

# 24

## CHAPTER

# The World at War 1937–1945

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The Second World War was the defining international event of the twentieth century. Battles raged across six of the world's seven continents and all of its oceans. It killed more than 50 million people and wounded hundreds of millions more. When it was over, the industrial economies and much of the infrastructure of Europe and East Asia lay in ruins. Waged with both technologically advanced weapons and massive armies, the war involved every industrialized power in Europe, North America, and Asia, as well as dozens of other nations, many of them colonies of the industrialized countries.

The military conflict began on two continents: in Asia with Japan's 1937 invasion of China across the Sea of Japan, and in Europe with the 1939 blitzkrieg (lightning war) conducted by Germany in Poland. It ended in 1945 after American planes dropped two atomic bombs, the product of stunning yet ominous scientific breakthroughs, on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In between these demonstrations of technological prowess and devastating power, huge armies confronted and destroyed one another in the fields of France, the forests and steppes of Russia, the river valleys of China, the volcanic islands of the Pacific, and the deserts of North Africa.

"Armed defense of democratic existence is now being gallantly waged in four continents," President Franklin Delano Roosevelt told the nation in January 1941. After remaining neutral for several years, the United States would commit to that "armed defense." Both FDR and British prime minister Winston Churchill came to see the war as a defense of democratic values from the threat posed by German, Italian, and Japanese fascism. For them, the brutal conflict was the "good war." When the grim reality of the Jewish Holocaust came to light, U.S. participation in the war seemed even more just. But as much as it represented a struggle between democracy and fascism, it was also inescapably a war to maintain British, French, and Dutch control of colonies in Africa, India, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. By 1945, democracy in the industrialized world had been preserved, and a new Euro-American alliance had taken hold; the future of the vast European colonial empires, however, remained unresolved.

On the U.S. domestic front, World War II ended the Great Depression, hastened profound social changes, and expanded the scope and authority of the federal government. Racial politics and gender roles shifted under the weight of wartime migration and labor shortages. The pace of urbanization increased as millions of Americans uprooted themselves and moved hundreds or thousands of miles to join the military or to take a war job. A stronger, more robust federal government, the product of a long, hard-fought war, would remain in place to fight an even longer, more expensive, and potentially more dangerous Cold War in the ensuing years. These developments, which accelerated transformations already under way, would have repercussions far into the postwar decades.

### IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA

How did World War II transform the United States domestically and change its relationship with the world?



**Black Mechanics in Tuskegee, Alabama** World War II was a “total war,” fought on seven continents by hundreds of millions of people and massive national armies. Though a late arrival to the conflict, the United States played a critical role in defeating the Axis powers. Here, African American soldiers in Tuskegee, Alabama, make engine adjustments for a training flight. Jeff Ethell Color Archives.

## The Road to War

The Great Depression disrupted economic life around the world and brought the collapse of traditional political institutions. In response, an antidemocratic movement known as **fascism**, which had originated in Italy during the 1920s, developed in Germany, Spain, and Japan. By the mid-1930s, these nations had instituted authoritarian, militaristic governments led by powerful dictators: Benito Mussolini in Italy, Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany, Francisco Franco in Spain, and, after 1940, Hideki Tojo in Japan. As early as 1936, President Roosevelt warned that other peoples had “sold their heritage of freedom” and urged Americans to work for “the survival of democracy” both at home and abroad. Constrained by strong isolationist sentiment, by 1940 FDR was cautiously leading the nation toward war against the fascist powers.

### The Rise of Fascism

World War II had its roots in the settlement of World War I. Germany struggled under the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and Japan and Italy had their desire for overseas empires thwarted by the treaty makers. Faced with the expansive ambitions and deep resentments of those countries, the League of Nations, the collective security system established at Versailles, proved unable to maintain the existing international order.

Fascism, as instituted in Germany by Hitler, combined a centralized, authoritarian state, a doctrine of Aryan racial supremacy, and intense nationalism in a call for the spiritual reawakening of the German people. Fascist leaders worldwide disparaged parliamentary government, independent labor movements, and individual rights. They opposed both the economic collectivism of the Soviet Union—where, in theory, the state managed the economy to ensure social equality—and the competitive capitalist economies of the United States and Western Europe. Fascist movements arose around the world in the 1930s but managed to achieve power in only a handful of countries. Those countries were at the center of global war making in the 1930s.

**Japan and Italy** The first challenge came from Japan. To become an industrial power, Japan required

pursuit of colonial possessions and overseas influence. In 1931, its troops occupied Manchuria, an industrialized province in northern China, and in 1937 the Japanese launched a full-scale invasion of China. In both instances, the League of Nations condemned Japan’s actions but did nothing to stop them.

Japan’s defiance of the League encouraged a fascist leader half a world away: Italy’s Benito Mussolini, who had come to power in 1922. *Il Duce* (The Leader), as Mussolini was known, had long denounced the Versailles treaty, which denied Italy’s colonial claims in Africa and the Middle East after World War I. As in Japan, the Italian fascists desired overseas colonies for raw materials, markets, and national prestige. In 1935, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia, one of the few remaining independent countries in Africa. Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie appealed to the League of Nations, but the League’s verbal condemnation and limited sanctions, its only real leverage, did not stop Italy from taking control of Ethiopia in 1936.

**Hitler’s Germany** Germany, however, posed the gravest threat to the existing world order. Huge World War I reparation payments, economic depression, fear of communism, labor unrest, and rising unemployment fueled the ascent of Adolf Hitler and his **National Socialist (Nazi) Party**. When Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933, the Reichstag (the German legislature) granted him dictatorial powers to deal with the economic crisis. Hitler promptly outlawed other political parties, arrested many of his political rivals, and declared himself *führer* (leader). Under Nazi control, the Reichstag invested all legislative power in Hitler’s hands.

Hitler’s goal was nothing short of European domination and world power, as he had made clear in his 1925 book *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*). The book outlined his plans to overturn the territorial settlements of the Versailles treaty, unite Germans living throughout central Europe in a great German fatherland, and annex large areas of Eastern Europe. The “inferior races” who lived in these regions—Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs—would be removed or subordinated to the German “master race.” These territories would provide Germany with what Hitler called “*lebensraum*”—a new region of settlement and farming and a source of natural resources. A virulent anti-Semite, Hitler had long blamed Jews for Germany’s problems. Once in power, he began a sustained and brutal persecution of Jews, which expanded into a campaign of extermination in the early 1940s.

In 1935, Hitler began to rearm Germany, in violation of the Versailles treaty. No one stopped him. In

#### IDENTIFY CAUSES

What motivated Japanese, Italian, and German expansionism?

raw materials and overseas markets. Like the Western European powers and the United States before it, Japan embraced an expansionary foreign policy in

### Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler salutes German troops during a parade at the Nazi Party's annual congress at Nuremberg. German fascism reveled in great public spectacles, such as the famous Nuremberg rallies held every year between the early 1920s and the late 1930s. Hitler used these mass rallies, at which tens and sometimes hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians gathered, to build wide support for his policies of aggressive militarism abroad and suppression of Jews and other minorities at home. Getty Images.



1936, he sent troops into the Rhineland, a demilitarized zone under the terms of Versailles. Again, France and Britain took no action. Later that year, Hitler and Mussolini formed the **Rome-Berlin Axis**, a political and military alliance between the two fascist nations. Also in 1936, Germany signed a pact to create a military alliance with Japan against the Soviet Union. With these alliances in place, and with France and Great Britain reluctant to oppose him, Hitler had seized the military advantage in Europe by 1937.

### War Approaches

As Hitler pushed his initiatives in Europe, which was mired in economic depression as deeply as the United States, the Roosevelt administration faced widespread isolationist sentiment at home. In part, this desire to avoid European entanglements reflected disillusion with American participation in World War I. In 1934, Gerald P. Nye, a progressive Republican senator from North Dakota, launched an investigation into the profits of munitions makers during that war. Nye's committee alleged that arms manufacturers (popularly labeled "merchants of death") had maneuvered President Wilson into World War I.

Although Nye's committee failed to prove its charge against weapon makers, its factual findings prompted an isolationist-minded Congress to pass a series of acts to prevent the nation from being drawn into another overseas war. The **Neutrality Act of 1935** imposed an embargo on selling arms to warring countries and declared that Americans traveling on the ships of belligerent nations did so at their own risk. In 1936, Congress banned loans to belligerents, and in 1937 it imposed a "cash-and-carry" requirement: if a warring country wanted to purchase nonmilitary goods from the United States, it had to pay cash and carry them in its own ships, keeping the United States out of potentially dangerous naval warfare.

Americans for the most part had little enthusiasm for war, and a wide variety of groups and individuals espoused isolationism. Many isolationists looked to Republican Ohio senator Robert Taft, who distrusted both Roosevelt and European nations with equal conviction, or to the aviator hero Charles A. Lindbergh, who delivered impassioned speeches against intervention in Europe. Some isolationists, such as the conservative National Legion of Mothers of America, combined anticommunism, Christian morality, and even anti-Semitism. Isolationists were primarily



### Charles Lindbergh Cartoon

Charles Lindbergh, the first person to fly solo nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean, was an American hero in the 1930s. In 1941, he had become the public face of the America First Committee, which was determined to keep the United States from entering the wars raging in Europe and Asia. In this political cartoon from October 1941, Lindbergh is shown standing on a soapbox labeled “Fascism,” looking up at the figure of “Democracy.” The implication is that Lindbergh had been fooled by German propaganda into taking its side. Less than two months after the cartoon appeared, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and isolationist sentiment all but disappeared in the United States. Library of Congress.

conservatives, but a contingent of progressives (or liberals) opposed America’s involvement in the war on pacifist or moral grounds. Whatever their philosophies, ardent isolationists forced Roosevelt to approach the brewing war cautiously.

**The Popular Front** Other Americans responded to the rise of European fascism by advocating U.S. intervention. Some of the most prominent Americans pushing for greater involvement in Europe, even if it meant war, were affiliated with the **Popular Front**. Fearful of German and Japanese aggression, the Soviet Union instructed Communists in Western Europe and the United States to join with liberals in a broad coalition opposing fascism. This Popular Front supported various international causes—backing the Loyalists in their fight against fascist leader Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), for example, even

as the United States, France, and Britain remained neutral.

In the United States, the Popular Front drew from a wide range of social groups. The American Communist Party, which had increased its membership to 100,000 as the depression revealed flaws in the capitalist system, led the way. African American civil rights activists, trade unionists, left-wing writers and intellectuals, and even a few New Deal administrators also joined the coalition. In time, however, many supporters in the United States grew uneasy with the Popular Front because of the rigidity of Communists and the brutal political repression in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. Nevertheless, Popular Front activists were among a small but vocal group of Americans encouraging Roosevelt to take a stronger stand against European fascism.

**The Failure of Appeasement** Encouraged by the weak worldwide response to the invasions of China, Ethiopia, and the Rhineland, and emboldened by British and French neutrality during the Spanish Civil War, Hitler grew more aggressive in 1938. He sent troops to annex German-speaking Austria while making clear his intention to seize part of Czechoslovakia. Because Czechoslovakia had an alliance with France, war seemed imminent. But at the **Munich Conference** in September 1938, Britain and France capitulated, agreeing to let Germany annex the Sudetenland—a German-speaking border area of Czechoslovakia—in return for Hitler’s pledge to seek no more territory. The agreement, declared British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, guaranteed “peace for our time.” Hitler drew a different conclusion, telling his generals: “Our enemies are small fry. I saw them in Munich.”

Within six months, Hitler’s forces had overrun the rest of Czechoslovakia and were threatening to march into Poland. Realizing that their policy of appeasement—capitulating to Hitler’s demands—had been disastrous, Britain and France warned Hitler that further aggression meant war. Then, in August 1939, Hitler and Stalin shocked the world by signing a mutual nonaggression pact. For Hitler, this pact was crucial, as it meant that Germany would not have to wage a two-front war against Britain and France in the west and the Soviet Union in the east. On September 1, 1939, Hitler launched a blitzkrieg against Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had officially begun.

Two days after the European war started, the United States declared its neutrality. But President Roosevelt made no secret of his sympathies. When war broke out

in 1914, Woodrow Wilson had told Americans to be neutral “in thought as well as in action.” FDR, by contrast, now said: “This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well.” The overwhelming majority of Americans — some 84 percent, according to a poll in 1939 — supported Britain and France rather than Germany, but most wanted America to avoid another European war.

At first, the need for U.S. intervention seemed remote. After Germany conquered Poland in September 1939, calm settled over Europe. Then, on April 9, 1940, German forces invaded Denmark and Norway. In May, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg fell to the swift German army. The final shock came in mid-June, when France too surrendered. Britain now stood alone against Hitler’s plans for domination of Europe.

**Isolationism and Internationalism** What *Time* magazine would later call America’s “thousand-step road to war” had already begun. After a bitter battle in Congress in 1939, Roosevelt won a change in the neutrality laws to allow the Allies to buy arms as well as nonmilitary goods on a cash-and-carry basis. Interventionists, led by journalist William Allen White and his **Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies**, became increasingly vocal in 1940 as war escalated in Europe. (Interventionists were also known as “internationalists,” since they believed in engaging with, rather than withdrawing from, international developments.) In response, isolationists formed the **America First Committee** (AFC), with well-respected figures such as Lindbergh and Senator Nye urging the nation to stay out of the war. The AFC held rallies across the United States, and its posters, brochures, and broadsides warning against American involvement in Europe suffused many parts of the country, especially the Midwest.

Because of the America Firsters’ efforts, Roosevelt proceeded cautiously in 1940 as he moved the United States closer to involvement. The president did not want war, but he believed that most Americans “greatly underestimate the serious implications to our own future,” as he confided to White. In May, Roosevelt created the National Defense Advisory Commission and brought two prominent Republicans, Henry Stimson and Frank Knox, into his cabinet as secretaries of war and the navy, respectively. During the summer, the president traded fifty World War I destroyers to Great Britain in exchange for the right to build military bases on British possessions in the Atlantic, circumventing neutrality laws by using an executive order to complete

the deal. In October 1940, a bipartisan vote in Congress approved a large increase in defense spending and instituted the first peacetime draft in American history. “We must be the great arsenal of democracy,” FDR declared.

As the war in Europe and the Pacific expanded, the United States was preparing for the 1940 presidential election. The crisis had convinced Roosevelt to seek an unprecedented third term. The Republicans nominated Wendell Willkie of Indiana, a former Democrat who supported many New Deal policies. The two parties’ platforms differed only slightly. Both pledged aid to the Allies, and both candidates promised not to “send an American boy into the shambles of a European war,” as Willkie put it. Willkie’s spirited campaign resulted in a closer election than that of 1932 or 1936; nonetheless, Roosevelt won 55 percent of the popular vote.

Having been reelected, Roosevelt now undertook to persuade Congress to increase aid to Britain, whose survival he viewed as key to American security. In January 1941, he delivered one of the most important speeches of his career. Defining “four essential human freedoms” — freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear — Roosevelt cast the war as a noble defense of democratic societies. He then linked the fate of democracy in Western Europe with the new welfare state at home. Sounding a decidedly New Deal note, Roosevelt pledged to end “special privileges for the few” and to preserve “civil liberties for all.” Like President Wilson’s speech championing national self-determination at the close of World War I, Roosevelt’s “**Four Freedoms**” speech outlined a liberal international order with appeal well beyond its intended European and American audiences.

#### PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

How did Roosevelt use the Four Freedoms speech and the Atlantic Charter to define the war for Americans?



To see a longer excerpt of the “Four Freedoms” speech, along with other primary sources from this period, see *Sources for America’s History*.

Two months later, in March 1941, with Britain no longer able to pay cash for arms, Roosevelt persuaded Congress to pass the **Lend-Lease Act**. The legislation authorized the president to “lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of” arms and equipment to Britain or any other country whose defense was considered vital to the security of the United States. When Hitler abandoned his nonaggression pact with Stalin and invaded the

Soviet Union in June 1941, the United States extended lend-lease to the Soviets. The implementation of lend-lease marked the unofficial entrance of the United States into the European war.

Roosevelt underlined his support for the Allied cause by meeting in August 1941 with British prime minister Winston Churchill (who had succeeded Chamberlain in 1940). Their joint press release, which became known as the **Atlantic Charter**, provided the ideological foundation of the Western cause. Drawing from Wilson's Fourteen Points and Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, the charter called for economic cooperation, national self-determination, and guarantees of political stability after the war to ensure "that all men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want." It would become the basis for a new American-led transatlantic alliance after the war's conclusion. Its promise of national self-determination,

however, set up potential conflict in Asia and Africa, where European powers would be reluctant to abandon their imperial holdings.

In the fall of 1941, the reality of U.S. involvement in the war drew closer. By September, Nazi U-boats and the American navy were exchanging fire in the Atlantic. With isolationists still a potent force, Roosevelt hesitated to declare war and insisted that the United States would defend itself only against a direct attack. But behind the scenes, the president openly discussed American involvement with close advisors and considered war inevitable.

## The Attack on Pearl Harbor

The crucial provocation came not from Germany but from Japan. After Japan invaded China in 1937, Roosevelt had denounced "the present reign of terror



### One City (and Island) at a Time

By late 1944, the victory of the United States and its allies was nearly certain, but Japanese and German troops continued to fight with great courage and determination. Many European cities and every Pacific island had to be taken foot by foot. Here, American troops from the 325th Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division advance slowly through the rubble-filled street of a German city in early 1945. Jeff Ethell Color Archives.

and international lawlessness” and suggested that aggressors be “quarantined” by peaceful nations. Despite such rhetoric, the United States refused to intervene later that year when Japanese troops sacked the city of Nanjing, massacred 300,000 Chinese residents, and raped thousands of women.

FDR and other American officials prioritized events in Europe over those in East Asia, and without a counterweight, Japan’s military and imperial ambitions expanded. In 1940, General Hideki Tojo became war minister. After concluding a formal military alliance with Germany and Italy that year, Tojo dispatched Japanese troops to occupy the northern part of the French colony of Indochina (present-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos). Tojo’s goal, supported by Emperor Hirohito, was to create a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” under Japan’s control stretching from the Korean Peninsula south to Indonesia. Like Germany and Italy, Japan sought to match the overseas empires of Britain, France, Holland, and the United States.

The United States responded to the stationing of Japanese troops in Indochina by restricting trade with Japan. Roosevelt hoped that these economic sanctions would deter Japanese aggression. But in July 1941, Japanese troops staged a full-scale invasion of Indochina. Roosevelt then froze Japanese assets in the United States and stopped all trade with Japan, including vital oil shipments that accounted for almost 80 percent of Japanese consumption.

In October 1941, General Tojo became prime minister and accelerated secret preparations for war against the United States. By November, American military intelligence knew that Japan was planning an attack but did not know where it would occur. Early on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers attacked **Pearl Harbor** in Hawaii, killing more than 2,400 Americans. They destroyed or heavily damaged eight battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers, and almost two hundred airplanes.

Although the assault was devastating, it united the American people. Calling December 7 “a date which will live in infamy,” President Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war against Japan. The Senate voted unanimously for war, and the House concurred by a vote of 388 to 1. The lone dissenter was Jeannette Rankin of Montana, a committed pacifist—she also voted against entry into World War I—and the first female member of Congress. Three days later, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, which in turn declared war on the Axis powers. The long shadows of two wars, one in Europe and one in Asia, had at long last converged over the United States.

## Organizing for Victory

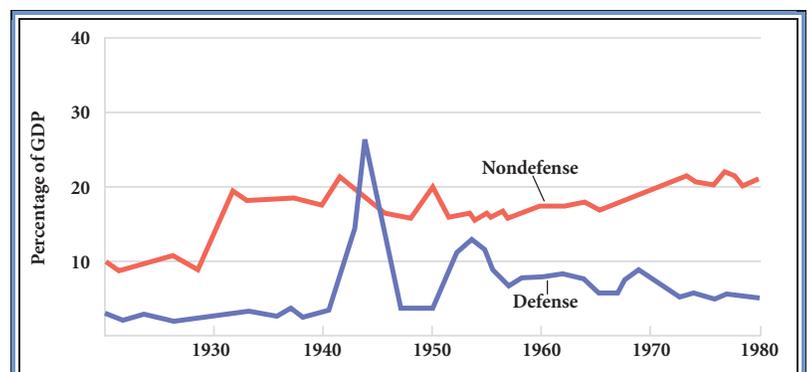
The task of fighting on a global scale dramatically increased the power of the federal government. Shifting from civilian to military production, raising an army, and assembling the necessary workforce required a massive expansion in government authority. When Congress passed the **War Powers Act** in December 1941, it gave President Roosevelt unprecedented control over all aspects of the war effort. This act marked the beginning of what some historians call the imperial presidency: the far-reaching use (and sometimes abuse) of executive authority during the latter part of the twentieth century.

## Financing the War

Defense mobilization, not the New Deal efforts of the 1930s, ended the Great Depression. Between 1940 and 1945, the annual gross national product doubled, and after-tax profits of American businesses nearly doubled (America Compared, p. 774). Federal spending on war production powered this advance. By late 1943, two-thirds of the economy was directly involved in the war effort (Figure 24.1). The government paid for these

**FIGURE 24.1**  
Government Military and Civilian Spending as a Percentage of GDP, 1920–1980

Government military spending was about 3 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the 1920s and 1930s, but it ballooned to more than 25 percent during World War II, to 13 percent during the Korean War, and to nearly 10 percent during the Vietnam War. Federal government spending for civilian purposes doubled during the New Deal and has remained at about 17 to 20 percent of GDP ever since.

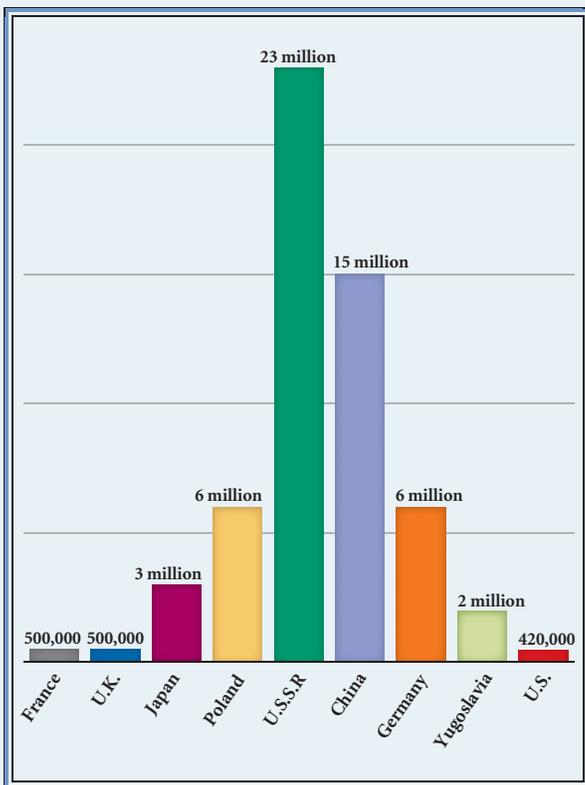




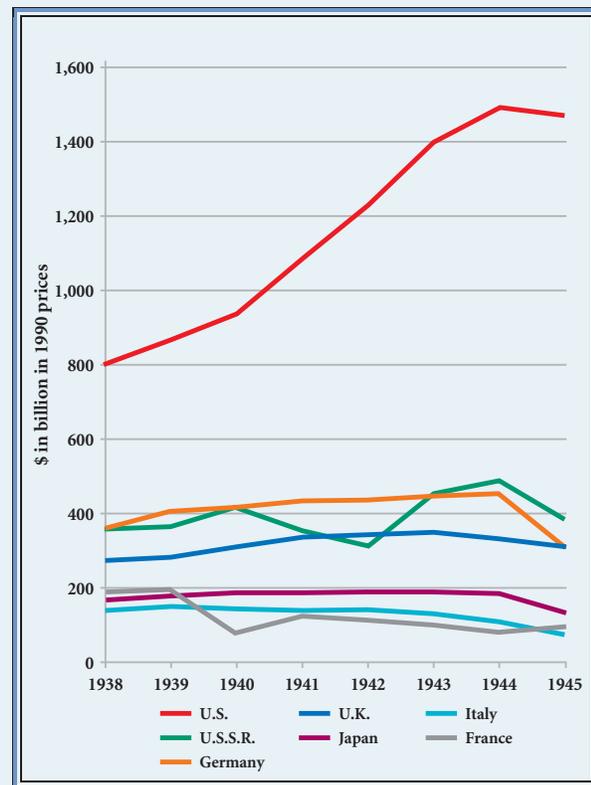
## The Scales of War: Losses and Gains During World War II

World War II saw an extraordinary loss of life. Worldwide, at least 50 million people perished between 1939 and 1945 from war-related causes. The majority of those who died were civilians, though many millions of soldiers perished in battle as well. For most countries, we have reasonable estimates rather than precise figures. The chart below compares the United States with other major combatants and nations caught in this global struggle.

On the other side of the scale, the war fueled tremendous economic growth, at least in the United States, which was spared the physical devastation of Europe and East Asia. Military production for World War II lifted the United States out of the Great Depression. Gross domestic product (GDP) nearly doubled between 1938 and 1945. Economic production in other combatant nations, as shown in the second figure, grew little if at all.



**FIGURE 24.2**  
World War II Military and Civilian Deaths, 1939–1945



**FIGURE 24.3**  
Gross Domestic Product Rates Worldwide, 1938–1945

Source: GDP data adapted From Mark Harrison, “The Economics of World War II: Six Great Powers” in *International Comparison* (1998), 11. Copyright © 1998 Cambridge University Press. Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why did the United States experience so many fewer deaths than other nations? Why were there so many deaths in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union?
2. Note the relative position of U.S. GDP to other industrial nations in 1938 and in 1945. How were some of the key domestic changes discussed in the chapter, such as rural-urban migration, racial conflict, and women’s employment, linked to this economic growth?
3. How might you use these comparisons to add to your understanding of key wartime developments, such as the Holocaust, Stalin’s demand for a second front, or the entry of the United States into the war?

military expenditures by raising taxes and borrowing money. The **Revenue Act** of 1942 expanded the number of people paying income taxes from 3.9 million to 42.6 million. Taxes on personal incomes and business profits paid half the cost of the war. The government borrowed the rest, both from wealthy Americans and from ordinary citizens, who invested in long-term treasury bonds known as war bonds.

Financing and coordinating the war effort required far-reaching cooperation between government and private business. The number of civilians employed by the government increased almost fourfold, to 3.8 million—a far higher rate of growth than that during the New Deal. The powerful War Production Board (WPB) awarded defense contracts, allocated scarce resources—such as rubber, copper, and oil—for military uses, and persuaded businesses to convert to military production. For example, it encouraged Ford and General Motors to build tanks rather than cars by granting generous tax advantages for re-equipping existing factories and building new ones. In other instances, the board approved “cost-plus” contracts, which guaranteed corporations a profit, and allowed them to keep new steel mills, factories, and shipyards after the war. Such government subsidies of defense

industries would intensify during the Cold War and continue to this day.

To secure maximum production, the WPB preferred to deal with major enterprises rather than with small businesses. The nation’s fifty-six largest corporations received three-fourths of the war contracts; the top ten received one-third. The best-known contractor was Henry J. Kaiser. Already highly successful from building roads in California and the Hoover and Grand Coulee dams, Kaiser went from government construction work to navy shipbuilding. At his shipyard in Richmond, California, he revolutionized ship construction by applying Henry Ford’s techniques of mass production. To meet wartime production schedules, Kaiser broke the work process down into small, specialized tasks that newly trained workers could do easily. Soon, each of his work crews was building a “Liberty Ship,” a large vessel to carry cargo and troops to the war zone, every two weeks. The press dubbed him the Miracle Man.

Central to Kaiser’s success were his close ties to federal agencies. The government financed the great

### TRACE CHANGE OVER TIME

How did the war affect the relationship between private corporations and the federal government?

### Shipyards in Wartime

The shipyard workers shown here are laying the keel of the *Joseph N. Teal*, a 10,500-ton “Liberty” freighter bound for the war in the Pacific in 1942. Amidst scaffolding, tools, and wires, these workers at Henry J. Kaiser’s shipyard in Portland, Oregon, constructed the entire ship in just ten days after the keel was laid, to shatter all previous shipbuilding records. Kaiser was the king of shipbuilding on the West Coast, with massive yards in Portland and the San Francisco Bay area. In all, Kaiser’s workers built nearly 1,500 ships in three years, one-quarter of the total constructed during the war. © Bettmann/Corbis.



dams that he built during the depression, and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation lent him \$300 million to build shipyards and manufacturing plants during the war. Working together in this way, American business and government turned out a prodigious supply of military hardware: 86,000 tanks; 296,000 airplanes; 15 million rifles and machine guns; 64,000 landing craft; and 6,500 cargo ships and naval vessels. The American way of war, wrote the Scottish historian D. W. Brogan in 1944, was “mechanized like the American farm and kitchen.” America’s productive industrial economy, as much as or more than its troops, proved the decisive factor in winning World War II.

The system of allotting contracts, along with the suspension of antitrust prosecutions during the war, created giant corporate enterprises. By 1945, the largest one hundred American companies produced 70 percent of the nation’s industrial output. These corporations would form the core of what became known as the nation’s “military-industrial complex” during the Cold War (Chapter 25).

## Mobilizing the American Fighting Force

The expanding federal bureaucracy also had a human face. To fight the war, the government mobilized tens of millions of soldiers, civilians, and workers—coordinated on a scale unprecedented in U.S. history. During World War II, the armed forces of the United States enlisted more than fifteen million men and women. In no other military conflict have so many American citizens served in the armed services. They came from every region and economic station: black sharecroppers from Alabama; white farmers from the Midwest; the sons and daughters of European, Mexican, and Caribbean immigrants; native men from Navajo and Choctaw reservations and other tribal communities; women from every state in the nation; even Hollywood celebrities. From urban, rural, and suburban areas, from working-class and middle-class backgrounds—they all served in the military.

In contrast to its otherwise democratic character, the American army segregated the nearly one million African Americans in uniform. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other civil rights groups reprimanded the government, saying, “A Jim Crow army cannot fight for a free world,” but the military continued to separate African Americans and assign them menial duties. The poet Langston Hughes observed the irony: “We are elevator boys, janitors, red caps, maids—a race

in uniform.” The military uniform, Hughes implied, was not assigned to African Americans so readily. Native Americans and Mexican Americans, on the other hand, were never officially segregated; they rubbed elbows with the sons of European immigrants and native-born soldiers from all regions of the country.

Among the most instrumental soldiers were the Native American “code talkers.” In the Pacific theater, native Navajo speakers communicated orders to fleet commanders. Japanese intelligence could not decipher the code because it was based on the Navajo language, which fewer than fifty non-Navajos in the world understood. At the battle of Iwo Jima, for instance—one of the war’s fiercest—Navajo code talkers, working around the clock, sent and received more than eight hundred messages without error. In the European theater, army commanders used Comanche, Choctaw, and Cherokee speakers to thwart the Nazis and exchange crucial military commands on the battlefield. No Axis nation ever broke these Native American codes.

Approximately 350,000 American women enlisted in the military. About 140,000 served in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), and 100,000 served in the navy’s Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). One-third of the nation’s registered nurses, almost 75,000 overall, volunteered for military duty. In addition, about 1,000 Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) ferried planes and supplies in noncombat areas. The armed forces limited the duties assigned to women, however. Female officers could not command men, and WACs and WAVES were barred from combat duty, although nurses of both sexes served close to the front lines, risking capture or death. Most of the jobs that women did in the military—clerical work, communications, and health care—resembled women’s jobs in civilian life.

Historians still debate how to characterize the World War II American military. As an army of “citizen-soldiers,” it represented a wide stratum of society. Military service gave a generation of men a noble purpose, following a decade of economic depression. And its ethic of patriotism further advanced the children of immigrants into mainstream American life. Yet the military embodied the tensions and contradictions of American society as well. The draft revealed appalling levels of health, fitness, and education among millions of Americans, spurring reformers to call for improved literacy and nutrition. Women’s integration into the military was marked by deep anxieties about their potentially negative effects on male soldiers as well as the threat to “womanhood” posed by service. The American army was like the nation itself.

United in wartime purpose, the military reflected the strengths and weaknesses of a diverse, fractious society.

## Workers and the War Effort

As millions of working-age citizens joined the military, the nation faced a critical labor shortage. Consequently, many women and African Americans joined the industrial workforce, taking jobs unavailable to them before the conflict. Unions, benefitting from the demand for labor, negotiated higher wages and improved conditions for America's workers. By 1943, with the economy operating at full capacity, the breadlines and double-digit unemployment of the 1930s were a memory.

**Rosie the Riveter** Government officials and corporate recruiters urged women to take jobs in defense industries, creating a new image of working women. “Longing won’t bring him back sooner . . . GET A WAR JOB!” one poster urged, while artist Norman Rockwell’s famous “Rosie the Riveter” illustration beckoned to women from the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The government directed its publicity at housewives, but many working women gladly abandoned low-paying “women’s jobs” as domestic servants or secretaries for higher-paying work in the defense industry. Suddenly, the nation’s factories were full of women working as airplane riveters, ship welders, and drill-press

operators (American Voices, p. 778). Women made up 36 percent of the labor force in 1945, compared with 24 percent at the beginning of the war. War work did not free women from traditional expectations and limitations, however. Women often faced sexual harassment on the job and usually received lower wages than men did. In shipyards, women with the most seniority and responsibility earned \$6.95 a day, whereas the top men made as much as \$22.

Wartime work was thus bittersweet for women, because it combined new opportunities with old constraints. The majority labored in low-wage service jobs. Child care was often unavailable, despite the largest government-sponsored child-care program in history. When the men returned from war, Rosie the Riveter was usually out of a job. Government propaganda now encouraged women back into the home—where, it was implied, their true calling lay in raising families and standing behind the returning soldiers. But many married women refused, or could not afford, to put on aprons and stay home. Women’s participation in the paid labor force rebounded by the late 1940s and continued to rise over the rest of the twentieth century, bringing major changes in family life (Chapter 26).

**Wartime Civil Rights** Among African Americans, a new militancy prevailed during the war. Pointing to parallels between anti-Semitism in Germany and racial

### Rosie the Riveter

Women workers install fixtures and assemblies to a tail fuselage section of a B-17 bomber at the Douglas Aircraft Company plant in Long Beach, California. To entice women to become war workers, the War Manpower Commission created the image of “Rosie the Riveter,” later immortalized in posters and by a Norman Rockwell illustration on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*. A popular 1942 song celebrating Rosie went: “Rosie’s got a boyfriend, Charlie / Charlie, he’s a marine / Rosie is protecting Charlie / Working overtime on the riveting machine.” Even as women joined the industrial workforce in huge numbers (half a million in the aircraft industry alone), they were understood as fulfilling a nurturing, protective role. Library of Congress.





## Women in the Wartime Workplace

During World War II, millions of men served in the armed forces and millions of women worked in war-related industries. A generation later, some of these women workers recounted their wartime experiences to historians in oral interviews.

### Evelyn Gotzion Becoming a Union Activist

Evelyn Gotzion went to work at Rayovac, a battery company in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1935; she retired in 1978. While at Rayovac, Gotzion and her working husband raised three children.

I had all kinds of jobs. [During the war] we had one line, a big line, where you'd work ten hours and you'd stand in one spot or sit in one spot. It got terrible, all day long. So I suggested to my foreman, the general foreman, that we take turns of learning everybody's job and switching every half hour. Well, they [the management] didn't like it, but we were on the side, every once in a while, learning each other's job and learning how to do it, so eventually most all of us got so we could do all the jobs, [of] which there were probably fifteen or twenty on the line. We could do every job so we could go up and down the line and rotate. And then they found out that that was really a pretty good thing to do because it made the people happier. . . .

One day I was the steward, and they wouldn't listen to me. They cut our rates, so I shut off the line, and the boss came up and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I have asked everybody that I know why we have gotten a cut in pay and why we're doing exactly the same amount of work as we did." . . . So, anyhow, we wrote up a big grievance and they all signed it and then I called the president of the union and then we had a meeting. . . . At that point the president decided that I should be added to the bargaining committee so that I would go in and argue our case, because I could do it better than any of the rest of them because I knew what it was. . . . We finally got it straightened out, and we got our back pay, too. From then on I was on the bargaining committee all the years that I worked at Rayovac.

Source: *Women Remember the War, 1941–1945*, edited by Michael E. Stevens and Ellen D. Goldlust (State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1993). Reprinted with permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

### Donna Jean Harvey Wartime Challenges and New Experiences

During the war Harvey raised her first child while working as a riveter and radio installer at a plant in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

I graduated from Cheyenne High School in 1940. I married Lewis Early Harvey in January 1941. He was drafted when the war broke out and was sent to the Aleutian Islands, and from there he transferred to the Paratroopers. In October I gave birth to my first son, Lewis Early Jr.

Labor force was critical at that time so I went to United Modification Plant and learned how to rivet, do installations of various kinds and etc. When the "new" radar system was implemented, I asked to be put on that crew. The F.B.I. investigated me and found me to be worthy and I proceeded to install radar along with my riveting duties, while waiting for the next shipment of planes to come in. . . . I was awarded the Army-Navy E Award and was presented with a pin. I've always been very proud of that!!! I certainly got educated in more ways than I ever expected, being a very young girl. But looking back I wouldn't trade my experiences for anything.

My feeling about the war in most instances was a conglomerate of mixed emotions. I had lived a fairly sheltered life, but I listened and learned and managed to survive, but I must admit, it left a scar on my memory that can never be erased.

I was living in one of my parent's apartments during the war and since they were both retired, they baby-sat my young son. My mother decided after a while that she too would like to do something in some little way to help. So she applied for maintenance and between my father and the girl next door, I managed to have a baby-sitter available at all times. The government was asking for rubber donations so my mother and I gave them our rubber girdles!! We liked to think that our girdles helped win the war!!!

My life took on a totally new perspective the longer I worked there. I saw many tragic accidents, none of which I care to talk about which haunt me to this day.

I couldn't do much socializing as I had a small infant at home to care for when off work and besides I was really pooped. Those midnight shifts were "killers." I hope I never have to do that again!! I tried to write weekly letters to my husband in between my other duties. . . .

Our community gathered together and collected scrap metals and such to help in the war effort and thanks to a good neighbor, who was growing a victory garden; we managed to get gifts of potatoes and lettuce etc. The government issued coupon books that allowed us two bananas a week, one pound of sugar and so many gallons of gas. We traded back and forth depending on our individual needs. I had a 1934 Ford and fortunately, it wasn't a gas eater and it managed to get me where I was going when I needed it. . . .

There were no unions there at that time and no baby sitting service provided. The single people formed a club and they entertained themselves after work but I was a married person with a child and so I didn't participate in any of their activities. . . .

After the war was over, most people went back to their previous jobs. I opened a beauty salon and when my husband returned home from the service he got a job with the Frontier Refinery.

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Source: National Park Service, *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working During World War II*, nps.gov/pwro/collection/website/donna.htm.

## Fanny Christina (Tina) Hill

### War Work: Social and Racial Mobility

After migrating to California from Texas and working as a domestic servant, Tina Hill, an African American, got a wartime job at North American Aircraft. After time off for a pregnancy in 1945, Hill worked there until 1980.

Most of the men was gone, and . . . most of the women was in my bracket, five or six years younger or older. I was twenty-four. There was a black girl that hired in with me. I went to work the next day, sixty cents an hour. . . . I could see where they made a difference in placing you in certain jobs. They had fifteen or twenty departments, but all the Negroes went to Department 17 because there was

nothing but shooting and bucking rivets. You stood on one side of the panel and your partner stood on this side and he would shoot the rivets with a gun and you'd buck them with the bar. That was about the size of it. I just didn't like it . . . went over to the union and they told me what to do. I went back inside and they sent me to another department where you did bench work and I liked that much better. . . .

Some weeks I brought home twenty-six dollars . . . then it gradually went up to thirty dollars [about \$420 in 2010]. . . . Whatever you make you're supposed to save some. I was also getting that fifty dollars a month from my husband and that was just saved right away. I was planning on buying a home and a car. . . . My husband came back [from the war, and] . . . looked for a job in the cleaning and pressing place, which was just plentiful. . . . That's why he didn't bother to go out to North American. But what we both weren't thinking about was that they [North American] have better benefits because they did have an insurance plan and a union to back you up. Later he did come to work there, in 1951 or 1952. . . .

When North American called me back [after I left to have a baby,] was I a happy soul! . . . It made me live better. It really did. We always say that Lincoln took the bale off of the Negroes. I think there is a statue up there in Washington, D.C., where he's lifting something off the Negro. Well, my sister always said — that's why you can't interview her because she's so radical — "Hitler was the one that got us out of the white folks' kitchen."

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Source: *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, by Sherna B. Gluck (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1987). Used by permission of Susan Berger Gluck.

#### ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. How did the war change the lives of these women?
2. Consider how the themes of identity and work, technology, and economic change, connect to the lives of these two women. How was their experience of the wartime industrial workplace tied to their class and gender identities? How did labor unions affect their conditions of employment?
3. These interviews occurred long after the events they describe. How might that long interval have affected the women's accounts of those years?



### Wartime Civil Rights

Fighting fascism abroad while battling racism at home was the approach taken by black communities across the country during World War II. Securing democracy in Europe and Asia while not enjoying it in the United States did not seem just. Jobs were plentiful as the wartime economy hummed along at a fevered pitch. But when employers and unions kept Jim Crow hiring policies in place, African Americans did not hesitate to protest. Here picketers rally for defense jobs outside the Glenn Martin Plant in Omaha, Nebraska, in the early 1940s. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library/Art Resource, NY.

discrimination in the United States, black leaders waged the Double V campaign: calling for victory over Nazism abroad and racism at home. “This is a war for freedom. Whose freedom?” the renowned black leader W. E. B. Du Bois asked. If it meant “the freedom of Negroes in the Southern United States,” Du Bois answered, “my gun is on my shoulder.”

Even before Pearl Harbor, black labor activism was on the rise. In 1940, only 240 of the nation’s 100,000 aircraft workers were black, and most of them were janitors. African American leaders demanded that the government require defense contractors to hire more black workers. When Washington took no action, A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest black labor union in the country, announced plans for a march on Washington in the summer of 1941.

Roosevelt was not a strong supporter of African American equality, but he wanted to avoid public protest and a disruption of the nation’s war preparations. So the president made a deal: he issued **Executive Order 8802**, and in June 1941 Randolph canceled the march. The order prohibited “discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race,

creed, color, or national origin” and established the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). Mary McLeod Bethune called the wartime FEPC “a refreshing shower in a thirsty land.” This federal commitment to black employment rights was unprecedented but limited: it did not affect segregation in the armed forces, and the FEPC could not enforce compliance with its orders.

Nevertheless, wartime developments laid the groundwork for the civil rights revolution of the 1960s. The NAACP grew ninefold, to 450,000 members, by 1945. In Chicago, James Farmer helped to found the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942, a group that would become known nationwide in the 1960s for its direct action protests such as sit-ins. The FEPC inspired black organizing against employment discrimination in hundreds of cities and workplaces. Behind this combination of government action and black militancy, the civil rights movement would advance on multiple fronts in the postwar years.

Mexican Americans, too, challenged long-standing practices of discrimination and exclusion. Throughout much of the Southwest, it was still common for signs to read “No Mexicans Allowed,” and Mexican American workers were confined to menial, low-paying jobs. Several organizations, including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Congress of Spanish Speaking Peoples, pressed the government

### UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

How does the slogan “A Jim Crow army cannot fight for a free world” connect the war abroad with the civil rights struggle at home?

and private employers to end anti-Mexican discrimination. Mexican American workers themselves, often in Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions such as the Cannery Workers and Shipyard Workers, also led efforts to enforce the FEPC's equal employment mandate.

Exploitation persisted, however. To meet wartime labor demands, the U.S. government brought tens of thousands of Mexican contract laborers into the United States under the Bracero Program. Paid little and treated poorly, the braceros (who took their name from the Spanish *brazo*, “arm”) highlighted the oppressive conditions of farm labor in the United States. After the war, the federal government continued to participate in labor exploitation, bringing hundreds of thousands of Mexicans into the country to perform low-wage agricultural work. Future Mexican American civil rights leaders Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez began to fight this labor system in the 1940s.

**Organized Labor** During the war, unions solidified their position as the most powerful national voice for American workers and extended gains made during the New Deal. By 1945, almost 15 million workers belonged to a union, up from 9 million in 1939. Representatives of the major unions made a no-strike pledge for the duration of the war, and Roosevelt rewarded them by creating the National War Labor Board (NWLB), composed of representatives of labor, management, and the public. The NWLB established wages, hours, and working conditions and had the authority to seize manufacturing plants that did not comply. The Board's “maintenance of membership” policy, which encouraged workers in major defense industries to join unions, also helped organized labor grow.

Despite these arrangements, unions endured government constraints and faced a sometimes hostile Congress. Frustrated with limits on wage increases and the no-strike pledge, in 1943 more than half a million United Mine Workers went out on strike, demanding a higher wage increase than that recommended by the NWLB. Congress responded by passing (over Roosevelt's veto) the Smith-Connally Labor Act of 1943, which allowed the president to prohibit strikes in defense industries and forbade political contributions by unions. Congressional hostility would continue to hamper the union movement in the postwar years. Although organized labor would emerge from World War II more powerful than at any time in U.S. history, its business and corporate opponents, too, would emerge from the war with new strength.

## Politics in Wartime

In his 1944 State of the Union address, FDR called for a second Bill of Rights, one that would guarantee all Americans access to education and jobs, adequate food and clothing, and decent housing and medical care. Like his Four Freedoms speech, this was a call to extend the New Deal by broadening the rights to individual security and welfare guaranteed by the government. The answer to his call, however, would have to wait for the war's conclusion. Congress created new government benefits only for military veterans, known as GIs (short for “government issue”). The **Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944)**, an extraordinarily influential program popularly known as the “GI Bill of Rights,” provided education, job training, medical care, pensions, and mortgage loans for men and women who had served in the armed forces (Chapter 26).

The president's call for social legislation sought to reinvigorate the New Deal political coalition. In the election of 1944, Roosevelt again headed the Democratic ticket. But party leaders, aware of FDR's health problems and fearing that Vice President Henry Wallace's outspoken support for labor and civil rights would alienate moderate voters, dropped him from the ticket. In his place, they chose Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri, a straight-talking, no-nonsense politician with little national experience. The Republicans nominated Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. Dewey, who accepted the general principles of welfare-state liberalism domestically and favored internationalism in foreign affairs, attracted some of Roosevelt's supporters. But a majority of voters preferred political continuity, and Roosevelt was reelected with 53.5 percent of the nationwide vote. The Democratic coalition retained its hold on government power, and the era of Republican political dominance (1896–1932) slipped further into the past.

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## Life on the Home Front

The United States escaped the physical devastation that ravaged Europe and East Asia, but the war profoundly changed the country. Americans welcomed wartime prosperity but shuddered when they saw a Western Union boy on his bicycle, fearing that he carried a War Department telegram reporting the death of someone's son, husband, or father. Citizens also grumbled about annoying wartime regulations and rationing but accepted that their lives would be different “for the duration.”



### A Family Effort

After migrating from the Midwest to Portland, Oregon, fifteen members of the family of John R. Brauckmiller (sixth from left) found jobs at Henry Kaiser's Swan Island shipyard. From 1943 to 1945, the shipyard turned out 152 T-2 Tankers, mostly for use by the U.S. Navy to carry fuel oil. A local newspaper pronounced the Brauckmillers as "the shipbuildingest family in America," and because of the importance of shipbuilding to the war effort, *Life* magazine featured the family in its issue of August 16, 1943. Ralph Vincent, *The Journal*, Portland, Oregon/Picture Research Consultants & Archives.

### "For the Duration"

Spurred by both government propaganda and a desire to serve the war cause, people on the home front took on wartime responsibilities. They worked on civilian defense committees, recycled old newspapers and scrap material, and served on local rationing and draft boards. About twenty million backyard "victory gardens" produced 40 percent of the nation's vegetables. Various federal agencies encouraged these efforts, especially the Office of War Information (OWI), which disseminated news and promoted patriotism. The OWI urged advertising agencies to link their clients' products to the war effort, arguing that patriotic ads

would not only sell goods but also "invigorate, instruct and inspire" citizens (Thinking Like a Historian, p. 784).

Popular culture, especially the movies, reinforced connections between the home front and the war effort. Hollywood producers, directors, and actors offered their talents to the War Department. Director Frank Capra created a documentary series titled *Why We Fight* to explain war aims to conscripted soldiers. Movie stars such as John Wayne and Spencer Tracy portrayed heroic American fighting men in numerous films, such as *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943) and *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1945). In this pretelevision era, newsreels accompanying the feature films kept the public up-to-date on the war, as did on-the-spot radio

broadcasts by Edward R. Murrow and Mary Marvin Breckenridge, the first female radio correspondent for CBS.

For many Americans, the major inconvenience during the war years was the shortage of consumer goods. Beginning in 1942, federal agencies subjected almost everything Americans ate, wore, or used to rationing or regulation. The first major scarcity was rubber. The Japanese conquest of Malaysia and Dutch Indonesia cut off 97 percent of America's imports of that essential raw material. To conserve rubber for the war effort, the government rationed tires, so many of the nation's 30 million car owners put their cars in storage. As more people walked, they wore out their shoes. In 1944, shoes were rationed to two pairs per person a year. By 1943, the government was rationing meat, butter, sugar, and other foods. Most citizens cooperated with the complicated rationing and coupon system, but at least one-quarter of the population bought items on the black market, especially meat, gasoline, cigarettes, and nylon stockings.

## Migration and the Wartime City

The war determined where people lived. When men entered the armed services, their families often followed them to training bases or points of debarkation. Civilians moved to take high-paying defense jobs. About 15 million Americans changed residences during the war years, half of them moving to another state. One of them was Peggy Terry, who grew up in Paducah, Kentucky; worked in a shell-loading plant in nearby Viola; and then moved to a defense plant in Michigan. There, she recalled, "I met all those wonderful Polacks [Polish Americans]. They were the first people I'd ever known that were any different from me. A whole new world just opened up."

As the center of defense production for the Pacific war, California experienced the largest share of wartime migration. The state welcomed nearly three million new residents and grew by 53 percent during the war. "The Second Gold Rush Hits the West," announced the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1943. One-tenth of all federal dollars flowed into California, and the state's factories turned out one-sixth of all war materials. People went where the defense jobs were: to Los Angeles, San Diego, and cities around San Francisco Bay. Some towns grew practically overnight; within two years of the opening of the Kaiser Corporation shipyard in Richmond, California, the town's population had quadrupled. Other industrial states — notably New York, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio — also attracted

both federal dollars and migrants on a large scale.

The growth of war industries accelerated patterns of rural-urban migration. Cities grew dramatically, as factories, shipyards, and other defense work drew millions of citizens from small towns and rural areas. This new mobility, coupled with people's distance from their hometowns, loosened the authority of traditional institutions and made wartime cities vibrant and exciting. Around-the-clock work shifts kept people on the streets night and day, and bars, jazz clubs, dance halls, and movie theaters proliferated, fed by the ready cash of war workers.

**Racial Conflict** Migration and more fluid social boundaries meant that people of different races and ethnicities mixed in the booming cities. Over one million African Americans left the rural South for California, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania — a continuation of the Great Migration earlier in the century (Chapter 21). As blacks and whites competed for jobs and housing, racial conflicts broke out in more than a hundred cities in 1943. Detroit saw the worst violence. In June 1943, a riot incited by southern-born whites and Polish Americans against African Americans left thirty-four people dead and hundreds injured.

Racial conflict struck the West as well. In Los Angeles, male Hispanic teenagers formed *pachuco* (youth) gangs. Many dressed in "zoot suits" — broad-brimmed felt hats, thigh-length jackets with wide lapels and padded shoulders, pegged trousers, and clunky shoes. Pachucas (young women) favored long coats, huarache sandals, and pompadour hairdos. Other working-class teenagers in Los Angeles and elsewhere took up the zoot-suit style to underline their rejection of middle-class values. To many adults, the zoot suit symbolized juvenile delinquency. Rumors circulating in Los Angeles in June 1943 that a pachuco gang had beaten an Anglo (white) sailor set off a four-day riot in which hundreds of Anglo servicemen roamed through Mexican American neighborhoods and attacked zoot-suiters, taking special pleasure in slashing their pegged pants. In a stinging display of bias, Los Angeles police officers arrested only Mexican American youth, and the City Council passed an ordinance outlawing the wearing of the zoot suit.

**Gay and Lesbian Communities** Wartime migration to urban centers created new opportunities for gay men and women to establish communities. Religious

## EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

What effects did wartime migration have on the United States?

# THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN



## Mobilizing the Home Front

The U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) promoted everything from food rationing to car-pooling during World War II, and the U.S. Treasury encouraged millions of Americans to buy war bonds. More than 20 million victory gardens were planted by ordinary Americans. By 1944 they were producing more than 40 percent of all vegetables grown in the United States. Through these and other measures, those on the home front were encouraged to see themselves as part of the war effort.

### 1. U.S. government advertisement from the *Minneapolis Star Journal*, 1943.

John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising and Marketing History, Duke University.

### 2. Copy from War Advertising Council/U.S. Treasury Department advertisement, 1943.

Farmer: “Well, there’s something we *really* want now — *more than anything else* . . . and I guess everybody does. It’s VICTORY IN THIS WAR! We had started saving for a new milking machine and a deep-well pump that we will be needing in a few years. . . . We’re still going to have that milking machine and that pump — and a lot of other new improvements after the war. When our son comes home from the fighting front, he’ll help us pick them out. And we’ll have the cash to pay for them. With the money we are saving now in War Bonds. And we are going to hang on to as many War Bonds as possible to take care

of us after our boy takes over on the farm. For after ten years, we get four dollars back for every three we have invested.”

### 3. Poster from the U.S. Office of Price Administration, 1943.

United States Office of Price Administration/Northwestern University Library.

#### 4. 4-H Club exhibiting victory garden posters, c. 1943.



"4-H club boys and girls" ID: 0016623, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.

#### 5. Oral histories about life during the war.

*Tessie Hickam Wilson, a young woman from Oklahoma.*

It was a hard time, but we felt like we were doing our part, and all the people we knew were doing their part. We had rationing. Sugar, coffee, gasoline and meat were some of the items that were hard to come by. We had ration books every so often, and we had to use them sparingly. We bought savings bonds to help in the war effort.

We also had radios and record players, and when we could afford it, we went to the movies. And even though there were hard times, we did what we could in the war effort, and I will always be glad I was part of it.

*Virginia J. Bondra, a student and clothing worker from Ohio.*

The only newsreel footage we saw was in the theaters when we went to a movie. And we used to bring scrap metal or cans, and we'd get in the movies free. They needed scrap metal and they — the USA needed scrap fat. My mother used to scrap fat, you know, in a can. She'd save it, and we'd bring it to a certain place. Sugar was rationed. Each member of the family would get one pound of sugar a week. And I always had time to bake because we had sugar. . . .

Different things were rationed. We couldn't buy nylons because it was needed . . . for parachutes. So we'd — we'd — my older sisters would paint their legs with a certain makeup that came out in place of nylons. . . . It was makeup for legs.

They painted an eyebrow pencil line down the back of their leg so it would look like real nylons. And we would

write V-mail. I had brother — brothers-in-law in the service. We — we'd write V-mail to them. It was called V-mail. Victory mail. . . . We couldn't put their address on because they were moved around a lot and we didn't want the enemy to know. There were a lot of secrets. They would say "zip your lip was the" — was the word of the days then. "Zip your lip" because we didn't want the enemy to get information.

Sources: (2) Digital Collections, Duke University Libraries; (4) National Park Service, *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working During World War II*, and the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

#### ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. Examine sources 1, 2, and 3. Who created these sources, and what does this suggest about the context and purpose of these documents? Can you tell from their content who the intended audience was?
2. Study the photograph (source 4). Who is depicted, and how were they posed? What does this suggest about the victory garden program as well as war efforts on the home front more broadly?
3. How do the oral histories in source 5 add to your understanding of home front involvement in the war effort? Does their testimony force you to question the other documents in any way, and if so, how?

#### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Analyze some of the ways the U.S. government encouraged ordinary citizens to participate in the war effort, and evaluate the objectives and results of these efforts.



### Zoot-Suit Youth in Los Angeles

During a four-day riot in June 1943, servicemen in Los Angeles attacked young Latino men wearing distinctive zoot suits, which were widely viewed as emblems of gang membership and a delinquent youth culture. The police response was to arrest scores of zoot-suiters. Here, a group of handcuffed young Latino men is about to board a Los Angeles County sheriff's bus to make a court appearance. Note the wide-legged pants that taper at the ankle, a hallmark of the zoot suit. The so-called zoot-suit riot was evidence of cracks in wartime unity on the home front. Library of Congress.

morality and social conventions against gays and lesbians kept the majority of them silent and their sexuality hidden. During the war, however, cities such as New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and even Kansas City, Buffalo, and Dallas developed vibrant

gay neighborhoods, sustained in part by a sudden influx of migrants and the relatively open wartime atmosphere. These communities became centers of the gay rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Chapter 29).



### New Urban Communities

Folk singer Pete Seeger performs at the opening of the Washington, D.C., labor canteen in 1944, sponsored by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Wartime migration brought people from across the country to centers of industry and military operations. Migration opened new possibilities for urban communities. African American neighborhoods grew dramatically; urban populations grew younger and more mobile; and gay and lesbian communities began to flourish and become more visible. The Granger Collection, New York.

The military tried to screen out homosexuals but had limited success. Once in the services, homosexuals found opportunities to participate in a gay culture often more extensive than that in civilian life. In the last twenty years, historians have documented thriving communities of gay and lesbian soldiers in the World War II military. Some “came out under fire,” as one historian put it, but most kept their sexuality hidden from authorities, because army officers, doctors, and psychiatrists treated homosexuality as a psychological disorder that was grounds for dishonorable discharge.

### Japanese Removal

Unlike World War I, which evoked widespread harassment of German Americans, World War II produced relatively little condemnation of European Americans. Federal officials held about 5,000 potentially dangerous German and Italian aliens during the war. Despite the presence of small but vocal groups of Nazi sympathizers and Mussolini supporters, German American and Italian American communities were largely left in peace during the war. The relocation and temporary imprisonment of Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens was a glaring exception to this otherwise tolerant policy. Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the West Coast remained calm. Then, as residents began to fear spies, sabotage, and further attacks, California’s long history of racial animosity toward Asian immigrants surfaced. Local politicians and newspapers whipped up hysteria against Japanese Americans, who numbered only about 112,000, had no political power, and lived primarily in small enclaves in the Pacific coast states.

Early in 1942, President Roosevelt responded to anti-Japanese fears by issuing **Executive Order 9066**, which authorized the War Department to force Japanese Americans from their West Coast homes and hold them in relocation camps for the rest of the war. Although there was no disloyal or seditious activity among the evacuees, few public leaders opposed the plan. “A Jap’s a Jap,” snapped General John DeWitt, the officer charged with defense of the West Coast. “It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not.”

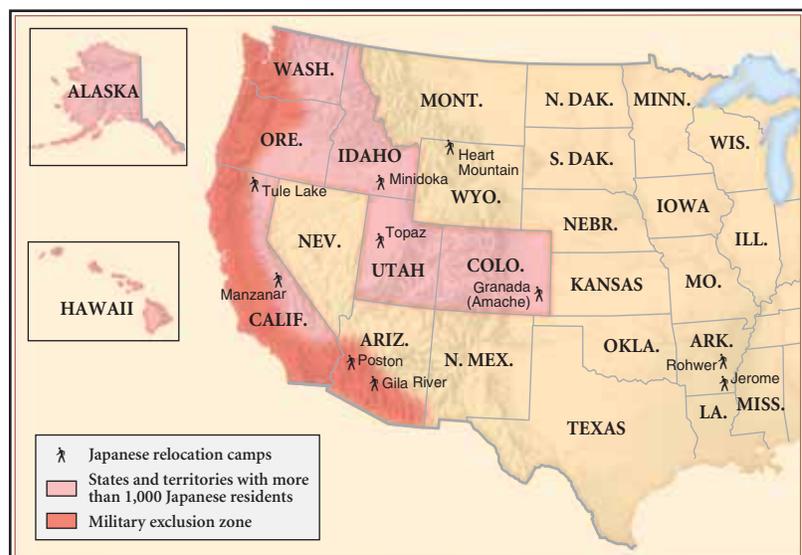
The relocation plan shocked Japanese Americans, more than two-thirds of whom were Nisei; that is, their parents were immigrants, but they were native-born American citizens. Army officials gave families only a few days to dispose of their property. Businesses that had taken a lifetime to build were liquidated overnight. The War Relocation Authority moved the prisoners to hastily built camps in desolate areas in California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Arkansas (Map 24.1). Ironically, the Japanese Americans who made up one-third of the population of Hawaii, and presumably posed a greater threat because of their numbers and proximity to Japan, were not imprisoned. They provided much of the unskilled labor in the island territory, and the Hawaiian economy could not have functioned without them.

Cracks soon appeared in the relocation policy. An agricultural labor shortage led the government to furlough seasonal farmworkers from the camps as early as 1942. About 4,300 students were allowed to attend colleges outside the West Coast military zone. Other

**IDENTIFY CAUSES**  
Why were Japanese Americans treated differently than German and Italian Americans during the war?

**MAP 24.1**  
Japanese Relocation Camps

In 1942, the government ordered 112,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast into internment camps in the nation’s interior because of their supposed threat to public safety. Some of the camps were as far away as Arkansas. The federal government rescinded the mass evacuation order in December 1944, but 44,000 people still remained in the camps when the war ended in August 1945.





### Behind Barbed Wire

As part of the forced relocation of 112,000 Japanese Americans, Los Angeles photographer Toyo Miyatake and his family were sent to Manzanar, a camp in the California desert east of the Sierra Nevada. Miyatake secretly began shooting photographs of the camp with a handmade camera. Eventually, Miyatake received permission from the authorities to document life in the camp—its births, weddings, deaths, and high school graduations. To communicate the injustice of internment, he also took staged photographs, such as this image of three young boys behind barbed wire with a watchtower in the distance. For Miyatake, the image gave new meaning to the phrase “prisoners of war.” Toyo Miyatake.

internees were permitted to join the armed services. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit composed almost entirely of Nisei volunteers, served with distinction in Europe.

Gordon Hirabayashi was among the Nisei who actively resisted incarceration. A student at the University of Washington, Hirabayashi was a religious pacifist who had registered with his draft board as a conscientious objector. He refused to report for evacuation and turned himself in to the FBI. “I wanted to uphold the principles of the Constitution,” Hirabayashi later stated, “and the curfew and evacuation orders which singled out a group on the basis of ethnicity violated them.” Tried and convicted in 1942, he appealed his case to the Supreme Court in *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943). In that case and in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), the Court allowed the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast on the basis of “military necessity” but avoided ruling on the constitutionality of the incarceration program. The Court’s decision underscored the fragility of civil liberties in wartime. Congress issued a public apology in 1988 and awarded \$20,000 to each of the eighty thousand surviving Japanese Americans who had once been internees.

## Fighting and Winning the War

World War II was a war for control of the world. Had the Axis powers triumphed, Germany would have dominated, either directly or indirectly, all of Europe

and much of Africa and the Middle East; Japan would have controlled most of East and Southeast Asia. To prevent this outcome, which would have crippled democracy in Europe and restricted American power to the Western Hemisphere, the Roosevelt administration took the United States to war. The combination of American intervention, the perseverance of Britain, and the profound civilian and military sacrifices of the Soviet Union decided the outcome of the conflict and shaped the character of the postwar world.

### Wartime Aims and Tensions

Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union were the key actors in the Allied coalition. China, France, and other nations played crucial but smaller roles. The leaders who became known as the Big Three—President Franklin Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and Premier Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union—set military strategy. However, Stalin was not a party to the Atlantic Charter, which Churchill and Roosevelt had signed in August 1941, and disagreed fundamentally with some of its precepts, such as a capitalist-run international trading system. The Allies also disagreed about military strategy and timing. The Big Three made defeating Germany (rather than Japan) the top military priority, but they differed over how best to do it. In 1941, a massive German force had invaded the Soviet Union and reached the outskirts of Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad before being halted in early 1942 by

hard-pressed Russian troops. To relieve pressure on the Soviet army, Stalin wanted the British and Americans to open a second front with a major invasion of Germany through France.

Roosevelt informally assured Stalin that the Allies would comply in 1942, but Churchill opposed an early invasion, and American war production was not yet sufficient to support it. For eighteen months, Stalin's pleas went unanswered, and the Soviet Union bore the brunt of the fighting; in the 1943 Battle of Kursk alone, the Soviet army suffered 860,000 casualties, several times what the Allies would suffer for the first two months of the European campaign after D-Day. Then, at a conference of the Big Three in Tehran, Iran, in November 1943, Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to open a second front in France within six months in return for Stalin's promise to join the fight against Japan. Both sides adhered to this agreement, but the long delay angered Stalin, who became increasingly suspicious of American and British intentions.

## The War in Europe

Throughout 1942, the Allies suffered one defeat after another. German armies pushed deep into Soviet territory, advancing through the wheat farms of the Ukraine and the rich oil region of the Caucasus. Simultaneously, German forces began an offensive in North Africa aimed at seizing the Suez Canal. In the Atlantic, U-boats devastated American convoys carrying oil and other vital supplies to Britain and the Soviet Union.

Over the winter of 1942–1943, however, the tide began to turn in favor of the Allies. In the epic Battle of Stalingrad, Soviet forces not only halted the German advance but also allowed the Russian army to push westward (Map 24.2). By early 1944, Stalin's troops had driven the German army out of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, as Churchill's temporary substitute

### UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

How did the Allies disagree over military strategy?



### Hitting the Beach at Normandy

These U.S. soldiers were among the 156,000 Allied troops who stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944: on that day alone, more than 10,000 were killed or wounded. Within a month, 1 million Allied troops had come ashore. Most Americans learned of the invasion at 3:30 A.M. Eastern Time, when Edward R. Murrow, the well-known radio journalist whose reports from war-torn London had gripped the nation in 1940, read General Eisenhower's statement to the troops. "The eyes of the world are upon you," Eisenhower told the men as they prepared to invade the European mainland. Library of Congress.



**MAP 24.2**  
World War II in Europe, 1941–1943

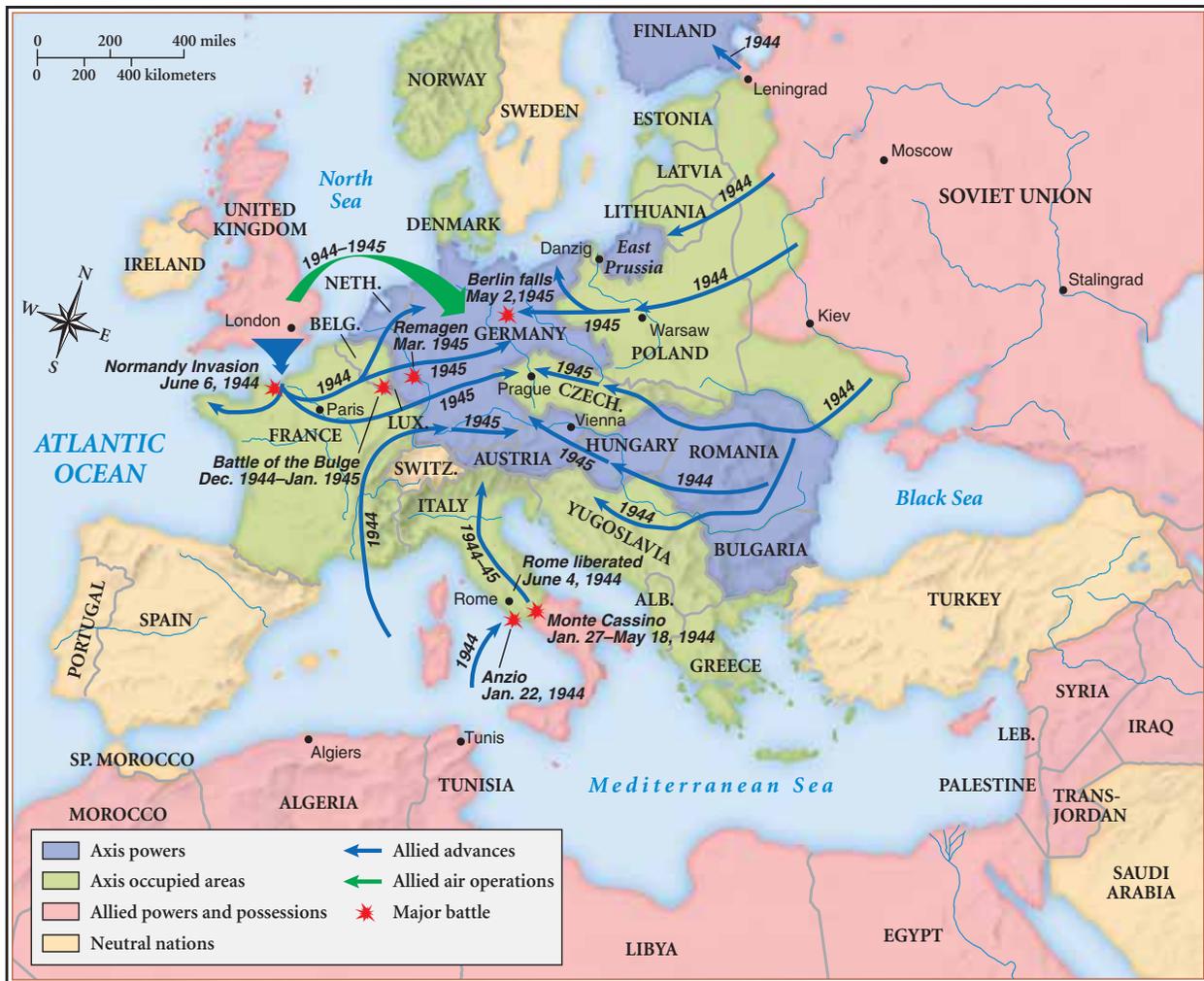
Hitler's Germany reached its greatest extent in 1942, by which time Nazi forces had occupied Norway, France, North Africa, central Europe, and much of western Russia. The tide of battle turned in late 1942 when the German advance stalled at Leningrad and Stalingrad. By early 1943, the Soviet army had launched a massive counterattack at Stalingrad, and Allied forces had driven the Germans from North Africa and launched an invasion of Sicily and the Italian mainland.

for a second front in France, the Allies launched a major counteroffensive in North Africa. Between November 1942 and May 1943, Allied troops under the leadership of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and General George S. Patton defeated the German Afrika Korps, led by General Erwin Rommel.

From Africa, the Allied command followed Churchill's strategy of attacking the Axis through its "soft underbelly": Sicily and the Italian peninsula. Faced with an Allied invasion, the Italian king ousted Mussolini's fascist regime in July 1943. But German troops, who far outmatched the Allies in skill and organization, took control of Italy and strenuously resisted

the Allied invasion. American and British divisions took Rome only in June 1944 and were still fighting German forces in northern Italy when the European war ended in May 1945 (Map 24.3). Churchill's southern strategy proved a time-consuming and costly mistake.

**D-Day** The long-promised invasion of France came on **D-Day**, June 6, 1944. That morning, the largest armada ever assembled moved across the English Channel under the command of General Eisenhower. When American, British, and Canadian soldiers hit the beaches of Normandy, they suffered terrible casualties but secured a beachhead. Over the next few days, more



**MAP 24.3**  
World War II in Europe, 1944–1945

By the end of 1943, the Russian army had nearly pushed the Germans out of the Soviet Union, and by June 1944, when the British and Americans finally invaded France, the Russians had liberated eastern Poland and most of southeastern Europe. By the end of 1944, British and American forces were ready to invade Germany from the west, and the Russians were poised to do the same from the east. Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945.

than 1.5 million soldiers and thousands of tons of military supplies and equipment flowed into France. Much to the Allies' advantage, they never faced more than one-third of Hitler's Wehrmacht (armed forces), because the Soviet Union continued to hold down the Germans on the eastern front. In August, Allied troops liberated Paris; by September, they had driven the Germans out of most of France and Belgium. Meanwhile, long-range Allied bombers attacked German cities such as Hamburg and Dresden as well as military and industrial targets. The air campaign killed some 305,000 civilians and soldiers and injured another 780,000—a grisly reminder of the war's human brutality.

The Germans were not yet ready to give up, however. In December 1944, they mounted a final offensive in Belgium, the so-called Battle of the Bulge, before being pushed back across the Rhine River into Germany. American and British troops drove toward Berlin from the west, while Soviet troops advanced east through Poland. On April 30, 1945, as Russian troops massed outside Berlin, Hitler committed suicide; on May 7, Germany formally surrendered.

**The Holocaust** When Allied troops advanced into Poland and Germany in the spring of 1945, they came face-to-face with Hitler's “final solution” for the Jewish population of Germany and the German-occupied

countries: the extermination camps in which 6 million Jews had been put to death, along with another 6 million Poles, Slavs, Gypsies, homosexuals, and other “undesirables.” Photographs of the Nazi death camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, and Auschwitz showed bodies stacked like cordwood and survivors so emaciated that they were barely alive. Published in *Life* and other mass-circulation magazines, the photographs of the **Holocaust** horrified the American public and the world.

The Nazi persecution of German Jews in the 1930s was widely known in the United States. But when Jews had begun to flee Europe, the United States refused to relax its strict immigration laws to take them in. In 1939, when the SS *St. Louis*, a German ocean liner carrying nearly a thousand Jewish refugees, sought permission from President Roosevelt to dock at an American port, FDR had refused. Its passengers’ futures uncertain, the *St. Louis* was forced to return to Europe, where many would later be deported to Auschwitz and other extermination camps. American officials, along with those of most other nations, continued this exclusionist policy during World War II as the Nazi regime extended its control over millions of Eastern European Jews.

Various factors inhibited American action, but the most important was widespread anti-Semitism: in the State Department, Christian churches, and the public at large. The legacy of the immigration restriction legislation of the 1920s and the isolationist attitudes of the 1930s also discouraged policymakers from assuming responsibility for the fate of the refugees. Taking a narrow view of the national interest, the State Department allowed only 21,000 Jewish refugees to enter the United States during the war. But the War Refugee Board, which President Roosevelt established in 1944 at the behest of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, helped move 200,000 European Jews to safe havens in other countries.

## The War in the Pacific

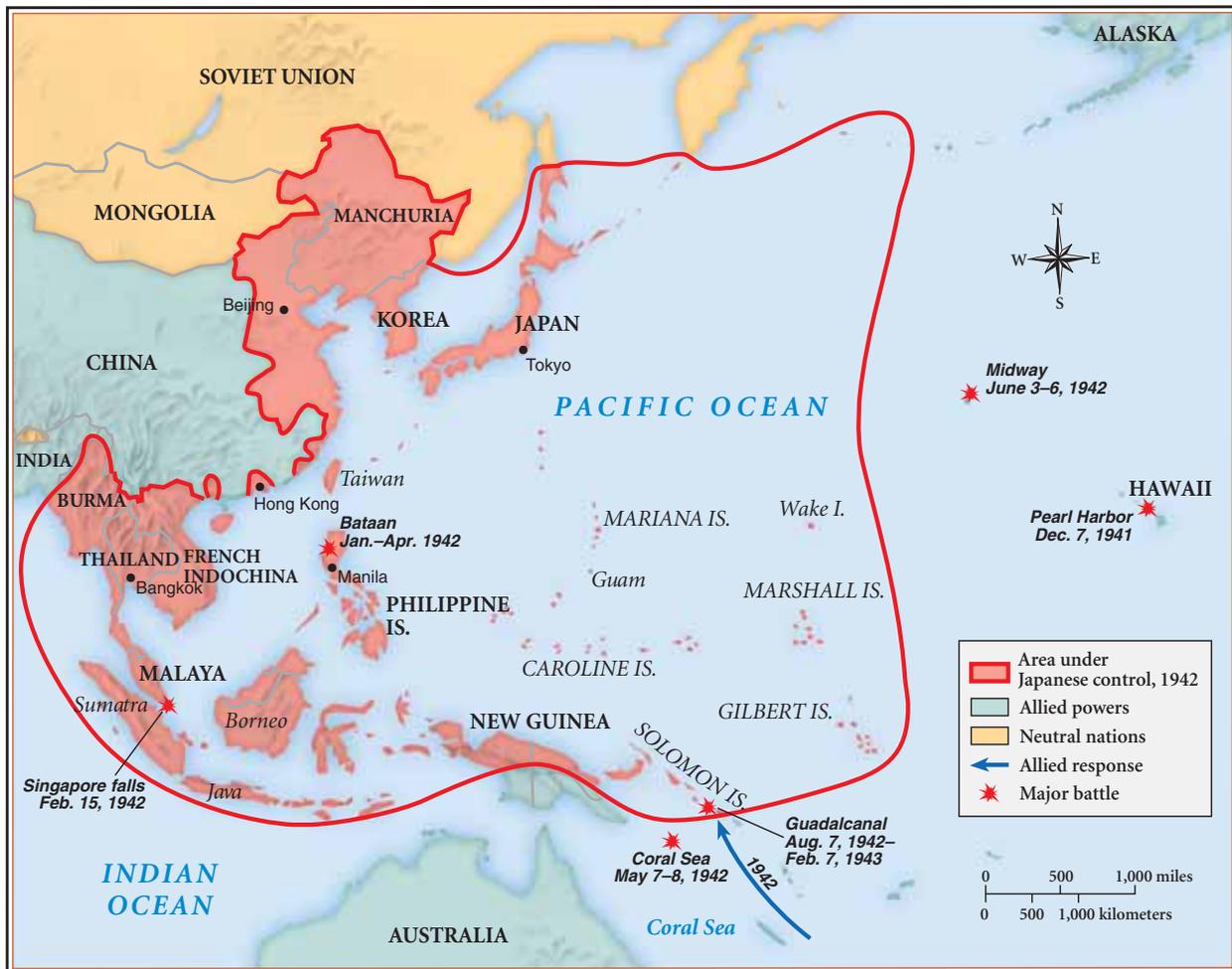
Winning the war against Japan was every bit as arduous as waging the campaign against Germany. After crippling the American battle fleet at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese quickly expanded into the South Pacific, with seaborne invasions of Hong Kong, Wake Island, and Guam. Japanese forces then advanced into Southeast Asia, conquering the Solomon Islands, Burma, and Malaya and threatening Australia and India. By May 1942, they had forced the surrender of U.S. forces in the Philippine Islands and, in the Bataan “death march,” caused the deaths of 10,000 American prisoners of war.

At that dire moment, American naval forces scored two crucial victories. These were possible because the attack on Pearl Harbor had destroyed several American battleships but left all aircraft carriers unscathed. In the Battle of the Coral Sea, off southern New Guinea in May 1942, they halted the Japanese offensive against Australia. Then, in June, at the Battle of Midway Island, the American navy severely damaged the Japanese fleet. In both battles, planes launched from American aircraft carriers provided the margin of victory. The U.S. military command, led by General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, now took the offensive in the Pacific (Map 24.4). For the next eighteen months, American forces advanced slowly toward Japan, taking one island after another in the face of determined Japanese resistance. In October 1944, MacArthur and Nimitz began the reconquest of the Philippines by winning the Battle of Leyte Gulf, a massive naval encounter in which the Japanese lost practically their entire fleet (Map 24.5).

By early 1945, victory over Japan was in sight. Japanese military forces had suffered devastating losses, and American bombing of the Japanese homeland had killed 330,000 civilians and crippled the nation’s economy. The bloodletting on both sides was horrendous. On the small islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers fought to the death, killing 13,000 U.S. Marines and wounding 46,000 more. Desperate to halt the American advance and short on ammunition, Japanese pilots flew suicidal kamikaze missions, crashing their bomb-laden planes into American ships.

Among the grim realities of war in the Pacific was the conflict’s racial overtones. The attack on Pearl Harbor reawakened the long tradition of anti-Asian sentiment in the United States. In the eyes of many Americans, the Japanese were “yellow monkeys,” an inferior race whose humanity deserved minimal respect. Racism was evident among the Japanese as well. Their brutal attacks on China (including the rape of Nanjing), their forcing of Korean “comfort women” to have sex with Japanese soldiers, and their treatment of American prisoners in the Philippines flowed from their own sense of racial superiority. Anti-Japanese attitudes in the United States would subside in the 1950s as the island nation became a trusted ally. But racism would again play a major role in the U.S. war in Vietnam in the 1960s.

As the American navy advanced on Japan in the late winter of 1945, President Roosevelt returned to the United States from the Yalta Conference, a major meeting of the Big Three at Yalta, a resort town on the Black



**MAP 24.4**  
World War II in the Pacific, 1941–1942

After the attacks on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Japanese rapidly extended their domination in the Pacific. The Japanese flag soon flew as far east as the Marshall and Gilbert islands and as far south as the Solomon Islands and parts of New Guinea. Japan also controlled the Philippines, much of Southeast Asia, and parts of China, including Hong Kong. By mid-1942, American naval victories at the Coral Sea and Midway stopped further Japanese expansion.

Sea (Chapter 25). The sixty-three-year-old president was a sick man, visibly exhausted by his 14,000-mile trip and suffering from heart failure and high blood pressure. On April 12, 1945, during a short visit to his vacation home in Warm Springs, Georgia, Roosevelt suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died.

## The Atomic Bomb and the End of the War

When Harry Truman assumed the presidency, he learned for the first time about the top-secret **Manhattan Project**, which was on the verge of testing a new weapon: the atomic bomb. Working at the University of Chicago in December 1942, Enrico Fermi and Leo

Szilard, refugees from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, produced the first controlled atomic chain reaction using highly processed uranium. With the aid of German-born refugee Albert Einstein, the greatest theorist of modern physics and a scholar at Princeton, they persuaded Franklin Roosevelt to develop an atomic weapon, warning that German scientists were also working on such nuclear reactions.

The Manhattan Project cost \$2 billion, employed 120,000 people, and involved the construction of thirty-seven installations in nineteen states—with all of its activity hidden from Congress, the American people, and even Vice President Truman. Directed by General Leslie Graves and scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the nation's top physicists assembled the



**MAP 24.5**  
World War II in the Pacific, 1943–1945

Allied forces retook the islands of the central Pacific in 1943 and 1944 and ousted the Japanese from the Philippines early in 1945. Carrier-launched planes had started bombing Japan itself in 1942, but the capture of these islands gave U.S. bombers more bases from which to strike Japanese targets. As the Soviet army invaded Japanese-occupied Manchuria in August 1945, U.S. planes took off from one of the newly captured Mariana Islands to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese offered to surrender on August 10.

first bomb in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and successfully tested it on July 16, 1945. Overwhelmed by its frightening power, as he witnessed the first mushroom cloud, Oppenheimer recalled the words from the Bhagavad Gita, one of the great texts of Hindu scripture: “I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds.”

Three weeks later, President Truman ordered the dropping of atomic bombs on two Japanese cities:

Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9. Truman’s rationale for this order—and the implications of his decision—have long been the subject of scholarly and popular debate. The

principal reason was straightforward: Truman and his American advisors, including Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall, believed that Japan’s military leaders would never surrender unless their country faced national ruin. Moreover, at the Potsdam Conference on the outskirts of Berlin in July 1945, the Allies had agreed that only the “unconditional surrender” of Japan was acceptable—the same terms under which Germany and Italy had been defeated. To win such a surrender, an invasion of Japan itself seemed necessary. Stimson and Marshall told Truman that such an invasion would produce between half a million and a million Allied casualties.

#### IDENTIFY CAUSES

What factors influenced Truman’s decision to use atomic weapons against Japan?



### The Big Three at Yalta

With victory in Europe at hand, Roosevelt journeyed in February 1945 to Yalta, on the Black Sea, and met for what would be the final time with Churchill and Stalin. The leaders discussed the important and controversial issues of the treatment of Germany, the status of Poland, the creation of the United Nations, and Russian entry into the war against Japan. The Yalta agreements mirrored a new balance of power and set the stage for the Cold War. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

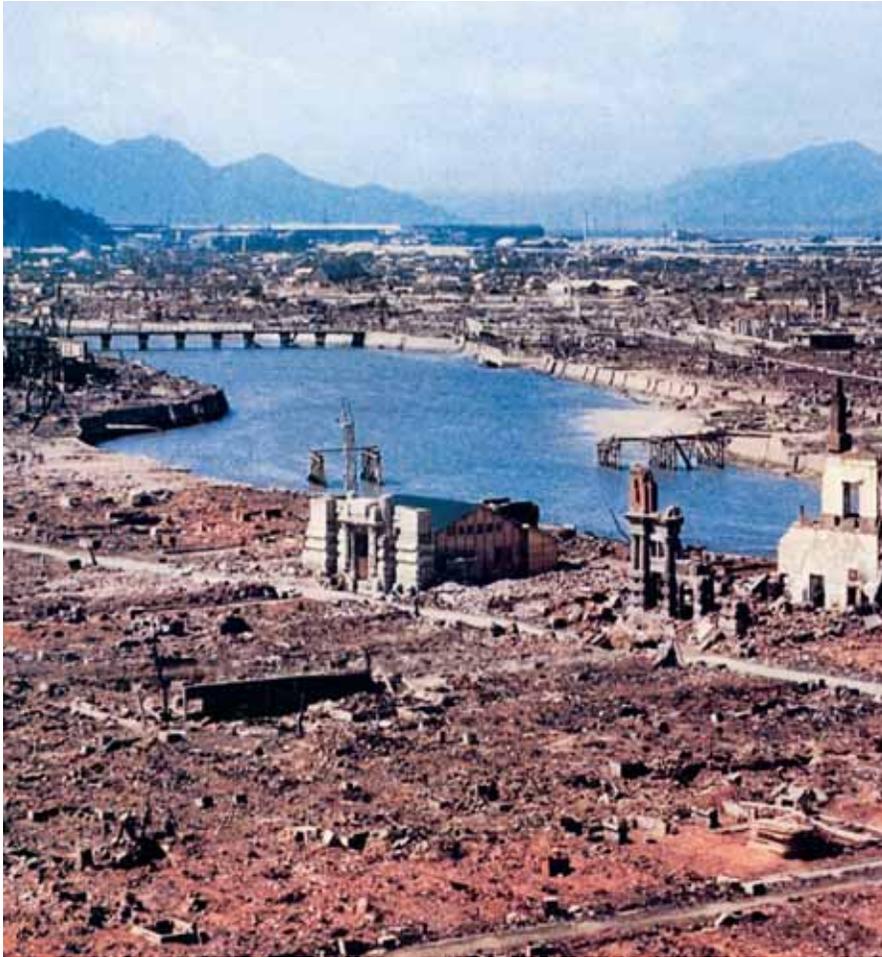
Before giving the order to drop the atomic bomb, Truman considered other options. His military advisors rejected the most obvious alternative: a nonlethal demonstration of the bomb's awesome power, perhaps on a remote Pacific island. If the demonstration failed — not out of the question, as the bomb had been tested only once — it would embolden Japan further. A detailed advance warning designed to scare Japan into surrender was also rejected. Given Japan's tenacious fighting in the Pacific, the Americans believed that only massive devastation or a successful invasion would lead Japan's military leadership to surrender. After all, the deaths of more than 100,000 Japanese civilians in the U.S. firebombing of Tokyo and other cities in the spring of 1945 had brought Japan no closer to surrender.

In any event, the atomic bombs achieved the immediate goal. The deaths of 100,000 people at Hiroshima

and 60,000 at Nagasaki prompted the Japanese government to surrender unconditionally on August 10 and to sign a formal agreement on September 2, 1945. Fascism had been defeated, thanks to a fragile alliance between the capitalist nations of the West and the communist government of the Soviet Union. The coming of peace would strain and then destroy the victorious coalition. Even as the global war came to an end, the early signs of the coming Cold War were apparent, as were the stirrings of independence in the European colonies.

### The Toll of the War

After the battle of Iwo Jima, one of the fiercest and bloodiest of the Pacific war, a rabbi chaplain in the Marine Corps delivered the eulogy for the fallen. "This shall not be in vain," he said, surveying a battlefield that



### Hiroshima, March 1946

Though the atomic bomb had been dropped on the port city of Hiroshima six months previous to this photo being taken, the devastation is still apparent. The U.S. Army report on the bombing described the immediate effects of the blast: “At 8:15 A.M., the bomb exploded with a blinding flash in the sky, and a great rush of air and a loud rumble of noise extended for many miles around the city; the first blast was soon followed by the sounds of falling buildings and of growing fires, and a great cloud of dust and smoke began to cast a pall of darkness over the city.” The only buildings not leveled were those with concrete reinforcement, meant to withstand earthquakes. The human toll of this weapon was unprecedented: of the estimated population of 350,000, 100,000 were likely killed by the explosion, and many tens of thousands more died slowly of the effects of radiation poisoning. U.S. Air Force.

witnessed the deaths of nearly 30,000 American and Japanese soldiers. Speaking of American losses, he said, “from the suffering and sorrow of those who mourn this, will come—we promise—the birth of a new freedom for the sons of man everywhere.” The toll of “suffering and sorrow” from World War II was enormous. Worldwide, more than 50 million soldiers and civilians were killed, nearly 2.5 percent of the globe’s population. The Holocaust took the lives of 6 million European Jews, 2.6 million from Poland alone. Nearly 100 million additional soldiers and civilians were wounded, and 30 million people across the globe were rendered homeless. It was one of the most wrenching, disruptive, and terrible wars in human history.

Alongside the human toll stood profound economic and political transformations. Hundreds of cities in Europe and Asia had been bombed. Some of them, like Dresden, Warsaw, Hamburg, and Hiroshima, had been simply obliterated. Much of the industrial infrastructure of Germany and Japan, two of the world’s most important industrial economies before the war, lay in ruins. Moreover, despite emerging as one of the

victors, Britain was no longer a global power. The independence movement in India was only the most obvious sign of its waning influence. Indeed, throughout the colonized world in Asia and Africa, people had taken the Atlantic Charter, and FDR’s insistence that this was a war for *democracy*, seriously. For them, resumption of European imperialism was unacceptable, and the war represented a step toward national self-determination.

In the United States, too, the toll of war was great. More than 400,000 lives were lost, and nearly 300,000 American soldiers were wounded. Yet millions returned home, and in the coming decades veterans would play a central role in national life. Incredibly, in 1950 World War II veterans made up one-third of all American men over the age of nineteen. Only the Civil War involved a comparable commitment of military service from a generation. Americans paid dearly for that commitment—though not, it must be noted, as dearly as other peoples in Europe and Asia—and the legacies of the war shaped families, politics, and foreign policy for the remainder of the century.

## SUMMARY

The rise of fascism in Germany, Italy, and Japan led to the outbreak of World War II. Initially, the American public opposed U.S. intervention. But by 1940, President Roosevelt was mobilizing support for the military and preparing the country for war. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 brought the nation fully into the conflict. War mobilization dramatically expanded the federal government and led to substantial economic growth. It also boosted geographical and social mobility as women, rural whites, and southern blacks found employment in new defense plants across the country. Government rules assisted both the labor movement and the African American campaign for civil rights. However, religious and racial animosity caused the exclusion of Jewish refugees and the internment of 112,000 Japanese Americans.

By 1942, Germany and Japan seemed to be winning the war. But in 1943, the Allies took the offensive — with

advances by the Soviet army in Europe and the American navy in the Pacific — and by the end of 1944, Allied victory was all but certain. Germany finally surrendered in May 1945, and Japan surrendered in August, after the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The United States emerged from the war with an undamaged homeland, sole possession of the atomic bomb, and a set of unresolved diplomatic disputes with the Soviet Union that would soon lead to the four-decade-long Cold War. Federal laws and practices established during the war — the universal income tax, a huge military establishment, and multibillion-dollar budgets, to name but a few — became part of American life. So, too, did the active participation of the United States in international politics and alliances, an engagement intensified by the unresolved issues of the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and the postwar fate of colonized nations.

## CHAPTER REVIEW

**MAKE IT STICK** Go to **LearningCurve** to retain what you've read.



**TERMS TO KNOW** Identify and explain the significance of each term below.

### Key Concepts and Events

**fascism** (p. 768)  
**National Socialist (Nazi) Party** (p. 768)  
**Rome-Berlin Axis** (p. 769)  
**Neutrality Act of 1935** (p. 769)  
**Popular Front** (p. 770)  
**Munich Conference** (p. 770)  
**Committee to Defend America By Aiding the Allies** (p. 771)  
**America First Committee** (p. 771)  
**Four Freedoms** (p. 771)  
**Lend-Lease Act** (p. 771)  
**Atlantic Charter** (p. 772)

**Pearl Harbor** (p. 773)  
**War Powers Act** (p. 773)  
**Revenue Act** (p. 775)  
**code talkers** (p. 776)  
**Executive Order 8802** (p. 780)  
**Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944)** (p. 781)  
**zoot suits** (p. 783)  
**Executive Order 9066** (p. 787)  
**D-Day** (p. 790)  
**Holocaust** (p. 792)  
**Manhattan Project** (p. 793)

### Key People

**Benito Mussolini** (p. 768)  
**Adolf Hitler** (p. 768)  
**Hideki Tojo** (p. 773)  
**Charles A. Lindbergh** (p. 769)  
**Winston Churchill** (p. 772)  
**Harry S. Truman** (p. 781)  
**Gordon Hirabayashi** (p. 788)  
**Dwight D. Eisenhower** (p. 790)

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter's main ideas.

- World War II has popularly been called the “good war.” Do you agree with this assessment? Why do you think it earned that nickname?
- Overall, what effects—positive or negative—did World War II have on social change in the United States, particularly among women and minority groups?
- How did World War II affect the federal government's regulating of the economy and its taxing power?
- THEMATIC UNDERSTANDING** Review the events listed under “America in the World” on the thematic timeline on page 671. How did World War II change the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world in the first half of the twentieth century?

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters by answering these questions.

- ACROSS TIME AND PLACE** For the United States, the period between World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1937–1945) was a prolonged series of conflicts and crises, both domestically and internationally. What connections can be drawn between World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II? Did this “long” conflict draw the United States and Europe closer together or drive them further apart? How did American attitudes toward involvement in European affairs change over this period?
- VISUAL EVIDENCE** Compare the photographs of soldiers and those contributing to the war effort. How do these images help us understand a major event like World War II from different perspectives? How would their proximity to battle affect people's experience of war?

## MORE TO EXPLORE

Start here to learn more about the events discussed in this chapter.

Ronald A. Goldberg, *America in the Forties* (2012). An engaging account of the home front during World War II.

David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (1999). A fascinating exploration of both the domestic and military experience of World War II.

Elizabeth Mullener, *War Stories: Remembering World War II* (2002). Fifty-three personal stories of war.

Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (2004). The war seen from the point of view of women.

For documents and images related to the war, see “A People at War” and “Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art

from World War II” ([archives.gov/exhibits/exhibits-list.html](http://archives.gov/exhibits/exhibits-list.html)); “Women Come to the Front: Journalists, Photographers, and Broadcasters During World War II” ([lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf0001.html](http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf0001.html)); “The Japanese American Legacy Project” ([densho.org/densho.asp](http://densho.org/densho.asp)); and “Ansel Adams's Photographs of Japanese-American Internment at Manzanar” ([memory.loc.gov/ammem/aamhtml](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aamhtml)).

“The Enola Gay Controversy: How Do We Remember a War That We Won?” at [lehigh.edu/~ineng/enola](http://lehigh.edu/~ineng/enola). Lehigh University professor Edward J. Gallagher's site on the decision to drop the atomic bomb.

**TIMELINE** Ask yourself why this chapter begins and ends with these dates and then identify the links among related events.

1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany</li> </ul>
1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italy invades Ethiopia</li> </ul>
1935–1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Neutrality Acts</li> </ul>
1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany reoccupies Rhineland demilitarized zone</li> <li>• Rome-Berlin Axis established</li> </ul>
1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japan invades China</li> </ul>
1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Munich conference</li> </ul>
1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• German-Soviet nonaggression pact</li> <li>• Germany invades Poland</li> <li>• Britain and France declare war on Germany</li> </ul>
1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany, Italy, and Japan form alliance</li> </ul>
1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany invades Soviet Union</li> <li>• Lend-Lease Act and Atlantic Charter established</li> <li>• Japanese attack Pearl Harbor (December 7)</li> </ul>
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Order 9066 leads to Japanese internment camps</li> <li>• Battles of Coral Sea and Midway halt Japanese advance</li> </ul>
1942–1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationing of scarce goods</li> </ul>
1943	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race riots in Detroit and Los Angeles</li> </ul>
1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D-Day: Allied landing in France (June 6)</li> </ul>
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yalta Conference (February)</li> <li>• Germany surrenders (May 7)</li> <li>• United Nations founded</li> <li>• Potsdam Conference (July–August)</li> <li>• United States drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 and 9)</li> <li>• Japan surrenders (August 10)</li> </ul>

**KEY TURNING POINTS:** On the timeline, identify the key turning points for the Allies in the European and Pacific campaigns.