Its industries, cities, and peoples had suffered terribly. Still, the Red Army controlled most of Eastern Europe and threatened to move farther west. Militarily, although the Americans had the atomic bomb, the Soviets had the Red Army, the world's largest military force.

 **Checkpoint** What impact did World War II have on the relative roles of the United States and Britain in the world?

International Cooperation

Americans were quick to recognize that their nation had taken on a new position in the world. After World War I, the Senate had rejected the Treaty of Versailles and refused to join the League of Nations. Many Americans now viewed these decisions as mistakes that contributed to the rise of fascism and the outbreak of another war. As World War II drew to a close, Americans were ready to embrace the idea of world organizations.

A New World Economy Takes Shape The United States took on major responsibilities in shaping the postwar world economy. After meeting in 1944 with the Allies in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, the U.S. government pushed for establishment of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The United States provided most of the working capital for these new organizations, which worked to foster global economic and financial stability. The United States also signed the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, a 1948 treaty designed to expand world trade by reducing tariffs.

The United Nations Is Formed Even more importantly, the United States led the charge for the establishment of the **United Nations (UN)**, an organization that, many hoped, would succeed where the League of Nations had failed. In April 1945, delegates from 50 nations met in San Francisco to write the charter for the UN. The Senate overwhelmingly ratified the charter, and the UN later set up its permanent home in New York City.

The United Nations was organized on the basis of cooperation between the Great Powers, not on the absolute equality of all nations. All member nations sat on the General Assembly. However, the five major World War II Allies—the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China—were assigned permanent seats on the most powerful arm of the UN, the Security Council.

Over the next decades, the UN aided the move away from colonialism, helped to create the Jewish state of Israel, mediated regional conflicts, and provided food and other aid to much of the world. The UN also issued the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in 1948. This idealistic document states:

Primary Source “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. . . . All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

—Universal Declaration of Human Rights

HISTORY MAKERS

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)

As First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt had been a valuable, if unofficial, part of her husband's presidential administration. After FDR's death, President Truman named her to represent the United States at the United Nations. As elected chair of the Commission on Human Rights, she guided the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which she hoped would “become the international Magna Carta for all men everywhere.” Her work on behalf of human rights won Roosevelt the nickname First Lady of the World. Shortly before her death, President John F. Kennedy named Roosevelt to head his Commission on the Status of Women.



Cause and Effect

Causes

- Europe suffers massive destruction in World War I
- Germans and Italians resent Versailles Treaty
- Great Depression leads to rise of fascist dictators
- European appeasement fails to end Axis aggression
- Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor



World War II

Effects

- Europe and Japan lay in ruins
- European colonies gradually gain independence
- Soviets dominate Eastern Europe
- Cold War between United States and Soviet Union begins
- America becomes a world power
- African Americans gain momentum to pursue civil rights



Connections to Today

- United States remains a global superpower
- U.S. government plays a large role in guiding the nation's economy

Analyze Cause and Effect In its overall impact, World War II is often considered the single most important event of the twentieth century. *How did World War II contribute to the two effects listed above under Connections to Today?*

The Declaration condemns slavery and torture, upholds freedom of speech and religion, and affirms that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family.” Though the document sets lofty goals it has proved difficult to enforce.

War Criminals Go on Trial In the effort to create a better world, the Allies did not forget to punish the people who had caused so much destruction and death. During the war, the Axis Powers had repeatedly violated the **Geneva Convention**, an international agreement governing the humane treatment of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war.

The Allies tried more than a thousand Japanese citizens for committing atrocities in China, Korea, and Southeast Asia and brutally mistreating prisoners of war. Hundreds were condemned to death, including Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and the general responsible for the Bataan Death March.

Americans more closely followed the **Nuremberg Trials**, in which the Allies prosecuted Nazis for war crimes. The trials turned a glaring spotlight on the evils of the Third Reich. The first of the Nuremberg Trials involved key leaders of Nazi Germany, such as Hermann Goring. Day by day, prosecutors described their crimes, detailing especially the horrors of the Holocaust. Most of the defendants pleaded that they were just following orders, that Hitler was the source of all the crimes. The judges at Nuremberg did not accept their excuses. Some of the Nazis were hanged; others received long prison terms.

In the following decades, Allied or Israeli authorities captured and tried such other Nazis as Adolf Eichmann, a leading architect of the “Final Solution.” The periodic trials kept alive the memory of the Nazi crimes against humanity.



Checkpoint What steps did the United States take to increase its role in the postwar world?

A New American Identity

A new American identity rose from the ashes of World War II, one formed as the antithesis of the Nazi ideal. Americans regarded the Nazis as totalitarian, racist, and warlike. They defined themselves as democratic, tolerant, and peaceful. During the war, U.S. leaders and American popular culture had emphasized these positive themes, repeating constantly that the Allies were fighting a “people’s war” for tolerance, freedom, democracy, and peace. Although many Americans felt that their country had not always lived up to that ideal, they hoped that the postwar period would usher in significant changes.

The United States Assumes Global Leadership Millions of Americans had spent several years closely following the war. They had attached world maps to their walls and traced the paths of U.S. troops in the deserts of North Africa, the forests of Europe, and the coral islands of the Pacific. For this generation of Americans, the world had somehow become a smaller, more interconnected place. They had learned to think in global terms.

Few Americans called for a return to a policy of isolationism or retreat from their global responsibilities. They recognized that what happened in the far reaches of the globe affected them, that the economic and political health of

America was tied to world peace and economic development. They knew that America's national security involved world security.

Commitment to Civil Rights Grows African American soldiers in World War II had clearly believed they were fighting two foes: dictatorship overseas and racism in the United States. As the great African American poet Langston Hughes put it:

Primary Source

“You tell me that Hitler
Is a mighty bad man.
I guess he took lessons
From the Ku Klux Klan.”

—Langston Hughes, quoted in *The Fight of the Century* (Hietala)

World War II gave renewed vigor to the fight for civil rights. In this battle, African Americans were not alone. A growing number of white Americans also called for the nation to fully live up to its promise as a beacon of freedom, democracy, and justice.

The Nation Prospers World War II ended the Great Depression and ushered in decades of economic growth. It also redistributed wealth across the country. Defense industries and military bases in the South and West spurred people to move to these regions, which in turn created more wealth and encouraged further migration.

The driving force for all the jobs and prosperity was the federal government. Like other wars, World War II led to a greater governmental influence in economic affairs. From the collection of raw materials to attempts to control inflation, the government had made the important decisions to guide the economy. In the process, it established the expanded economic role that government would play in postwar America.

✔ **Checkpoint** How did World War II foster support for civil rights?



A Hero Comes Home

For millions of Americans, World War II was not truly over until their loved ones came home from overseas. Here, a wounded G.I. embraces his parents.

SECTION 5 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-1111

Comprehension

1. Terms and People For each term below, write a sentence explaining how it was connected with the building of the postwar world.

- Yalta Conference
- superpower
- GATT
- United Nations
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Geneva Convention
- Nuremberg Trials

2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Understand Effects Use your concept web to answer the Section Focus Question: What were the major immediate and long-term effects of World War II?

Writing About History

3. Quick Write: Write a Descriptive Paragraph Write a paragraph describing the look and feel of the Nuremberg Trials. Describe both what you might see and the emotional mood in the room.

Critical Thinking

4. Predict Consequences Identify one possible postwar consequence of the Allied disagreements at Yalta and Potsdam.

5. Recognize Causes and Effects Why do you think Americans supported participation in the UN after World War II when they had opposed participation in the League of Nations after World War I?

6. Compare In what way were both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the postwar push for civil rights reactions to the war?