

7.14 Postwar Diplomacy

Theme: America in the World

Learning Objective 7.N: Explain the consequences of U.S. involvement in World War II.

Postwar World Order

KC-7.3.III.E: 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.

- Asia
 - Japan, weakened after months of bombings, capped by _____
 - China, recovering from Japanese attack - communist forces under _____ resume fight to control China
 - Pacific islands scarred by fighting
 - _____ independence July 4, 1946
 - _____ used as nuclear weapon testing site
- Europe
 - Many countries destroyed by fighting and bombings
 - Displaced _____ population after Holocaust
 - _____ implemented in 1948 to finance rebuilding and keep communism out
 - _____ under Allied occupation
 - _____ countries with puppet Soviet governments
- US Role
 - _____ in Feb 1945 (FDR)
 - Germany divided up, _____ in Eastern Europe, plans for _____
 - _____ in July 1945 (Truman)
 - Stalin interprets atomic weapon on Japan as a threat
 - US joins UN in Oct. 1945
 - 1946 _____ plan rejected

Recap

- The US emerges as most powerful country in the world
- Sets stage for Cold War vs. Soviet Union

Part II

Short Answer Questions

Answer the following in AT LEAST three sentences.

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

Secondary Source Document Analysis

Read the essay and fill in the chart below. Identify one claim for each subsection of the essay and provide a piece of evidence that corresponds to the claim.

Title:	
Author:	
Historical Period and Topic:	
Thesis:	
Claims	Evidence
Identify an alternative viewpoint to the author's thesis.	
Does the author address this viewpoint by refuting or conceding to it?	

Toward a Postwar World

Retrieved from: <http://www.americanyawp.com/text/24-world-war-ii/>

Source: Mary Beth Chupas et al., "World War II," Joseph Locke, ed., in *The American Yawp*, eds. Joseph Locke and Ben Wright (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

Americans celebrated the end of the war. At home and abroad, the United States looked to create a postwar order that would guarantee global peace and domestic prosperity. Although the alliance of convenience with Stalin's Soviet Union would collapse, Americans nevertheless looked for the means to ensure postwar stability and economic security for returning veterans.

The inability of the League of Nations to stop German, Italian, and Japanese aggressions caused many to question whether any global organization or agreements could ever ensure world peace. This included Franklin Roosevelt, who, as Woodrow Wilson's undersecretary of the navy, witnessed the rejection of this idea by both the American people and the Senate. In 1941, Roosevelt believed that postwar security could be maintained by an informal agreement between what he termed the Four Policemen—the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China—instead of a rejuvenated League of Nations. But others, including secretary of state Cordell Hull and British prime minister Winston Churchill, disagreed and convinced Roosevelt to push for a new global organization. As the war ran its course, Roosevelt came around to the idea. And so did the American public. Pollster George Gallup noted a "profound change" in American attitudes. The United States had rejected membership in the League of Nations after World War I, and in 1937 only a third of Americans polled supported such an idea. But as war broke out in Europe, half of Americans did. America's entry into the war bolstered support, and, by 1945, with the war closing, 81 percent of Americans favored the idea.³⁰

Whatever his support, Roosevelt had long shown enthusiasm for the ideas later enshrined in the United Nations (UN) charter. In January 1941, he announced his Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, of worship, from want, and from fear—that all of the world's citizens should enjoy. That same year he signed the Atlantic Charter with Churchill, which reinforced those ideas and added the right of self-determination and promised some sort of postwar economic and political cooperation. Roosevelt first used the term *united nations* to describe the Allied powers, not the subsequent postwar organization. But the name stuck. At Tehran in 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill convinced Stalin to send a Soviet delegation to a conference at Dumbarton Oaks, outside Washington, D.C., in August 1944, where they agreed on the basic structure of the new organization. It would have a Security Council—the original Four Policemen, plus France—which would consult on how best to keep the peace and when to deploy the military power of the assembled nations. According to one historian, the organization demonstrated an understanding that "only the Great Powers, working together, could provide real security." But the plan was a kind of hybrid between Roosevelt's policemen idea and a global organization of equal representation. There would also be a General Assembly, made up of all nations; an International Court of Justice; and a council for economic and social matters. Dumbarton Oaks was a mixed success—the Soviets especially expressed concern over how the Security Council would work—but the powers agreed to meet again in San Francisco between April and June 1945 for further negotiations. There, on June 26, 1945, fifty nations signed the UN charter.³¹

Anticipating victory in World War II, leaders not only looked to the postwar global order, they looked to the fate of returning American servicemen. American politicians and interest groups sought to avoid another economic depression—the economy had tanked after World War I—by gradually easing returning veterans back into the civilian economy. The brainchild of William Atherton, the head of the American Legion, the G.I. Bill won support from progressives and conservatives alike. Passed in 1944, the G.I. Bill was a multifaceted, multibillion-dollar entitlement program that rewarded honorably discharged veterans with numerous benefits.³²

Faced with the prospect of over fifteen million members of the armed services (including approximately 350,000 women) suddenly returning to civilian life, the G.I. Bill offered a bevy of inducements to slow their influx into the civilian workforce as well as reward their service with public benefits. The legislation offered a year's worth of unemployment benefits for veterans unable to secure work. About half of American veterans

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(eight million) received \$4 billion in unemployment benefits over the life of the bill. The G.I. Bill also made postsecondary education a reality for many. The Veterans Administration (VA) paid the lion's share of educational expenses, including tuition, fees, supplies, and even stipends for living expenses. The G.I. Bill sparked a boom in higher education. Enrollments at accredited colleges, universities, and technical and professional schools spiked, rising from 1.5 million in 1940 to 3.6 million in 1960. The VA disbursed over \$14 billion in educational aid in just over a decade. Furthermore, the bill encouraged home ownership. Roughly 40 percent of Americans owned homes in 1945, but that figure climbed to 60 percent a decade after the close of the war. Because the bill did away with down payment requirements, veterans could obtain home loans for as little as \$1 down. Close to four million veterans purchased homes through the G.I. Bill, sparking a construction bonanza that fueled postwar growth. In addition, the VA also helped nearly two hundred thousand veterans secure farms and offered thousands more guaranteed financing for small businesses.³³

Not all Americans, however, benefited equally from the G.I. Bill. Indirectly, since the military limited the number of female personnel, men qualified for the bill's benefits in far higher numbers. Colleges also limited the number of female applicants to guarantee space for male veterans. African Americans, too, faced discrimination. Segregation forced Black veterans into overcrowded "historically Black colleges" that had to turn away close to twenty thousand applicants. Meanwhile, residential segregation limited Black home ownership in various neighborhoods, denying Black homeowners the equity and investment that would come with home ownership. There were other limits and other disadvantaged groups. Veterans accused of homosexuality, for instance, were similarly unable to claim GI benefits.³⁴

The effects of the G.I. Bill were significant and long-lasting. It helped sustain the great postwar economic boom and, even if many could not attain it, it nevertheless established the hallmarks of American middle class life.

The United States entered the war in a crippling economic depression and exited at the beginning of an unparalleled economic boom. The war had been won, the United States was stronger than ever, and Americans looked forward to a prosperous future. And yet new problems loomed. Stalin's Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear weapons would disrupt postwar dreams of global harmony. Meanwhile, Americans who had fought a war for global democracy would find that very democracy eradicated around the world in reestablished colonial regimes and at home in segregation and injustice. The war had unleashed powerful forces that would reshape the United States at home and abroad.