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AMERICA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The Road to War: Aggression and Response
- Fighting the War in Europe and the Pacific
- The War at Home: The Economy
- The War at Home: Social Issues
- Shaping the Peace

THE SECOND WORLD WAR vastly changed American life. The United States abandoned isolationism, moved toward military engagement on the side of the Allies, and emerged triumphant in a global war.

The mobilization for war finally lifted the United States out of the Great Depression. The nation's productive capacity—spurred by innovative technologies and by a new working relationship among government, business, labor, and scientific researchers—dwarfed that of all other nations and provided the economic basis for military victory.

At home, Americans reconsidered the meanings of liberty and equality. Although a massive publicity campaign initially stressed how wartime sacrifices would protect and preserve an “American way of life,” the war raised questions. How would the nation, while striving for victory, reorder its economy, its politics, and the cultural and social patterns that had shaped racial, ethnic, and gender relationships during the 1930s? What processes of reconstruction, at home and abroad, might be required to build a prosperous and lasting peace?

THE ROAD TO WAR: AGGRESSION AND RESPONSE

The road to the Second World War began at least a decade before U.S. entry in 1941. In Japan, Italy, and Germany, economic stagnation created political conditions that nurtured **ultranationalist movements** bent on territorial expansion. Elsewhere in Europe and in the United States, economic problems made governments turn inward, concentrating on domestic recovery and avoiding foreign entanglements.

CHRONOLOGY

1931	Japanese forces seize Manchuria
1933	Hitler takes power in Germany
1936	Spanish Civil War begins ♦ Germany and Italy agree to cooperate as the Axis Powers
1937	Neutrality Act broadens provisions of Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1936 ♦ Roosevelt makes “Quarantine” speech ♦ Japan invades China
1938	France and Britain appease Hitler at Munich
1939	Hitler invades Poland; war breaks out in Europe ♦ Congress amends Neutrality Act to assist Allies
1940	Paris falls after German <i>blitzkrieg</i> ♦ Roosevelt makes “destroyers-for-bases” deal with Britain ♦ Selective Service Act passed ♦ Roosevelt wins third term
1941	Lend-Lease established ♦ Roosevelt creates Fair Employment Practices Commission ♦ Roosevelt and Churchill proclaim the Atlantic Charter ♦ Congress narrowly repeals Neutrality Act ♦ Japanese forces attack Pearl Harbor (December 7)
1942	President signs Executive Order 9066 for internment of Japanese Americans ♦ General MacArthur driven from Philippines ♦ U.S. victorious in Battle of Midway ♦ German army defeated at Battle of Stalingrad ♦ Operation TORCH begins
1943	Axis armies in North Africa surrender ♦ Allies invade Sicily and Italy ♦ “Zoot suit” incidents in Los Angeles; racial violence in Detroit ♦ Allies begin drive toward Japan through South Pacific islands
1944	Allies land at Normandy (D-Day, June 6) ♦ Roosevelt reelected to fourth term ♦ Bretton Woods Conference creates IMF and World Bank ♦ Dumbarton Oaks Conference establishes plan for UN
1945	U.S. firebombs Japan ♦ Yalta Conference ♦ Roosevelt dies; Truman becomes president ♦ Germany surrenders ♦ Hiroshima and Nagasaki hit with atomic bombs ♦ Japan surrenders ♦ United Nations established

The Rise of Aggressor States

On September 18, 1931, Japanese military forces seized Manchuria and created Manchukuo, a puppet state of Japan. This action violated the League of Nations charter, the Washington Naval Treaties, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact (see Chapter 24).

Focused on domestic matters, the international community hesitated to oppose Japan's move. The Hoover-Stimson Doctrine (1931) announced a U.S. policy of “nonrecognition” toward Manchukuo, and the League of Nations condemned Japan's action. Japan simply ignored these rebukes.

Meanwhile, ultranationalist states in Europe also sought to alleviate domestic ills through military aggression. **Adolf Hitler's** National Socialist (Nazi) Party came to power in Germany in 1933 and instituted a fascist regime, a one-party dictatorial state. Hitler denounced the Versailles peace settlement of 1919, blamed Germany's problems on a Jewish conspiracy, claimed a genetic superiority for the “Aryan

race” of German-speaking peoples, and promised a new Germanic empire, the **Third Reich**. His regime withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933 and, in a blatant violation of the Versailles Treaty, dramatically boosted Germany’s military budget. Another fascist government in Italy, headed by Benito Mussolini, also launched a military buildup and dreamed of empire. In October 1935 Mussolini’s armies took over Ethiopia, an independent nation in Africa.

U.S. Neutrality

Many Americans wished to isolate their nation from these foreign troubles. Antiwar movies, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1931), implicitly portrayed the First World War as a power game played by business and governmental elites, who used appeals to nationalism to dupe young soldiers into serving as cannon fodder. During the mid-1930s a Senate investigating committee headed by Republican Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota held well-publicized hearings and concluded that the United States had been maneuvered into the First World War to preserve the profits of bankers and munitions makers. By 1935, opinion polls suggested that Americans overwhelmingly opposed involvement in foreign conflicts.

To prevent a repetition of the circumstances that had supposedly drawn the United States into the First World War, Congress enacted neutrality legislation. The **Neutrality Acts** of 1935 and 1936 mandated an arms embargo against belligerents, prohibited loans to them, and curtailed travel by Americans on ships belonging to nations at war. The Neutrality Act of 1937 extended the embargo to include all trade with any belligerent, unless the nation paid in cash and carried the purchases away in its own ships.

Critics charged that foreswearing U.S. intervention actively aided expansionist powers such as Nazi Germany. In March 1936 Nazi troops seized the Rhineland, a German area from which the 1919 peace settlement had barred military installations. A few months later, Hitler and Mussolini began assisting General Francisco Franco, a fellow fascist seeking to overthrow Spain’s republican government. Republicans in Spain appealed to nonfascist nations for assistance, but only the Soviet Union responded. Britain, France, and the United States, fearing that the conflict would flare into world war if more nations took sides, remained uninvolved.

Although the United States remained officially aloof, the **Spanish Civil War** precipitated a major debate. Conservative groups generally hailed Franco as a staunch anti-communist who supported the Catholic Church and social traditionalism in Spain. In contrast, the political left championed republican Spain and denounced the fascism sweeping Europe. Cadres of Americans, including the famed “Abraham Lincoln Brigade,” crossed the Atlantic to fight alongside republican forces in Spain. American peace groups splintered over the question of how to avoid a wider war. Some continued to advocate neutrality and isolation, but others argued for intervention against the spread of fascism.

In October 1937 Roosevelt called for international cooperation to “quarantine” aggressor nations and suggested that Congress should modify its earlier Neutrality measures. Still suspicious of foreign entanglements, a majority of legislators refused to budge, even when this meant a victory by Franco in Spain’s civil war.

The Mounting Crisis

As Americans debated how to deal with foreign aggression, Japan attacked China. In summer 1937, after an exchange of gunfire between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo

Bridge near Beijing, Japanese armies invaded and captured Shanghai, Nanjing, Shandong, and Beijing. Japan demanded that China become subservient to Tokyo. It also proposed an **East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere** that would supposedly liberate Asian nations from Western colonialism and create a self-sufficient economic zone under Japanese leadership. In late 1937 Japanese planes sank the American gunboat *Panay* as it evacuated Americans from Nanjing. Japan's quick apology defused a potential crisis. Still, the *Panay* incident and Japan's brutality in occupying Nanjing—where perhaps 300,000 Chinese civilians were killed—alarmed Roosevelt.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Germany continued on the march. In March 1938 Hitler annexed Austria to the Third Reich and announced his intention to seize the Sudetenland, a portion of Czechoslovakia inhabited by 3.5 million people of German descent. In May FDR began a program of naval rearmament. French and British leaders, still hoping to avoid war, met with Hitler at the **Munich Conference** in September 1938. They acquiesced to Germany's seizure of the Sudetenland in return for Hitler's promise to seek no more territory. Hailed by Britain's prime minister as a guarantee of "peace in our time," the arrangement soon became a symbol of what interventionists called the "appeasement" of aggression.

In March 1939 Germans marched into Prague and, within a few months, annexed the rest of Czechoslovakia. In August 1939 Hitler signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, previously his bitter enemy. In a secret protocol, Hitler and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin agreed on a plan to divide up Poland and permit Soviet annexation of the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia).

The Outbreak of War in Europe

When Hitler's armies stormed into Poland on September 1, 1939, the Second World War officially began in Europe.

Britain and France declared war against Germany, but these Allied powers could not mobilize in time to help Poland, which fell within weeks. Then an eerie calm settled over Europe during the winter.

In April 1940 a full-scale German *blitzkrieg*, or "lightning war," began moving swiftly, overrunning Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. The speed of the Nazi advance, employing massed tanks, motorized infantry, and air support, shocked Allied leaders in Paris and London. Britain barely managed to evacuate its troops, but not its equipment, from the French coastal town of Dunkirk, just before it fell to a German onslaught. Early in June, Italy joined Germany to form the Axis Powers, and they declared war on the Allies. Later in June, France fell, and Hitler installed a pro-Nazi government at Vichy in southern France. In only six weeks, Hitler's army had seized complete control of Europe's Atlantic coastline, from the North Sea south to Spain, where Franco remained officially neutral but decidedly pro-Axis. The Axis gained another member in September 1940, when Japan joined Germany and Italy in a Tripartite Pact.

The U.S. Response to War in Europe

Meanwhile, alarmed at the Nazi surge, Roosevelt pressured Congress to modify its neutrality legislation and called for other measures, "short of war," to help Britain and France. Late in 1939 Congress did lift the ban on selling military armaments to belligerents and substituted a cash-and-carry provision that permitted arms sales to

belligerents who could pay cash and use their own ships for transport. This arrangement minimized risks to American exporters. Because its naval forces dominated the Atlantic sea lanes, Britain primarily benefited from this change in policy. Congress also boosted military funding and passed the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, the first peacetime draft in U.S. history. Abandoning any pretense of neutrality, the United States also facilitated Britain's direct acquisition of U.S. "surplus" war materiel. In an attempt to broaden bipartisan support for these controversial measures, Roosevelt added pro-interventionist Republicans to his cabinet—Henry Stimson as secretary of war and Frank Knox as secretary of Navy.



MAP 26.1 German Expansion at Its Height

This map shows the expansion of German power from 1938 through 1942. Which countries fell to German control? Why might Americans have differed over whether these moves by Germany represented a strategic threat to the United States?

Meanwhile, from August through October 1940 Germany's *Luftwaffe* (air force) conducted daily raids on British air bases and nearly knocked out its Royal Air Force (RAF). On the verge of a knock-out, however, Hitler suddenly changed strategy and ordered, instead, the bombing of London and other cities. The use of airpower against civilians in the Battle of Britain, as it was called, steeled Britain's resolve and aroused sympathy among Americans who heard of events during dramatic radio broadcasts from London. CBS's Edward R. Murrow, observed the writer Archibald MacLeish, "skillfully burned the city of London in our homes, and we felt the flames."

In September 1940 Roosevelt agreed to transfer 50 First World War-era naval destroyers to the British navy. In return, the United States gained the right to build eight naval bases in British territories in the Western Hemisphere. This "destroyers-for-bases" deal infuriated isolationists. The America First Committee, organized by General Robert E. Wood, head of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, launched a campaign to shore up isolationist sentiment in Congress and among the public. The aviator hero Charles A. Lindbergh, America First's most famous member, flew around the country attending pro-isolationist rallies that denounced aid to Britain.

Although those who favored staying out of the war were generally lumped together as "isolationists," this single term obscures their ideological diversity. Some pacifists opposed all wars as immoral, even those against fascist regimes. Some political progressives disliked fascism but feared even more the centralization of governmental power that conducting a war would require in the United States. Some conservatives sympathized with the anticommunism of fascist states, and some Americans shared Hitler's anti-Semitism.

A current of anti-Jewish sentiment existed in the United States. In 1939 congressional leaders had quashed the Wagner-Rogers bill, which would have boosted immigration quotas in order to allow for the entry of 20,000 Jewish children otherwise slated for Hitler's concentration camps. Bowing to anti-Semitic prejudices, the United States adopted a restrictive refugee policy. The consequences of these policies became especially grave after June 1941, when Hitler established the death camps that would systematically exterminate millions of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, communists, and anyone else whom the Nazis deemed unfit for life in the Third Reich and its occupied territories. In September 1941 Burton K. Wheeler of Montana created a special Senate committee to investigate whether Hollywood movies were being used to promote pro-war views. Some isolationists, pointing out that many Hollywood producers were Jewish, expressed blatantly anti-Semitic views.

To counteract the isolationists, those who favored supporting the Allies also organized. The Military Training Camps Association lobbied on behalf of the Selective Service Act. The Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, headed by William Allen White, a well-known Republican newspaper editor, organized more than 300 local chapters in just a few weeks. Similar to the isolationists, interventionist organizations mobilized a diverse group of supporters. All, however, sounded alarms that fascist brutality, militarism, and racism might overrun Europe and threaten America as well.

Presidential electoral politics in 1940 forced Roosevelt, nominated for a third term, to tone down his pro-Allied rhetoric. The Republicans nominated Wendell Willkie, a lawyer and business executive with ties to the party's liberal, internationalist wing. To differentiate his policies from Willkie's, the president played to the popular opposition to war, promising not to send American troops to fight in "foreign

wars.” Once he had won an unprecedented third term, however, Roosevelt unveiled his most ambitious plan yet to support Britain’s war effort.

An “Arsenal of Democracy”

Britain was nearly out of money, so the president proposed that the United States would now “lend-lease,” or loan rather than sell, munitions to the Allies. Making the United States a “great arsenal of democracy,” FDR claimed, would “keep war away from our country and our people.” Congressional debate over the **Lend-Lease Act** was bitter, but it passed as House Resolution 1776 on March 11, 1941. When Germany turned its attention away from Britain and suddenly attacked in June its recent ally, the Soviet Union, Roosevelt extended Lend-Lease assistance to the communist regime of Joseph Stalin.

Roosevelt next began coordinating military strategy with Britain. He secretly pledged to follow a Europe-first approach if the United States were drawn into a two-front war against both Germany and Japan. Publicly, Roosevelt deployed U.S. Marines to Greenland and Iceland to free up the British forces that had protected these strategic Danish possessions after Germany’s 1940 conquest of Denmark. In August 1941 Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met on the high seas off the coast of Newfoundland to forge a formal wartime alliance.

They agreed to an eight-point Atlantic Charter that disavowed territorial expansion, endorsed protection of human rights and self-determination, and pledged the postwar creation of a new world organization that would ensure “general security.” Roosevelt also agreed to Churchill’s request that the U.S. Navy convoy American goods as far as Iceland. Soon, in an undeclared naval war, Germany’s formidable submarine packs began attacking U.S. ships.

By this time Roosevelt and his advisors believed that defeating Hitler would require U.S. entry into the war, but public support still lagged. Privately, the president likely hoped that Germany would commit some provocative act in the North Atlantic that would jar public opinion. The October 1941 sinking of the U.S. destroyer *Reuben James* did just that. Congress repealed its earlier neutrality legislation, but the vote was so close and debate so bitter that Roosevelt knew he could not yet seek a formal declaration of war.

Pearl Harbor

As it turned out, Japan, rather than Germany, sparked America’s involvement. In response to Japan’s 1937 invasion of China, the United States extended credit to China and curtailed sales of equipment to Japan. In 1939 the United States abrogated its Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Japan, an action that further restricted U.S. exports to the island nation. A 1940 ban on the sale of aviation fuel and high-grade scrap iron to Japan was also intended to slow Japan’s military advances.

These measures did not halt Japanese expansion but made it seem even more imperative to Japan’s leaders. As the European war sapped the strength of France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain, Japanese militarists hoped to grab Europe’s Asian colonies and incorporate them into Japan’s own East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japan therefore pushed deep into French Indochina, seeking the raw materials it could no longer buy from the United States, and prepared to launch attacks on Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), and the Philippines.

Roosevelt expanded the trade embargo against Japan, promised further assistance to China, and accelerated a U.S. military buildup in the Pacific. In mid-1941 he froze all Japanese assets in the United States, effectively bringing under presidential control all commerce between the two countries, including trade in petroleum, which was vital to the Japanese economy and war effort. Faced with impending economic strangulation, Japanese leaders did not reassess their plan to create an East Asian empire. Instead, they began planning a preemptive attack on the United States. With limited supplies of raw materials, especially oil, Japan had little hope of winning a prolonged war. Japanese military strategists gambled that a surprise, crippling blow would limit U.S. capabilities and force U.S. concessions. General Hideki Tojo, who became Japan's prime minister, knew the risks but remarked, "sometimes a man has to jump with his eyes closed."

On December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers swooped down on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and destroyed much of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Altogether, 19 ships were sunk or severely damaged; nearly 200 aircraft were destroyed or disabled; and 2,200 Americans were killed. The attack could have been worse. U.S. aircraft carriers, out to sea at the time, were spared, as were the base's fuel storage tanks and repair facilities. In a dramatic message broadcast by radio on December 8, Roosevelt decried the attack and labeled December 7 as "a date which will live in infamy," a phrase that served as a battle cry throughout the war. Japan had rallied Americans, not brought them to terms.

A few Americans charged that Roosevelt had intentionally provoked Japan in order to open a "back door" to war. They asked why the fleet at Pearl Harbor lay vulnerable, not even in a state of full alert. The actions and inactions of leaders, however, were more confused than devious. Intelligence experts, who had broken Japanese diplomatic but



San Diego Historical Society

Is That a War Plant? *This photo from 1945 shows an aircraft plant near San Diego bedecked with camouflage.*

not military code, expected Japan to move toward Singapore or other British or Dutch possessions in Asia. Intercepted messages, along with visual sightings of Japanese ships, seemed to confirm preparations for a strike in Southeast Asia (which did occur). American leaders doubted that Japan would risk a direct attack and doubted that Japan's military planners had the skill to plan an air attack of such distance.

On December 8, 1941, Congress declared war against Japan. Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, declared war on the United States three days later. Hitler mistakenly assumed that the fight against Japan would keep the United States preoccupied in the Pacific. The three Axis Powers drastically underestimated America's ability to mobilize swiftly and effectively.

FIGHTING THE WAR IN EUROPE AND THE PACIFIC

Initially, the war went badly for the Allies. German forces controlled most of Europe from Norway to Greece and had pushed eastward into the Soviet Union. Now they rolled across North Africa, and German submarines endangered Allied supply lines in the Atlantic. Japan seemed unstoppable in the Pacific, overrunning Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies, and the Philippines and moving against the British in Burma and the Australians in New Guinea.

The United States had been unprepared for war, but new bureaucracies and technologies quickly guided a crash program for mobilization. The newly formed Joint Chiefs of Staff, consisting of representatives from each of the armed services, directed Roosevelt's strategy. The War Department's Pentagon complex, a giant, five-story, five-sided building, was completed in January 1943 after 16 months of around-the-clock work. In 1942 aircraft equipped with radar, a new technology developed in collaboration with Britain, proved effective against submarines, and during 1943 Germany's U-boat threat faded "from menace to problem," in the words of one U.S. naval commander. Perhaps most critical, a massive Allied code-breaking operation, based at Bletchley Park in England and employing 4,000 people, perfected decryption techniques for use against Germany's supposedly inviolable encoding machine. Decrypted German messages, called "Ultra" for "ultrasecret," gave the Allies a crucial advantage. Throughout the war, Germans never discovered that many of their decoded radio communications were being forwarded to Allied commanders—sometimes even before they had reached their German recipients. In the postwar world, the code-breaking effort would contribute to the development of computer technology.

Campaigns in North Africa and Italy

Military strategy divided the Allied powers. All agreed that their primary focus would be on Europe, and Roosevelt and his military strategists established a unified command with the British. Stalin pleaded with Roosevelt and Churchill to open a second front in Western Europe, by way of an invasion across the English Channel into France, to relieve pressure on the Soviet Union. Many of Roosevelt's advisers agreed: If German troops succeeded in knocking the Soviet Union out of the war, Hitler could turn his full attention toward Britain. Churchill, however, urged instead the invasion of French North Africa, in order to nibble away at the edges of enemy power.

At a meeting in Casablanca, Morocco, in January 1943, Roosevelt sided with Churchill. He argued that a cross-Channel invasion of France carried too many

risks at that time. To assuage Stalin's fear that his two allies might sign a separate peace with Hitler, however, Roosevelt and Churchill promised to remain in the fight until Germany agreed to an "unconditional surrender."

The North African operation, code-named **TORCH**, began with Anglo-American landings in Morocco and Algeria in November 1942. As **TORCH** progressed, the Soviets turned the tide of battle on the eastern front with a decisive victory at **Stalingrad**. The epic battle of Stalingrad, which lasted nearly six months between July 1942 and February 1943 and killed well over one million people, was perhaps the **bloodiest in modern history**.

Hitler poured reinforcements into North Africa but could stop neither **TORCH** nor the British drive westward from Egypt. In the summer of 1943 the Allies followed up their successful North African campaign by overrunning the island of Sicily and then fighting their way, slowly, northward through Italy's mountains.

Some U.S. officials worried about the postwar implications of wartime strategy. Secretary of War Henry Stimson, for example, warned that the Allied campaigns through Africa and Italy might leave the Soviets dominant in most of Europe. Acting on this advice, Roosevelt finally agreed to set a date for the cross-Channel invasion that Stalin had long been promised.

Operation **OVERLORD**

Operation **OVERLORD**, directed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower began on June 6, 1944, **D-Day**. During the preceding months, probably the largest invasion force in history had assembled in England. Disinformation and diversionary tactics fooled the Germans into expecting a landing at the narrowest part of the English Channel rather than in the Normandy region. After several delays, because of the Channel's unpredictable weather, nervous commanders finally ordered the daring plan to begin. The night before, as naval guns pounded the Normandy shore, three divisions of paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines to disrupt German communications. Then at dawn, more than 4,000 Allied ships landed troops and supplies on Normandy's beaches. The first American forces to come ashore at Omaha Beach met especially heavy German fire and took enormous casualties, but the waves of invading troops continued. Only three weeks after **D-Day**, more than a million Allied personnel controlled the French coast and opened the long-awaited Second Front.

Just as the 1943 Battle of Stalingrad had reversed the course of the war in the East, so **OVERLORD** changed the momentum in the West. Within three months, U.S., British, and Free French troops entered Paris. After repulsing a desperate German counteroffensive in Belgium, at the Battle of the Bulge in December and January, Allied armies swept eastward, crossing the Rhine, and headed toward Berlin to meet up with westward-advancing Soviet troops.

As the war in Europe drew to a close, the horrors perpetrated by the Third Reich became fully visible to the world. Hitler's campaign of extermination, now called the **Holocaust**, killed more than 5 million Jews out of Europe's prewar population of 10 million. Hundreds of thousands more from various other groups were also murdered. Although only a military victory put an end to German death camps, the Allies might have saved thousands of Jews by helping them escape and emigrate. Allied leaders, however, worried about how to deal with large numbers of Jewish refugees, and they also claimed they could not spare scarce ships to

HISTORY THROUGH FILM

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

Directed by Steven Spielberg.

Starring Tom Hanks (Captain John Miller), Matt Damon (Private James Ryan), Harve Presnell (General George Marshall).

Hollywood marked the 50th anniversary of the Allied effort in the Second World War with a series of films about “the good war.” Although *Saving Private Ryan* invited comparison with *The Longest Day* (1962) because of its depiction of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, Steven Spielberg’s battlefield sequences represented a considerable advance in the art of waging war on film. His production team employed sophisticated computer graphics and nearly deafening Dolby sound to mount battle scenes so realistic that reviewers cautioned veterans susceptible to post-traumatic stress syndrome about watching the film.

The film also suggested the kind of family-centered melodrama that Spielberg had grafted onto the sci-fi genre in *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). A heroic squad led by Captain John Miller is trying to locate a single U.S. soldier, Private James Ryan, whose mother has already lost her three other sons to the war. The film poses the question of whether such a family-related mission legitimates and sanctifies the sacrifices of the Second

World War. *Private Ryan* answers “yes” to this question.

The major body of the film carefully justifies the rescue mission. Although Captain Miller wonders if his dangerous assignment is simply a public relations stunt, he quickly drops this idea and pursues his mission with the gallantry required of a Hollywood-commissioned officer. Later, his platoon members debate the morality of risking eight lives to save one, but the cause of Ryan’s mother always seems overriding. General George Marshall cuts off debate over the appropriateness of the Ryan mission by invoking an earlier war leader, Abraham Lincoln, who once faced a similar dilemma. When Miller’s troops finally locate Private Ryan, the film’s audience discovers that he is the kind of clean-cut Iowa farm boy who will stay with his would-be saviors rather than retreat to safety. Ryan survives, although most of his comrades perish. Captain Miller, dying, implores young Ryan to lead a “good” life to justify the sacrifice of so many others.

The film *Private Ryan*, in contrast to its characters, takes few risks. It secures its emotional investment in the rescue effort by bracketing the Second World War segments with two brief framing sequences in which an aging Ryan, along with his own

transport them to sanctuary. The Allies would, in 1945 and 1946, bring 24 German high officials to trial at Nuremberg for “crimes against humanity.” Large quantities of money, gold, and jewelry that Nazi leaders stole from victims of the Holocaust and deposited in Swiss banks, however, remained concealed for more than 50 years. Not until 1997 did Jewish groups and the U.S. government force an investigation of the Swiss banking industry’s holdings of stolen “Nazi gold,” an inquiry that finally prompted some monetary restitution for victims’ families.

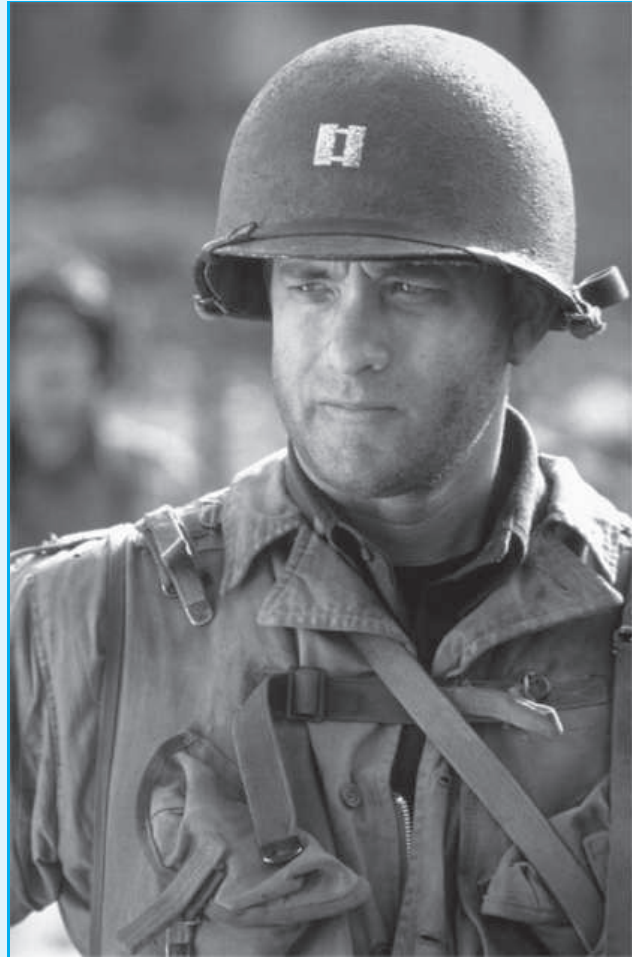
With Hitler’s suicide in April and Germany’s surrender on May 8, 1945, the military foundations for peace in Europe were complete. Soviet armies controlled Eastern Europe; British and U.S. forces predominated in Italy and the rest of the

family, returns to Normandy and visits the grave of Captain Miller. In the final segment, Ryan's wife provides the final reassurance that the trauma of the Second World War served a good cause, because Private Ryan's own family life has justi-

fied Miller's sacrifice. "Tell me I've led a good life. Tell me I'm a good man," he implores his wife. After nearly three hours of this Spielberg epic, the question is rhetorical.

Saving Private

Ryan, which garnered four Academy Award nominations, celebrated the heroism of what popular historians called America's "greatest generation."



David James/RAC/Dream Works/Getty Images

Mediterranean; Germany and Austria fell under divided occupation. Governmental leaders now needed to work out a plan for transforming these military arrangements into a comprehensive political settlement for the postwar era. Meanwhile, the war in the Pacific was far from over.

Seizing the Offensive in the Pacific

For six months after Pearl Harbor, Japan's forces steadily advanced. Singapore fell easily. Japan overwhelmed U.S. naval garrisons in the Philippines and on Guam and Wake islands. Filipino and American troops surrendered at Bataan

and Corregidor in the Philippines. Other Japanese forces headed southward to menace Australia and New Zealand.

When Japan finally suffered its first naval setback at the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, Japanese naval commanders decided to hit back hard. They amassed 200 ships and 600 planes to destroy what remained of the U.S. Pacific fleet and to take Midway Island, from where they could assault Hawaii. U.S. Naval Intelligence, however, was monitoring Japanese codes and warned Admiral Chester W. Nimitz of the plan. Surprising the Japanese armada in the Battle of Midway, U.S. planes sank four Japanese carriers and destroyed a total of 322 planes.

Two months later, American forces splashed ashore at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. The bloody engagements in the Solomons continued for months on both land and sea, but they accomplished one major objective: seizing the military initiative in the Pacific. According to prewar plans, the war in Europe was to have received highest priority, but by 1943 the two theaters were receiving roughly equal resources.

The bloody engagements in the Pacific reinforced racial prejudices and brutality on both sides. Japanese leaders hoped the war would confirm the superiority of their divine Yamato race. Prisoners taken by the Japanese, particularly on the Asian mainland, were brutalized in almost unimaginable ways. The Japanese Army's Unit 731 tested bacteriological weapons in China and conducted horrifying medical experiments on live subjects. American propaganda images played on themes of racial superiority, portraying the Japanese people as animalistic subhumans. American troops often rivaled Japan's forces in their disrespect for the enemy dead and sometimes killed the enemy rather than take prisoners.

China Policy

U.S. policymakers hoped that China would fight effectively against Japan and emerge after the war as a strong, united nation. Neither hope seemed realized. China was beset by civil war.

Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government was incompetent and unpopular. It avoided engaging the Japanese invaders and still made extravagant demands for U.S. assistance. A growing communist movement led by Mao Zedong fought more effectively against the Japanese invaders, but U.S. policy continued to support Jiang as China's future leader. Meanwhile, Japan's advance into China continued, and in 1944 its forces captured seven key U.S. air bases in China.

U.S. Strategy in the Pacific

In contrast to the European Theater, no unified command guided the war in the Pacific, and military actions often emerged from compromise. General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the army in the South Pacific, favored an offensive launched from his headquarters in Australia through New Guinea and the Philippines and on to Japan. After Japan had driven him out of the Philippines in May 1942, he promised to return. Admiral Nimitz disagreed. He favored an advance across the smaller islands of the central Pacific, bypassing the Philippines. Unable to decide between the two strategies, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized both.

Both offensives moved forward, marked by fierce fighting and heavy casualties. MacArthur took New Guinea. Nimitz's forces liberated the Marshall Islands and the Marianas in 1943 and 1944. An effective radio communication system conducted by a Marine platoon of Navajo Indians, the Navajo Signal Corps, made a



MAP 26.2 Allied Advances and Collapse of German Power

This map depicts the final Allied advances and the end of the war in Germany. Through what countries did Soviet armies advance, and how might their advance have affected the postwar situation? How was Germany divided by occupying powers, and how might that division have affected postwar politics?

unique contribution to success. Navajo, a language unfamiliar to Japanese intelligence officers, provided a secure medium for sensitive communications.

In late 1944 the fall of Saipan brought American bombers within range of Japan. The capture of the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa during spring 1945 further shortened that distance. Okinawa illustrated the ferocity of the campaigns: 120,000 Japanese and 48,000 American soldiers died. Given these numbers, U.S. military planners dreaded the prospect of invading Japan's home islands.

Airpower looked more and more enticing. The results of the Allies' strategic bombing of Germany, including the destruction of such large cities as Hamburg and Dresden, were ambiguous, and military historians continue to debate whether the damage against military targets really offset the huge civilian casualties and the unsustainable losses of American pilots and aircraft. Nonetheless, U.S. strategists continued to claim that strategic bombing might provide the crucial advantage in the Pacific. In February 1944 General Henry Harley ("Hap") Arnold devised a plan for firebombing major Japanese cities. Bombers added to the horror of war and terrorized civilians, Arnold conceded, but when used "with the proper degree of understanding" could become "the most humane of all weapons" by shortening the war. Arnold's air campaign, operating from bases in China, turned out to be cumbersome. It was replaced by a more effective and lethal operation run from Saipan by General Curtis LeMay, whom Arnold dubbed "the Babe Ruth of bombers."

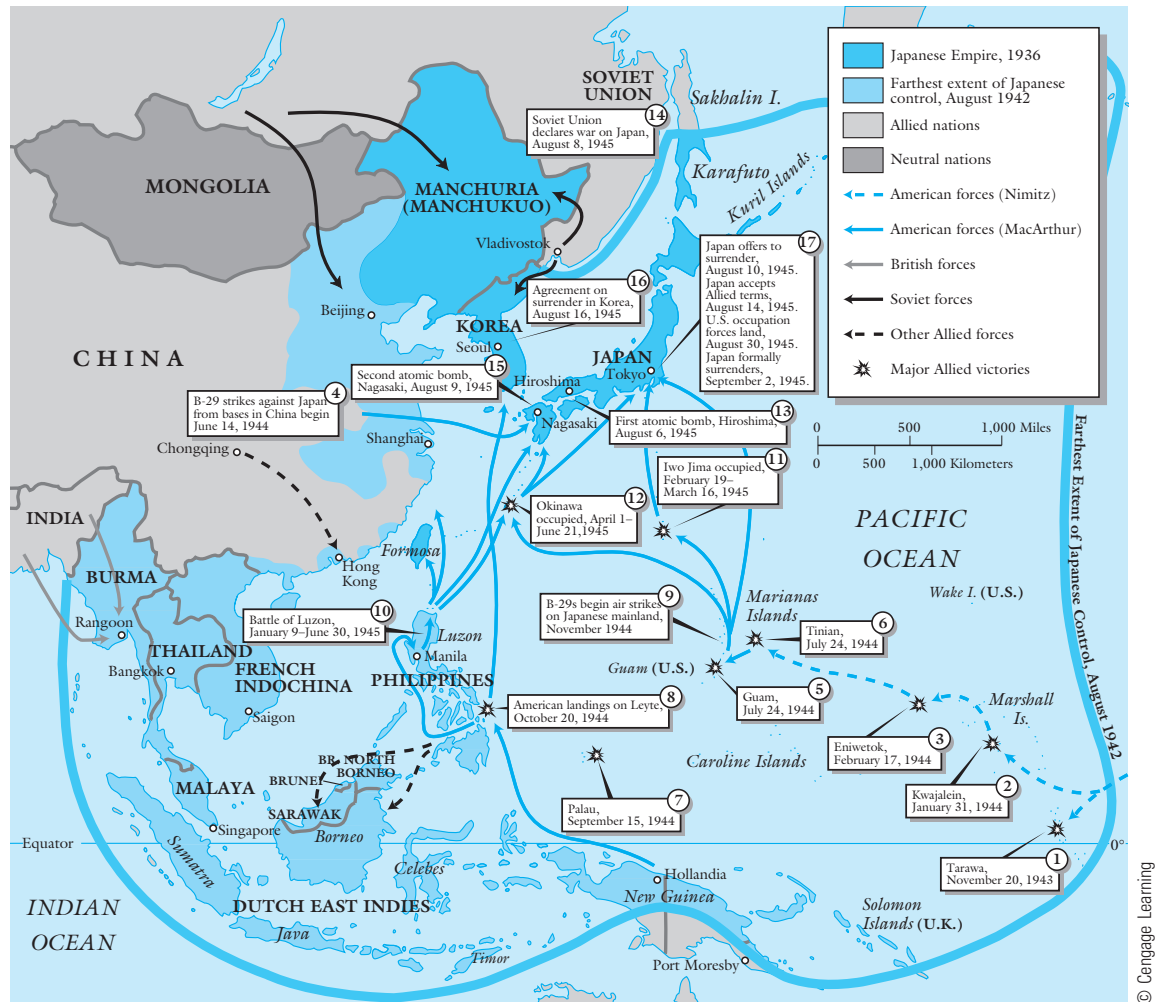
The official position on the incendiary raids against Japanese cities was that they constituted "precision" rather than "area" bombing. In actuality, the success of a mission was measured by the number of square miles it left scorched. The number of Japanese civilians killed in the raids is estimated to have been greater than Japanese soldiers killed in battle. Air attacks on Tokyo during the night of March 9/10, 1945, inaugurated the new policy. They leveled nearly a quarter of the city and incinerated more than 100,000 people. LeMay summarized his strategy: "Bomb and burn them until they quit."

By the winter of 1944–45, a combined sea and air strategy had emerged: The United States sought "unconditional surrender" by blockading Japan's seaports, bombarding its cities from the air, and invading only if necessary. Critics of the policy of unconditional surrender, which most Japanese assumed meant the death of their emperor, later suggested that it might have hardened Japan's determination to fight even after defeat had become inevitable. Defenders of the policy suggest that any softening of U.S. terms would have encouraged Japanese resistance. Whatever the case, American leaders decided that victory would only come through massive destruction.

A New President, the Atomic Bomb, and Japan's Surrender

On April 13, 1945, newspaper headlines across the country read "President Roosevelt Dead." After more than 13 years in office, the increasingly frail president had succumbed to a massive cerebral hemorrhage. Sorrow and shock spread through the armed forces, where many young men and women had hardly known any other president. Through diplomatic conference halls, Roosevelt's personal magnetism had often brought unity, if not always clarity; and among his many supporters, he had symbolized optimism through economic depression and war. Roosevelt had also accumulated a host of critics and enemies. He had defeated Republican Thomas E. Dewey in the 1944 presidential election by the smallest popular-vote margin in nearly 30 years, and Republicans had further cut into the Democrat's once overwhelming majorities in the House and Senate. Unaware of Roosevelt's precarious health, however, both Republican and Democrats assumed FDR would lead the United States into the postwar world.

Emerging from Roosevelt's shadow, the new president, Harry S Truman, seemed an unimposing presence. Born on a farm near Independence, Missouri, Truman served in France during the First World War, became a U.S. senator in 1934, and was tabbed as



MAP 26.3 Pacific Theater Offensive Strategy and Final Assault Against Japan

This map suggests the complicated nature of devising a war strategy in the vast Pacific region. What tactics did the United States use to advance upon and finally prevail over the island nation of Japan?

Roosevelt's running mate in 1944. Roosevelt offered an upper-class image of well-practiced and worldly charm. The blunt-spoken Truman proudly presented himself as a "little man from Missouri." He knew little about international affairs or about any informal understandings that Roosevelt may have made with foreign leaders.

Only after succeeding Roosevelt did Truman learn about events at Los Alamos, New Mexico. There, since the late 1930s, scientists from all across the world had been secretly working on a new weapon. Advances in theoretical physics had suggested that splitting the atom (fission) would release a tremendous amount of energy. Fearful that Germany was racing ahead of the United States in this research, Albert Einstein, a Jewish refugee from Germany, had urged Roosevelt to launch a secret program to build a bomb based on the latest atomic research. The government subsequently enlisted top scientists in the **Manhattan Project**, a huge, secret military operation. On July 16, 1945, the first atomic weapon was successfully tested at Trinity Site, near Alamogordo, New Mexico.

Truman and his top policymakers assumed that the weapon would be put to immediate use. They were eager to end the war, both because a possible land invasion of Japan might prove costly in American lives and because the Soviet Union was planning to enter the Pacific Theater, where **Truman wished to limit Soviet power.** Churchill called the bomb a “miracle of deliverance.” Truman later publicly claimed that he had never lost a night’s sleep over its use.

Privately, he and other U.S. officials admitted to more qualms. There was disagreement over where and how the bomb should be deployed. A commission of atomic scientists recommended a “demonstration” that would impress Japan with the bomb’s power, yet cause no loss of life. General George C. Marshall suggested using it on purely military installations or only on manufacturing sites, after first warning away Japanese workers. Ultimately, the Truman administration discarded these options. The bomb, Secretary of War Henry Stimson said, had to make “a profound psychological impression on as many inhabitants as possible.”

In the context of the earlier aerial bombardment of Japanese cities, dropping atomic bombs on the previously unbombed cities of **Hiroshima** and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, seemed only a small departure from existing policy. “Fat Man” and “Little Boy,” as the two bombs were nicknamed, could be regarded as merely bigger, more effective firebombs. Atomic weapons did, however, produce a new level of violence. Colonel Paul Tibbets, who piloted the U.S. plane that dropped the first bomb, reported, “the shimmering city became an ugly smudge ... a pot of bubbling hot tar.” Teams of U.S. observers who entered Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the aftermath were stunned at the instantaneous incineration of both human beings and manmade structures and shocked to **contemplate the longer-lasting horror of radiation disease.**

The mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki inaugurated a new “atomic age” in which dreams of peace mingled with nightmares of global destruction. Shortly after the bombing, Stimson wrote to Truman that atomic weapons represented “a new control by man over the forces of nature too revolutionary and dangerous to fit into old concepts.” But in those late summer days of 1945 most Americans sighed with relief. News reports of August 15 proclaimed Japan’s surrender, V-J Day. All across the nation people spontaneously flooded into the streets to celebrate the end of the Second World War.

THE WAR AT HOME: THE ECONOMY

The success of the U.S. military effort depended on economic mobilization at home. **This effort ultimately brought the Great Depression of the 1930s to an end** and transformed the nation’s government, its business and financial institutions, and its labor force.

Government’s Role in the Economy

The federal bureaucracy nearly quadrupled in size during the war. New economic agencies proliferated. The most powerful of these, the War Production Board, oversaw the conversion and expansion of factories, allocated resources, and enforced production priorities and schedules. The War Labor Board adjudicated labor-management disputes. The War Manpower Commission allocated workers to various industries. The Office of Price Administration regulated prices to control inflation and rationed such scarce commodities as gasoline, rubber, steel, shoes, coffee, sugar, and meat. **Although most of the controls were abandoned after the war, the concept of**

greater governmental oversight of the economy survived, extending the New Deal's activist legacy that would begin to be called Keynesianism.

From 1940 to 1945 the U.S. economy expanded rapidly, and the gross national product (GNP) rose, year-by-year, by 15 percent or more. When Roosevelt called for the production of 60,000 planes shortly after Pearl Harbor, skeptics jeered. Yet within a few years the nation produced nearly 300,000 planes. The Maritime Commission oversaw the construction of millions of tons of new ships. The government's huge wartime spending provided a fiscal stimulus that eradicated the underconsumption of the Great Depression. The once stagnant economy sprang to life and spewed out prodigious quantities of all kinds of supplies, including 2.5 million trucks and 50 million pairs of shoes.

Striving to increase production, industry entered into a close relationship with government to promote scientific and technological research and development (R&D). Government money subsidized new industries, such as electronics, and transformed others, such as rubber and chemicals. Eventually, an Office of Scientific Research and Development contracted with universities and scientists for a variety of projects. Under this program, radar and penicillin (both British discoveries), rocket engines, and other new products were perfected for wartime use. The Manhattan Project, of course, provided the most dramatic example of the government's new involvement in military research. Refugees from Nazi tyranny contributed significantly to this scientific innovation.

Business and Finance

To finance the war effort, government spending rose from \$9 billion in 1940 to \$98 billion in 1944. In 1941 the national debt stood at \$48 billion; by V-J Day it was \$280 billion.

With fewer goods to buy because of rationing, Americans invested in war bonds, turning their savings into tanks and planes. Although war bonds provided a relatively insignificant contribution to overall defense spending, they helped raise personal saving to record levels and gave those who purchased them a direct psychological and economic stake in the war effort.

As production shifted from autos to tanks, and from refrigerators to guns, consumer goods became scarce. Essentials such as food, fabrics, and gasoline were rationed and, consequently, were shared more equitably than before the war. Higher taxes on wealthier Americans redistributed income and narrowed the gap in wealth between the well-to-do and other citizens. War bonds, rationing, and progressive taxation encouraged a sense of shared sacrifice and helped ease the class tensions of the 1930s.

Even as the war fostered personal savings and lessened income inequality, however, it also facilitated the dismantling of some New Deal agencies most concerned with economic inequality. A Republican surge in the off-year elections of 1942—the GOP gained 44 seats in the House and 7 in the Senate—helped strengthen an anti-New Deal coalition in Congress. In 1943 legislators abolished the job-creation programs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the National Youth Administration (NYA) (see Chapter 25). They also shut down the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) and Farm Security Administration (FSA), agencies that had assisted rural areas. As business executives flocked to Washington, D.C., to run the new wartime agencies, the Roosevelt administration adopted a relatively cooperative stance toward big business.

Corporations considered essential to wartime victory flourished under governmental subsidies. What was essential, of course, became a matter of definition. Coca-Cola and Wrigley's chewing gum won precious sugar allotments by arguing that GIs overseas "needed" to enjoy these products. Both companies prospered. The California-based Kaiser Corporation, whose spectacular growth during the 1930s had been spurred by federal dam contracts, now turned its attention to building ships, aircraft, and military vehicles such as the famous "Jeep." By 1943 Kaiser controlled nearly a third of the nation's military construction business and brought a boom to coastal California and Washington state. Federal subsidies and tax breaks enabled factories throughout the country to expand and retool. New manufacturing centers transformed the size and function of cities particularly in the South and West, areas previously dominated mostly by agricultural production.

The war concentrated power in the largest corporations. After Roosevelt ordered his justice department to postpone enforcement of antitrust laws, government lawyers tucked away long-planned legal cases, such as one against America's great oil cartel. Congressional efforts to investigate possible collusion in the awarding of large government contracts and to increase assistance to small businesses similarly made little headway. The top 100 companies, which had provided 30 percent of the nation's total manufacturing output in 1940, were providing 70 percent by 1943.

Rita Hayworth Scraps Her Bumpers.

Movie stars aided the war effort by promoting the sale of war bonds and urging sacrifice. Here Hayworth urges Americans to scrap their unessential car parts.



The Workforce

During the early years of the military buildup, people who had scrounged for jobs during the Great Depression found work. Employment in heavy industry invariably went to men, and most of the skilled jobs went to whites. But as military service depleted the ranks of white males, women and minorities became more attractive candidates for production jobs. Soon, both private employers and public officials were encouraging women to go to work, southern African Americans to seek jobs in northern and western industrial cities, and Mexicans to enter the United States under the *bracero* guest farm worker program.

Hired for jobs never before open to them, women became welders, shipbuilders, lumberjacks, and miners. Women won places in prestigious symphony orchestras, and one Major League Baseball owner financed the creation of a women's league to give new life to the national pastime. Many employers hired married women, who before the war would have been lucky to obtain a position even in traditionally female occupations such as teaching. Minority women moved into clerical and sales jobs, where they had not previously been welcome. Most workplaces, however, continued to be segregated by sex.

The scope of unpaid labor, long provided primarily by women, also expanded. Volunteer activities such as Red Cross projects, civil defense work, and recycling drives claimed more and more of the time of women, children, and older people. As kids collected scrap and women rolled bandages, leisure time melted away and even seemed unpatriotic. Both in the home and in the workplace, women's responsibilities and workloads increased, but few complained. Government publications exhorted homemakers: "Wear it out, use it up, make it do, or do without." The Second World War became one in which people of all ages and occupations contributed either their fighting skills or their productive labor.

The new labor market improved the general economic position of African Americans. By executive order in June 1942, Roosevelt created the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), which aimed to ban discrimination in hiring. In 1943 his administration announced that it would not recognize as collective bargaining agents any unions that discriminated on the basis of race. The War Labor Board outlawed the practice of paying different wages to whites and nonwhites doing the same job. Before the war, the African American population had been mainly southern, rural, and agricultural; within a few years, a substantial percentage of African Americans had become northern, urban, and industrial. Although employment discrimination was hardly eliminated and many charged the FEPC with foot-dragging, twice as many African Americans held skilled jobs at the end of the war as at the beginning.

For both men and women, the war brought higher wages and longer work hours. Although the Roosevelt administration tried to limit wage increases during the war, overtime often raised paychecks. During the war, average weekly earnings for industrial workers rose nearly 70 percent. Farmers, who had suffered through many years of low prices and overproduction, doubled their income and then doubled it again.

The Labor Front

The scarcity of labor during the war substantially strengthened the union movement. Union membership rose by 50 percent. Although women and workers of color joined unions in unprecedented numbers, the main beneficiaries of labor's new clout were the white males who still comprised the bulk of union workers.

Especially on the national level, the commitment of organized labor to female workers was weak. Not a single woman served on the executive boards of either the American Federation of Labor (AFL) or the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The International Brotherhood of Teamsters even required women to sign a statement that their union membership could be revoked when the war was over. Unions did fight for contracts stipulating equal pay for men and women who worked in the same job, but these benefited women only as long as they held “male” jobs. The unions’ primary purpose in advocating equal pay was to maintain wage levels for the men who would return to their jobs after the war. During the first year of peace, as employers trimmed their workforces, both businesses and unions gave special preference to returning veterans and worked to ease women and minority workers out of their wartime positions. Unions based their policies on seniority and their wage demands on the goal of securing male workers a “family wage,” one sufficient to support an entire family.

Some union leaders feared that hiring traditionally lower-paid workers (women and minorities) would jeopardize the wage gains and recognition that unions had won during the labor struggles of the 1930s. Early in the war, some union locals in the well-paying aircraft and shipbuilding industries refused to enroll African Americans and opposed the FEPC. As growing numbers of African Americans were hired, racial tensions in the workplace increased. All across the country—at a defense plant in Lockland, Ohio; at a transit company in Philadelphia; at a shipbuilding company in Mobile—white workers walked off the job to protest the hiring of African Americans, fearing that management might use the war as an excuse to erode union power.

The labor militancy of the 1930s, although muted by a wartime no-strike pledge, persisted into the 1940s. Wildcat strikes erupted among St. Louis bus drivers, Detroit assemblyline workers, and Philadelphia streetcar conductors. In Detroit, a group of aircraft workers, angry at the increasing regimentation of the production process, fanned out across a factory floor and cut off the neck ties worn by their supervisors. Despite the no-strike assurances, the United Mine Workers called a walkout in the bituminous coal fields in 1943. When the War Labor Board took a hard line against the union’s demands, the strike was prolonged. The increasingly conservative Congress responded with the Smith-Connally Act of 1943, which empowered the president to seize plants or mines if strikes interrupted war production. Even so, the war helped to strengthen organized labor’s place.

Assessing Economic Change

The economic impact of the war proved substantial. Most workplaces became more inclusive, in terms of gender and race, than ever before. So did labor unions. More people entered the paid labor force, and many earned more money than rationing restrictions on consumer goods allowed them to spend. Income inequality moderated. In a remarkable reversal of conditions during the Great Depression, jobs were plentiful and savings piled up.

More than anything else, the institutional scale of American life was transformed. Big government, big business, and big labor all grew even bigger during the war years. Science and technology forged new links of mutual interest among these three sectors and brought important new growth especially to still sparsely settled Western states. The old America of family farms, family-run businesses, and small towns did not disappear, but urban-based, bureaucratized institutions increasingly organized life.

A New Role for Government?

The growth of governmental power during the war years prompted debates over what the role of government should be in a postwar world. During the heyday of the New Deal, a broad view of governmentally guaranteed “security” had resulted in programs such as the Social Security System and federal agencies to secure home mortgages and personal savings accounts. At the same time, community-based groups and labor unions had begun to build a set of cooperative social welfare and health institutions they hoped would create a vast, nonprofit security-safety net.

As military victory began to seem likely, President Roosevelt and his advisers talked of harnessing the national government’s power behind expanded efforts to enhance personal security in everyday life. Some dreamed of extending wartime health-care and day-care programs into a more comprehensive social welfare system.

In 1944 FDR introduced his ideas for the kind of expansive social agenda that some European governments were embracing. Calling for a **“Second Bill of Rights,”** Roosevelt advocated measures to ensure that Americans could enjoy the “right” to regular employment, adequate food and shelter, appropriate educational opportunities, and guaranteed health care. Translating this vision into reality, its proponents generally assumed, would require the government to continue the kind of economic and social planning it was doing in wartime.

Large insurance companies and some private businesses, recognizing the popularity of security-focused proposals, came forward with **private alternatives to governmental programs.** Insurers expanded their earlier efforts to market individual policies that would pay in cases of sickness, disability, and unexpected death. At the same time, insurance companies worked with large corporations to develop group insurance plans that would make expansion of government programs less attractive and provide supplements for existing New Deal-era programs such as Social Security. **Questions about what should be the proper role for government in providing social safety nets would roil American life in the postwar era.**

THE WAR AT HOME: SOCIAL ISSUES

Dramatic social changes accompanied the wartime mobilization. Many people, ordered by military service or attracted by employment, moved away from the communities where they had grown up. The war demanded sacrifice from all, and most Americans willingly obliged. The Roosevelt administration asked Americans to defend the “American way of life.” Yet, for many, the war effort unsettled established patterns, and wartime ideals spotlighted the everyday inequalities that often clashed with rosy visions of the “American way.”

Selling the War

Hollywood studios and directors answered the government’s call to mobilize the country for war. The film factories produced both commercial movies with military themes, such as *Destination Tokyo* (1943), and **documentaries, such as the *Why We Fight* series, directed by Frank Capra.** Capra contrasted images of wholesome and diverse Americans with harrowing portrayals of the tightly regimented lifestyles in the military-dominated dictatorships of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Other famous directors enlisted their skills: Darryl F. Zanuck filmed Allied troops in North Africa; John Ford recreated

the Pearl Harbor attack on film; Walt Disney's animation teams produced war-themed cartoons. Hollywood personalities sold war bonds, entertained the troops, and worked on documentaries for the Army's Pictorial Division.

Photojournalists helped bring the war into American living rooms. The U.S. Army, for example, accredited Margaret Bourke-White as a war correspondent, the first woman so designated. She saw action in North Africa, Italy, and Germany, and documented the horrors of the Nazi death camps in *Life* magazine. The government, however, exercised close censorship over all journalists' war photos. Any images that censors felt might damage morale at home never made it into publication.

The advertising industry, lacking many consumer products to sell, turned its talents to promoting the war effort. Roosevelt encouraged advertisers to sell the benefits of freedom. Most obliged, and "freedom" often appeared in the form of new washing machines, improved kitchen appliances, streamlined automobiles, a wider range of lipstick hues, and other consumer products. As soon as the fighting ended, wartime ads promised, technological know-how would transform the United States into a consumer's paradise.

In the spring of 1942 Roosevelt created the **Office of War Information (OWI)** to coordinate propaganda and censorship. Many New Deal Democrats saw it catering to advertisers who preferred imagery extolling the future joys of consumerism to ones promoting broader visions of liberty and equality. Some Republicans, by contrast, blasted the agency for cranking out crass political appeals for causes favored by Roosevelt's New Dealers. Despite criticism from both left and right, the OWI established branch offices throughout the world, published a magazine called *Victory*, and produced hundreds of films, posters, and radio broadcasts.

The work of illustrator Norman Rockwell exemplified wartime image making. Rockwell produced a set of paintings that visually represented the "Four Freedoms" for which President Roosevelt proclaimed Americans fought: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear. Using his neighbors in Arlington, Vermont, as models, Rockwell depicted these values as rooted in small town America. Originally published in the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine in early 1943, the "Four Freedoms" came to adorn posters in millions of post offices and other buildings throughout the country.

Gender Issues The changes sweeping American life became apparent in a range of social issues affecting women.

The wartime United States called on women to serve their country as more than wives and mothers. Some 350,000 women volunteered for military duty during the war, and more than a thousand became pilots for the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). Not everyone approved. One member of Congress asked: "What has become of the manhood of America?" Most in Congress, however, supported the creation of a woman's corps in each branch of the military—an innovation proposed but never adopted during the First World War.

Even as the war narrowed gender differences in employment, widespread imagery frequently framed the changes as temporary. Women's expanded participation

“Food Is a Weapon.”

This 1943 poster shows the Office of War Information skillfully extending its major theme: that people at home could assist the war by watching what they ate. The poster’s final directive suggests how the war made better nutrition both a personal and patriotic goal.



Office of War Information, 1943. Courtesy, the American Legion Poster Collection

in the workplace was often portrayed as a short-term sacrifice intended, ultimately, to preserve and protect their “natural” sphere in the home. Stereotypes abounded. A typical ad suggesting that women take on farm work declared: “A woman can do anything if she knows she looks beautiful doing it.”

An Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution continued to be debated both within Congress and around the country. Should the Constitution guarantee women “equal” status with men, or should the law continue to allow women some kind of “protected” status in view of their special vulnerability to exploitation? The war raised but did not settle this issue, over which even women’s advocates were split.

In some ways, the war may have even widened the symbolic gap between notions of femininity and masculinity. Military culture fostered a “pin-up” mentality toward women. Tanks and planes were decorated with images of female sexuality, and the home-front entertainment industry, led by Hollywood, promoted its glamorous female stars as anxious to “please” their “boys” in the military. Wartime popular culture often associated masculinity with misogyny. After the war, tough-guy fiction, on display in Mickey Spillane’s “Mike Hammer” series of detective novels, portrayed female sexuality as both alluring and threatening to men.

Public policymaking sometimes worked to reinforce gender divisions. The military assigned most of the women who joined the armed services to stateside clerical and supply jobs. Day-care programs for mothers working outside their homes received reluctant and inadequate funding. The thousands of child-care centers set up during the conflict filled only a fraction of the need and were swiftly shut down after the war. Meanwhile, social scientists oftentimes blamed mothers for an apparent spike in rates of juvenile delinquency and divorce during the war years.

Racial Issues

Messages about race were as ambiguous as those related to gender. Before the war, America had been a sharply segregated society. Disenfranchised in the South, African Americans in the rest of the country experimented with how best to use the political power they had gained during the 1930s. In California and throughout the Southwest, residents who traced their ancestry back to Mexico, including many who had long resided in the United States, also worked to address a wide range of discriminatory policies in employment, education, and housing.

President Roosevelt refused to abandon the policy of segregation in the armed forces. Although the Army integrated Latino and American Indian soldiers, along with those from various European ethnic groups, into its combat units, military leaders refused to do the same for people of African and Japanese ancestry. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others pressed for integration, but Roosevelt's top advisers remained opposed to change. Desegregation of the armed forces found special opposition among politically powerful white Democrats in the South, who feared it might lead to broader demands for desegregation at home. The army even adopted the scientifically absurd practice of segregating donated blood into separate stores of "white" and "black" plasma. African Americans were relegated to inferior, often highly dangerous, jobs and excluded from combat duty. Toward the end of the war, when troop shortages forced the administration to put African American units into combat, they performed with distinction.

Meanwhile, on the home front, volatile social issues continued to simmer. As the wartime production system created more jobs, vast numbers of people from the rural South, including several hundred thousand African Americans, moved to cities such as Los Angeles and Detroit. People already living in these areas often chafed at the influx of newcomers, who competed with them for jobs and housing and placed greater demands on public services such as transportation, education, and recreational facilities.

Social strains sometimes flared into violence. This escalation most often occurred in overcrowded urban spaces, where diverse populations and cultures already competed and clashed. In Detroit, in June 1943, conflict between white and black youth at an amusement park rapidly spiraled into a multiple-day riot. The violence left nearly 40 people, most of them African American, dead, injured hundreds, and inflicted millions of dollars worth of damage to property.

Racial disturbances were not restricted to confrontations between whites and blacks. In Los Angeles, complicated and long-standing ethnic tensions erupted in the "Zoot Suit Riots" of 1943. Soldiers and sailors from nearby military bases attacked young Mexican American and African American men wearing zoot suits: flamboyant outfits featuring oversized coats and trousers. Violence only escalated as the city's police force entered the fray, often beating and arresting Mexican

Americans. A military order restricting servicemen to their bases finally helped quell the disorder.

Even when wartime tensions did not produce the level of violence seen in Detroit and Los Angeles, the Second World War highlighted long-standing social divisions. For many Native Americans, for instance, the wartime years increased the pressures associated with longer-term patterns of migration and assimilation. Approximately 25,000 Indian men and several hundred Indian women served in the armed forces. Tens of thousands of other American Indians, many leaving their reservations for the first time, found wartime work in urban areas such as Rapid City, Minneapolis, Flagstaff, and Billings. Many Indians moved back and forth between city and reservation, seeking to live in two significantly different worlds.

Internment of Japanese Americans

People of Japanese descent faced a unique situation. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, fear of sabotage by pro-Japanese residents engulfed West Coast communities. One military report claimed that a “large, unassimilated, tightly knit racial group, bound to an enemy nation by strong ties of race, culture, custom, and religion ... constituted a menace” that justified extraordinary action.

Although lacking evidence of disloyalty, the president in February 1942 issued Executive Order 9066, directing the relocation and **internment** of first- and second-generation Japanese Americans (called Issei and Nisei, respectively) at inland camps. Nearly 130,000 people were affected. Significantly, in Hawaii, where the presumed danger of subversion might have seemed much greater, military rule with intensive surveillance prevailed after the Pearl Harbor attack, and internment took place. There, people of Japanese ancestry constituted nearly 40 percent of the population and were essential to the economy. Some Italian and German Americans were also closely watched and several thousand were interned in camps across America, but these numbers paled beside the comprehensive internment of Japanese Americans.

Forced to abandon their possessions or sell them for a pittance, Japanese American evacuees were confined in flimsy barracks, enclosed by barbed wire and under armed guard. These camps, often located in remote locations such as Heart Mountain, Wyoming, offered only the barest accommodations: cots for beds, a low daily ration for food, overcrowded rooms. Two-thirds of the detainees were native-born U.S. citizens, and many gave up thriving agricultural enterprises that they had built in California over a generation. Some evacuated so quickly that they arrived in their camps with only the clothes they wore, hardly enough for cold-winter climates.

Internment was controversial. Civil libertarians charged that the measure was militarily unnecessary and unconstitutional. In December 1944, however, a divided U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Japanese relocation in *Korematsu v. U.S.* (1944). In 1988 Congress officially apologized for the internment, revealed that military investigators at the time had reported no cases of subversion, and authorized a cash indemnity for anyone who had been confined in the camps.

Challenging Racial Inequality

The global fight against fascism proved helpful to movements that were working for greater racial equality in America. Nazism, based on the idea of racial inequality,

exposed the racist underpinnings of older social-science research. The view that racial difference was not the result of biology but of culture gained wider acceptance during the war. “The Huns have wrecked the theory of the master race,” stated an Alabama politician. The idea that a democracy could bridge racial differences provided a basis for the postwar struggle against discrimination.

The *Amsterdam News*, a Harlem newspaper, called for a “**Double V**” campaign—victory at home as well as abroad. In January 1941 the labor leader **A. Philip Randolph** promised to lead tens of thousands of black workers in a march on Washington to demand more defense jobs and integration of the military forces. **President Roosevelt feared the event would embarrass his administration** and urged that it be canceled. Randolph’s persistence ultimately forced Roosevelt to create the FEPC. Although this new agency gained little effective power, its very existence helped advance the ideal of nondiscrimination.

Northward migration of African Americans accelerated demands for equality. Drawn by the promise of wartime jobs, nearly 750,000 African Americans relocated to northern cities, where many sensed the possibility of political power for the first time in their lives. They found an outspoken advocate of civil rights within the White House. **First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt** repeatedly antagonized southern Democrats and members of her husband’s administration by her advocacy of civil rights and her participation in integrated social functions.

Particularly in urban areas, civil rights groups emerged from the wartime years with a strong base from which to fight for jobs and political power. Founded in 1942, the interracial Committee (later, Congress) on Racial Equality (CORE) devised



Buyenlarge/Archive Photos/Getty Images

Internment of Japanese Americans. Taken by the famous photographer Ansel Adams, this image shows internees walking in the snow at a remote relocation camp.

new ways of opposing discrimination. CORE activists staged sit-ins to integrate restaurants, theaters, and other public facilities, especially in Washington, D.C.

In California and throughout the Southwest during the war years, Latino organizations also highlighted the irony of fighting overseas for a nation that denied equality at home. They challenged the United States to live up to its democratic rhetoric. Approximately 500,000 Mexican Americans served, often with great distinction, in the military. Not wishing to anger this constituency, the Roosevelt administration also feared discrimination might harm the credibility of its Good Neighbor Policy in Latin America (see Chapter 25). The president's Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs allocated federal money to train Spanish-speaking workers for wartime employment, improve education in barrios, and provide high school graduates with new opportunities to enter college.

Although legal precedents in California and other Southwestern states classified Latinos as "white," actual practices, especially in public schools, usually discriminated against people of Mexican descent. Organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) mounted several drives against such discrimination during the war, and they prepared for greater challenges in the postwar period.

People of Japanese descent, despite their internment, also laid the basis for postwar campaigns for equality. The courage and sacrifice of Japanese American soldiers became legendary. The 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, segregated units, suffered stunning casualties, often while undertaking extremely dangerous combat missions in Europe. Moreover, in the Pacific Theater, 6,000 Japanese-American members of the Military Intelligence Service provided invaluable service.

In the face of divisive issues and calls for greater equality in American life, wartime propaganda stressed national unity and contrasted America's "melting pot" ethos with German and Japanese obsessions about racial "purity." Wartime movies, plays, radio dramas, and music fostered a sense of national community by celebrating cultural diversity. As members of each of America's racial and ethnic groups distinguished themselves in the military, the claim of equality—"Americans All," in the words of a wartime slogan—took on greater moral force. Imagery extolling social solidarity and freedom provided a foundation for the antidiscrimination movements of the decades ahead.

SHAPING THE PEACE

Even before the war ended, U.S. policymakers began considering postwar peace arrangements. The Truman administration built on Roosevelt's wartime conferences and agreements to shape the framework of international relations for the next half-century.

International Organizations

In the Atlantic Charter of 1941, and at a conference in Moscow in October 1943, the Allied powers had pledged to create a replacement for the defunct League of Nations. Internationalist-minded Americans hoped the new **United Nations (UN)** would offer a more realistic version of Woodrow Wilson's vision for a world body that could deter aggressor nations and promote peaceful political change. At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in Washington in August 1944, and at a subsequent meeting in San

Francisco in April 1945, the Allies worked out the UN's organizational structure. It included a **General Assembly**, in which each member nation would be represented and cast one vote. A smaller body, the **Security Council**, would include five permanent members from the Allied coalition—the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and Nationalist China—and six rotating members. The Security Council would have primary responsibility for maintaining peace, but permanent members could veto any council decision. A UN Secretariat, headed by a Secretary General, would handle day-to-day business, and an Economic and Social Council would sponsor measures to improve living conditions throughout the world.

The U.S. Senate, with only two dissenting votes, approved joining the UN in July 1945. This victory for internationalism contrasted sharply with the Senate's 1919 rejection of membership in the League of Nations. Opponents of Wilson's dream had worried that internationalist policies might limit the ability of the United States to pursue its own national interests. Following the Second World War, however, a newly powerful United States appeared able to dominate international organizations such as the UN. It seemed unlikely that decisions by it or other international bodies could hamstring U.S. foreign policy. In addition, most U.S. leaders recognized that the war had partly resulted from the lack of a coordinated, international response to aggression during the 1930s.

Eleanor Roosevelt, the former first lady and a committed social activist, played a prominent role in building the new postwar internationalist ethos. A delegate to the first meeting of the UN's General Assembly, she chaired its Commission on Human Rights and guided the drafting of a **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the UN in 1948. The document set forth "inalienable" human rights and freedoms as cornerstones of international law.

Economic agreements also illustrated a growing acceptance of international organizations. They sought to remedy some of the causes of international instability that had touched off the Great Depression and the war. At the Bretton Woods (New Hampshire) Conference of 1944, assembled nations created the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, which was designed to maintain stable currency exchange rates by ensuring that each nation's currency could be converted into any other national currency at a fixed rate. The U.S. dollar, initially pegged at a value of \$35 dollars for an ounce of gold, would provide the lynchpin. Exchange rates could be altered only with the agreement of the IMF.

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, later renamed the **World Bank**, was also created to provide loans to war-battered countries and promote the resumption of world trade. In 1948 the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** established the institutional groundwork for breaking up closed trading blocs and implementing free and fair trade agreements.

Spheres of Interest and Postwar Settlements

In wartime negotiations, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt all had assumed that powerful nations—their own—would enjoy special "spheres of influence" in the postwar world. As early as January 1942 the Soviet ambassador to the United States reported to Stalin that Roosevelt had tacitly assented to Soviet postwar control over the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. In 1944 Stalin and Churchill agreed, informally and secretly, that Britain would continue its

sway over Greece and that the Soviets could control Romania and Bulgaria. U.S. leaders, meanwhile, assumed that Latin America would remain within their sphere of influence. Roosevelt sometimes seemed to imply that he accepted Stalin's goal of having states friendly to the USSR on his vulnerable western border, but at the Tehran Conference of November 1943 he also told Stalin that U.S. voters of Eastern European descent expected their homelands to be independent after the war.

Historians continue to differ on precisely how Roosevelt might have intended to reconcile his contradictory positions on a postwar Soviet sphere of influence. As long as the Soviet military remained essential to Germany's defeat—and Roosevelt also wanted the Soviet Union to join the war against Japan—the president struck a conciliatory tone with Stalin. After Roosevelt's death, however, the Soviets' powerful position in Eastern Europe became a focus of bipolar tensions.

Early in the war, both nations had urged the dismemberment and deindustrialization of a defeated Nazi Germany. At a conference held at Yalta, in Ukraine, in February 1945, the three Allied powers agreed to divide Germany into four zones of occupation (with France as the fourth occupying force). Later, as relations among the victors worsened, this temporary division of Germany hardened into a Soviet-dominated zone in the east and the other three zones to its west. Berlin, the German capital, also was divided, even though the city itself lay totally within the Soviet zone.

The future of Poland also posed difficult issues. At Yalta, the Soviets agreed to permit free elections in postwar Poland and to create a government "responsible to the will of the people," but Stalin believed that the other Allied leaders had tacitly accepted Soviet dominance over Poland. The agreement at Yalta was ambiguous at best. The war was still at a critical stage, and the western Allies chose to sacrifice clarity in order to encourage cooperation from the Soviets. After Yalta, the Soviets assumed that Poland would be in their sphere of influence, but many Americans charged the Soviets with bad faith for failing to hold free elections and for not relinquishing control.

In Asia, military realities likewise influenced postwar settlements. At Tehran and again at Yalta, Stalin pledged to send troops to fight Japan as soon as Germany surrendered. The first U.S. atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, however, just one day before the Soviets were to enter the Pacific Theater of the war, and the United States assumed total charge of the occupation and postwar reorganization of Japan. The Soviet Union and the United States divided Korea, which had been controlled by Japan, into separate zones of occupation. Here, as in Germany, these zones would later emerge as two antagonistic states (see Chapter 27).

The fate of the European colonies seized by Japan in Southeast Asia was another contentious issue. Most U.S. officials preferred to see the former British and French colonies become independent nations, but they also worried about the left-leaning politics of many anticolonial nationalist movements. As the United States developed an anticommunist foreign policy after the end of the war, it moved to support British and French efforts to reassemble their colonial empires.

In the Philippines, the United States honored its long-standing pledge to grant independence. A friendly government that agreed to respect American economic interests and military bases took power in 1946 and enlisted American advisers to help suppress leftist rebels. In 1947 the United Nations designated the Mariana,

Caroline, and Marshall Islands as the “Trust Territories of the Pacific” and authorized the United States to administer their affairs.

Although the nations of Latin America had been only indirectly involved in military conflict and peace negotiations, the war directly affected U.S. relations with them. During the 1930s the Roosevelt administration’s Good Neighbor Policy had helped improve U.S.–Latin American relations. The Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), created in 1937, further expanded cultural and economic ties. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Latin American leaders stood nearly united behind the Allies. After U.S. entry into the war, at a conference in Rio de Janeiro in January 1942, every Latin American country except Chile and Argentina broke diplomatic ties with the Axis governments. When naval warfare in the Atlantic severed commercial connections between Latin America and Europe, Latin American countries became critical suppliers of raw materials to the United States.

Wartime conferences avoided clear decisions about creating a Jewish homeland in the Middle East. The Second World War prompted survivors of the Holocaust and Jews from around the world to take direct action. Zionism, the movement to found a Jewish state in Palestine, attracted thousands of Jews to the Middle East. They began to carve out, against the wishes of Palestinians and other Arab people, the new nation of Israel.

CONCLUSION

The world changed dramatically during the Second World War. For the United States, wartime mobilization ended the Great Depression and focused attention on international concerns. The war brought victory over dictatorial, expansionist regimes, and the United States emerged as the world’s preeminent power.

At home, a more powerful national government, concerned with preserving national security, assumed nearly complete power over the economy. New, cooperative ties were forged among government, business, and scientific researchers. These sectors worked together to provide the seemingly miraculous growth in productivity that ultimately won the war.

The early 1940s sharpened debates over liberty and equality. Many Americans saw the Second World War as a struggle to protect and preserve liberties they already enjoyed. Others, inspired by a struggle against racism and injustice abroad, insisted that a war for freedom overseas should extend to the redress of inequalities at home.

News of Japan’s 1945 surrender prompted joyous celebrations throughout the United States. Still, Americans remained uncertain about postwar policies at home, where the dislocations of war would give way to the uncertainties of peace. They also worried about the recovery of Europe and relations with their wartime ally, the Soviet Union. And of course, the nation now faced the future without the charismatic leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt.