**Learning Objective:**

Explain the consequences of U.S. involvement in World War II.

**Thematic Focus:**

*Diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military interactions between empires, nations, and peoples shape the development of America and America’s increasingly important role in the world.*

1. U.S. participation in World War II transformed American society, while the victory of the United States and its allies over the Axis powers vaulted the U.S. into a position of global, political, and military leadership.
2. The war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, and the dominant U.S. role in the Allied victory and postwar peace settlements, allowed the United States to emerge from the war as the most powerful nation on earth.
   1. World War II resulted in the deaths of some 50 million military personnel and civilians worldwide. 15 million Americans served in uniform and approximately 300,000 of them lost their lives in either Europe or the Pacific, and 800,000 were wounded.
   2. The war left the country with a huge national debt, but the United States had suffered little compared to others.
   3. On January 1, 1942, representatives from 26 nations met in Washington, D.C. and signed the Declaration of the United Nations, pledging themselves to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and promising not to make a separate peace with their common enemies.

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| **Wartime Conferences** | |
| **Casablanca**  **(January 1943)** | * Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared a policy of “unconditional surrender” for all enemies. |
| **Moscow**  **(October 1943)** | * U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull obtained Soviet agreement to enter the war against Japan after Germany was defeated and to participate in a world organization after the war was over. |
| **Cairo**  **(November 1943)** | * After Roosevelt met with Chinese General Chiang Kai-shek, the Declaration of Cairo called for Japan’s unconditional surrender. * It also stated that all Chinese territories occupied by Japan would be returned to China and that Korea would be free and independent. |
| **Tehran**  **(December 1943)** | * The Big Three consisted of American President Franklin Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Dictator Joseph Stalin. * Stalin reaffirmed the Soviet commitment to enter the war against Japan and discussed coordination of the Soviet offensive with the Allied invasion of France. * The Big Three demanded the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan. |
| **Yalta**  **(February 1945)** | * Stalin said that the Soviet Union would enter the Pacific war within three months after Germany surrendered and agreed to the Declaration of Liberated Europe, which called for free elections. * They called for a conference on world organization, to meet in the U.S. beginning in April of 1945. They agreed that the USSR would have three votes in the General Assembly and that the U.S., Great Britain, USSR, France, and China would be permanent members of the Security Council. * Germany was divided into occupation zones, and a coalition government of communists and non-communists was agreed to for Poland. Soviet satellite nations would set up communist governments to act as a buffer zone between the USSR and the West. The presence of Soviet troops in Poland limited President Roosevelt’s options at the Yalta Conference. |
| **Potsdam**  **(July 1945)** | * Truman, Stalin, and new British Prime Minister Clement Atlee met at Potsdam (Franklin Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945 and Harry S. Truman became president. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill resigned in the summer of 1945 after his party lost in an election). * During the conference, Truman ordered the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan. * The conference disagreed on most major issues but did establish a Council of Foreign Ministers to draft peace treaties for the Balkans. Approval was also given to the concept of war-crimes trials and the demilitarization and “de-nazification” of Germany. |