

Emperor Hirohito had stamped the orders sending troops into north China in 1937. It was later said that he did so unwillingly, yet he went on two months later to stamp orders for the dispatch of troops to central and south China as well ... He became so immersed in war planning that the prime minister at the time complained of his preoccupation. Finally his own uncle assumed command of the attack on Nanjing, the Chinese capital, and moved into a hotel in Nanjing, to look on while his troops murdered over 100,000 defenseless military and civilian prisoners there. It was the first act of genocide in World War II, but when the uncle returned to Tokyo, Hirohito went out of his way to confer decorations and honors upon him.

David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, 1971

Bergamini also identified evidence of Hirohito's responsibility in the diary of Japan's wartime Army Chief of Staff, General Hajime Sugiyama, who committed suicide when the war ended:

...Hirohito [was] asking detailed questions about military and economic planning in the months before Pearl Harbor... Most surprising, the Sugiyama Memoranda stated that in January 1941, eleven months before the outbreak of war with the United States, Hirohito had personally ordered a secret evaluation to be made of the feasibility of a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor... The Sugiyama Memoranda revealed that Hirohito had participated in the Pearl Harbor planning a full six months before any of his official military advisors were informed of it. Evidence taken before the Allied judges of the International Military Tribunal for the far east, and verified by witnesses under oath and cross-examination, demonstrated conclusively that none of the 'militarists' who were supposed to have dragged Hirohito to war knew of the Pearl Harbor plan until August 1941. General Tojo, the arch 'militarist' who headed Japan's wartime Cabinet, was not told of the plan until November 1941.

David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, 1971

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Class discussion

- How far can Hirohito be held responsible for the causes of war between Japan and the USA in 1941?
- Compare and contrast his involvement with the role played by Hitler in causing war in Europe in 1939.

#### Review activity

##### War in the Pacific: Action and Reaction

Review the sections on US and Japanese responsibility for the war in the Pacific. In pairs, create a diagram of the key 'actions and reactions' of the two countries. Discuss the extent to which war in the Pacific was caused by the USA reacting to the perceived aggressive action of Japan, and vice versa.

#### Essay questions

- Why did Japan bomb Pearl Harbor in December 1941?  
Two possible approaches to this question would be: a) Long-term causes versus short-term and immediate causes; b) Japanese action and aggression versus American action and provocation.
- Compare and contrast the causes of two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region. You could answer this question effectively by selecting the causes of World War I in Europe and the causes of World War II in the Pacific. Your essay would then identify the key similarities in the causes of each war and then consider the key differences in the causes of war in Europe in 1914 and in the Pacific in 1941.

## 8

# WORLD WAR II AND TOTAL WAR

Consider the following essay questions while reading this chapter:

- In what ways can World War II be considered a total war?
- Why did the Axis powers lose World War II?

World War II was even more deadly than World War I. More soldiers and civilians were killed than in any war before it. The impact on civilians in particular in terms of death, destruction and displacement also made it more of a total war than that of 1914–18. It was also very different to previous wars in that it was a conflict of rapid movement, with major campaigns taking place not only in Central and Western Europe, but also in the Far East, North Africa and the USSR. This chapter is structured in the same way as Chapter 3. First we will give a brief overview of both the war in Europe and the war in the Pacific. The war will then be analyzed in terms of the nature of the fighting and the reasons why it can be considered a total war.

## The war in Europe

### Blitzkrieg – the invasion of Poland (September 1939)

In the early hours of 1 September 1939, Hitler's Panzers (tanks), supported by the *Luftwaffe* (air force), smashed over the border into Poland. They rapidly cut through Poland's defences, thus making a path for the advancing infantry. This rapid and devastating method of fighting was known as *Blitzkrieg* or 'lightning war'. Polish resistance was heroic, but ultimately futile. The USSR invaded from the east, as agreed by the Nazi–Soviet Pact, and on 29 September Poland was divided up between the two countries.

### The Phoney War

After the defeat of Poland, very little happened in the next five months. Although Britain had declared war on Germany two days after the Polish invasion, it could not get troops to Poland in time to have any effect, and thus only watched as a great part of Eastern Europe fell into the hands of Hitler and Stalin. The Soviet Union took over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and then invaded Finland in what became known as the 'Winter War'.

Meanwhile, the French manned the Maginot Line and waited for the next German move. Chamberlain believed that this period of inactivity would bring Hitler to his knees and that Hitler had in fact 'missed the bus'.

### The invasion of Denmark and Norway (April 1940)

Four days after Chamberlain's misguided comment, Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway. Control of Norway was important for the Germans, due to the need for German access to Swedish iron ore, which was vital to the German armaments industry. The invasions brought about the downfall of Chamberlain in Britain, and on 10 May a coalition government was established under Winston Churchill.

#### The Winter War

In the Winter War, the Soviet forces were vastly superior in numbers to those of the Finnish Army – 450,000 troops against only 180,000. However, the Red Army had recently been subjected to a political purge that had removed 50 per cent of its commanding officers. This weakening, along with the determination and high morale of the Finns, meant that the Finns were able to hold out until March 1940. Although victory did eventually come to the USSR, the fact that the Soviet losses were so large meant that it was also a humiliation for Stalin.

War in Europe	War in the Pacific
<b>1939</b> <b>1 Sep</b> Germany invades Poland <b>3 Sep</b> Britain declares war on Germany	
<b>1940</b> <b>9 Apr</b> Nazis invade Denmark and Norway <b>10 May</b> Nazis invade France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands <b>26 May</b> Evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk begins <b>10 Jun</b> Norway surrenders to the Nazis; Italy declares war on Britain and France. <b>1 Jul</b> German U-boats attack merchant ships in the Atlantic <b>10 Jul</b> Battle of Britain begins <b>23 Jul</b> Soviets take Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia <b>7 Sep</b> Blitz begins against Britain <b>27 Sep</b> Tripartite (Axis) Pact signed by Germany, Italy and Japan <b>28 Oct</b> Italy invades Greece	
<b>1941</b> <b>6 Apr</b> Nazis invade Greece and Yugoslavia <b>2 Jun</b> Operation <i>Barbarossa</i> begins	<b>1941</b> <b>26 Jul</b> Roosevelt freezes Japanese assets in USA and suspends relations with Japan <b>1 Aug</b> USA announces an oil embargo against aggressor states <b>7 Dec</b> Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor <b>8 Dec</b> USA and Britain declare war on Japan <b>11 Dec</b> Germany declares war on the USA
<b>1942</b> <b>13 Sep</b> Battle of Stalingrad begins <b>23 Oct–5 Nov</b> Battle of El Alamein	<b>1942</b> <b>4–7 Jun</b> Battle of Midway <b>August</b> US Marines land in Guadalcanal
<b>1943</b> <b>2 Feb</b> Germans surrender at Stalingrad <b>16–20 Mar</b> Battle of Atlantic climaxes with 27 merchant ships sunk by German U-boats <b>13 May</b> German and Italian troops surrender in North Africa <b>9/10 Jul</b> Allies land in Sicily <b>27/28 Jul</b> Allied air raid causes a firestorm in Hamburg <b>3 Sep</b> Allied invasion of mainland Italy	<b>1943</b> <b>Jan</b> Allied gains in the Pacific continue (island hopping) <b>Oct</b> Allies invade Philippines
<b>1944</b> <b>6 Jun</b> D-Day landings <b>25 Aug</b> Liberation of Paris <b>2 Oct</b> Warsaw Uprising ends as the Polish Home Army surrenders to the Germans. <b>16–27 Dec</b> Battle of the Bulge	<b>1944</b> <b>Jan–Feb</b> US forces capture the Marshall Islands. British forces make advances in Burma <b>17 Apr</b> Japanese begin last offensive in China <b>15 Jun</b> US forces invade Saipan <b>Jul–Aug</b> US forces recapture the Mariana Islands <b>23–26 Oct</b> Japanese Navy suffers critical losses in the battle of Leyte Gulf
<b>1945</b> <b>17 Jan</b> Soviet troops capture Warsaw <b>13/14 Feb</b> Dresden is destroyed by a firestorm after Allied bombing raids <b>16 Apr</b> Soviet troops begin their final attack on Berlin; Americans enter Nuremberg <b>30 April</b> Adolf Hitler commits suicide <b>2 May</b> German troops in Italy surrender <b>7 May</b> Unconditional surrender of all German troops <b>8 May</b> VE (Victory in Europe) Day	<b>1945</b> <b>19 Feb</b> US forces invade the island of Iwo Jima <b>3 Mar</b> US and Filipino forces take Manila <b>1 Apr</b> US forces invade Okinawa <b>6 Aug</b> First atomic bomb dropped, on Hiroshima, Japan <b>8 Aug</b> Soviets declare war on Japan and invade Manchuria <b>9 Aug</b> Second atom bomb dropped, on Nagasaki <b>14 Aug</b> Japan surrenders

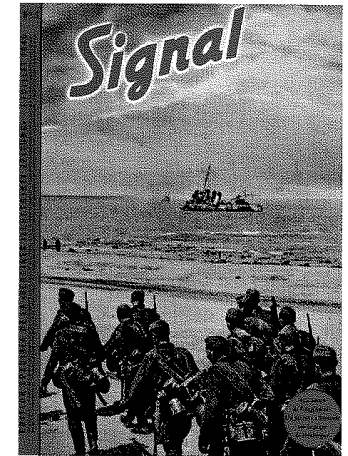
## The invasion of Holland, Belgium and France (May–June 1940)

Also on 10 May, Hitler launched attacks on Holland and Belgium, and then, skirting around the tip of the Maginot Line, invaded France on 12 May. The reason that the Maginot Line defences did not continue along the frontier between France and Belgium was because Marshal Pétain believed that the Ardennes forest further north would be a strong enough barrier to stop Germany attacking from that direction. However, this is exactly where the Germans broke through.

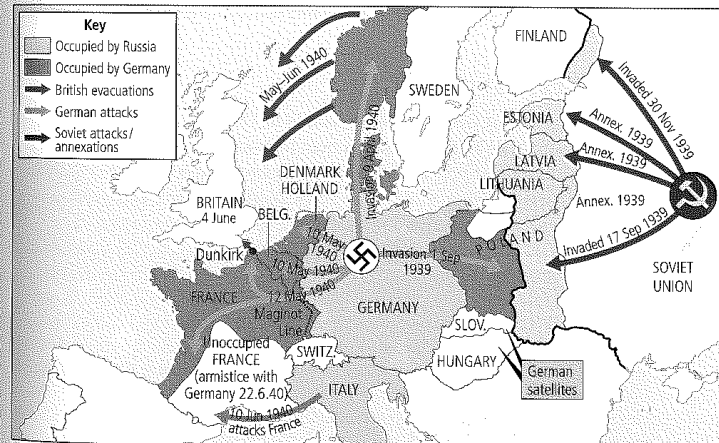
Using *Blitzkrieg* tactics, Hitler's victories were swift, and within six days the Panzers had reached the English Channel. Only Dunkirk remained in British hands, and a third of a million troops were then rescued by the British navy and other private boats owned by fishermen. Although a great opportunity to boost British morale with talk of the 'Dunkirk spirit' (see newspaper opposite), the evacuation was in fact a serious blow for the Allies; they lost a large amount of arms and equipment and had been driven from the European mainland.

The Germans now swept southwards. Paris was captured on 14 June and the French government, now led by Pétain, requested Germany's terms for an armistice. The ceasefire agreement was signed at Compiègne on 21 June in the same railway coach that had been used for the 1918 Armistice. All of the country except south-eastern France was occupied and demilitarized, thus giving the Germans access to important submarine bases on the Atlantic coast. Unoccupied France was allowed its own government under Marshal Pétain, but in reality it had no real independence and actively collaborated with the Germans.

The German propaganda magazine *Signal* shows German troops on the beaches of Dunkirk, having ejected British forces from France.



Blitzkrieg offensive, 1939–40.



Hitler's Germany had achieved more in two months than the Kaiser's Germany had achieved in the whole of World War I. By the end of June 1940, Germany dominated Western, Central and Northern Europe. In addition, Italy had now entered the war as Hitler's ally and the USSR remained 'friends' with Germany in the east, under the terms of the Nazi–Soviet Pact. Franco in Spain did not actually join in the war, but remained closely associated with Germany and Italy.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

## Document analysis

## Document A

*We must conclude that it [the German attack into France] was a plan well executed and incompetently opposed. But there is no doubt that the French government was weak and showed little resolve. Moral authority and executive capacity both disappeared and military defeat turned into political collapse. Essentially Hitler's military successes were based on his preparedness to take the adventurous and unexpected course. He was fortunate that military thinking lagged behind military technology. Moreover whereas the Allies were cautious and conservative, Hitler was an impatient man who was psychologically predisposed to adopt daring and mobile strategies.*

From Graham Darby, *Europe at War 1939–45*, 2003

## Document B

*... with good battlefield aviation supporting ground forces, and an effective system of radio communication, the German military made the most of their resources against an enemy whose cast of mind was defensive and whose communication and organization at the front proved woefully deficient. The British and French concept of a war of attrition and blockade, fought partly by bombing aircraft, never materialised. The two western states lost sight in the 1930s of the most basic element of warfare – the ability to fight effectively on the field of battle itself. Both sides possessed comparable resources (the Germans had in fact fewer and poorer-quality tanks) but German military leaders emphasised high standards of training and operational preparation and technical efficiency, the very virtues that brought victory in 1866 over Austria and in 1870 over France.*

Richard Overy in Charles Townshend (ed.), *The Oxford History of Modern War*, 2005

## Questions

- 1 According to Darby, what factors accounted for Hitler's success in taking over France?
- 2 In what ways does Overy agree with Darby? What are the differences between the two sources in their analysis of the German successes?

## The Battle of Britain (1940)

Britain now stood alone against Germany. On 18 June 1940, Churchill correctly forecast the next stage of the war – 'The battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin.' Hitler had in fact hoped for a peace agreement with Britain rather than an invasion. Yet Churchill was totally opposed to any negotiation with Hitler, and went on to inspire the British with his determination and memorable speeches:

*The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free, and the life of the world may move forward into broad sunlit uplands; but if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister and perhaps more protracted by the lights of a perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say 'This was their finest hour'.*

From a speech delivered by Winston Churchill to the House of Commons, 18 June 1940

Hitler remained astonished that Britain should continue to resist. Although an amphibious invasion codenamed Operation *Sealion* was planned, it was given a low priority, as it was believed that the *Luftwaffe* would be able to destroy the Royal Air Force. With no air force to oppose it, the *Luftwaffe* would be able to dominate the Royal Navy in the English

Channel, leaving Britain totally exposed to German invasion and so willing to come to the negotiating table.

Thus the Battle of Britain began in July 1940, the *Luftwaffe* opening their offensive with a concentrated air attack on Britain's airfields in order to gain air supremacy. The *Luftwaffe* then started bombing London and other major cities in what became known as the 'Blitz', in an attempt to break British morale and destroy her major industries. When it became clear that Germany was unable to break the RAF or Britain's morale, Hitler postponed the invasion indefinitely; then in 1941 he turned his attention to his main priority, the conquest of the Soviet Union.

There are several reasons why Britain was able to survive:

- The numerical superiority of the *Luftwaffe* (about 1,200 bombers and 1,000 fighters to the RAF's 900 fighters) was offset by the fact that the German bombers were vulnerable once their shorter-range fighter escorts had turned for home, and they had limited range and a limited bomb load. The German Messerschmitt Bf-109 was an excellent fighter, but also had only enough fuel to stay in the air for about 10–20 minutes over Britain. Against this, the British Spitfires and Hurricanes were excellent fighters and could spend much longer in the air, being over their home airfields.
- Britain had a revolutionary new warning system – radar. This minimized the impact of the RAF's numerical inferiority as it allowed the RAF to locate the incoming enemy (the radar showed up enemy aircraft when they were about 120km away) and not have to waste aircraft in patrols looking for the German planes.
- Hitler's switch to bombing the cities instead of concentrating on the RAF airfields was a fatal error. By this changing of targets, the RAF was given time to recover and to rebuild airbases.

The Battle of Britain was the first time that Hitler had been stopped from achieving his aims. Britain's survival was going to be vital for keeping up the pressure on Germany, and ultimately to providing the launch pad for the allied invasion of Europe in 1944.

## Foreign exiles

After the German conquests in mainland Europe, Britain also became the base for a number of European governments-in-exile. In 1940, the governments of Poland, Norway and the Netherlands were established in London. There were also other bodies representing Belgium, Luxembourg and Free France. Armed forces of these countries, e.g. Polish fighter pilots, also took part in the defence of Britain.

◀ RAF pilots scramble to their fighters during the Battle of Britain, 1940.



## The Mediterranean and the Balkans (1940–41)

The entry of Italy into the conflict in June 1940 spread the war to the Balkans, the Mediterranean and North Africa. In September 1940, Mussolini sent an army from the Italian colony of Libya to Egypt. Another Italian army invaded Greece from Albania in October. Both Italian offensives failed, however. The British pushed the Italians out of Egypt, defeating them at Beda Fomm in Libya. The British then sank half the Italian fleet in harbour at Taranto and occupied Crete. The Greeks forced the Italians back and invaded Albania.

Mussolini's failures brought Hitler into both North Africa and the Balkans. General Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps soldiers were sent to Tripoli, from where the British were driven out of Libya; by June 1942 the Germans had advanced close to El Alamein in Egypt. Meanwhile, in April 1941 Hitler's troops overran Yugoslavia and Greece. Within three weeks, the Greeks had surrendered and in May Crete was taken after a successful airborne attack. The British evacuated in May 1941.

These campaigns were significant because:

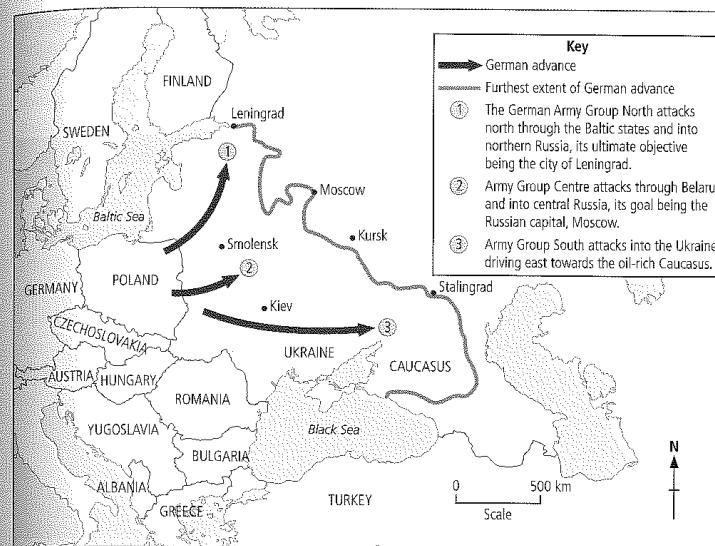
- They were severe setbacks for the Allies.
- British troops in North Africa were moved to the fighting in Greece, which weakened the British in North Africa at a time when Britain needed its strength to deal with the threat from Rommel.
- In going to assist Mussolini in Greece, Hitler's plan to attack the USSR was delayed by a crucial six weeks, which had an impact on the chances of the German Army reaching Moscow before the harsh Russian winter set in.

## Operation Barbarossa (22 June 1941)

By attacking the Soviet Union, Hitler was fulfilling his aims for *Lebensraum* or living space for the German people. Clearly the natural resources of the USSR, including oil, were vast, and would be ideal for the expansion of the German race. Hitler's motives for invading the Soviet Union, however, were mainly ideological. Hitler was impatient to get on with destroying a country that was not only full of peoples inferior in his eyes, such as the Slavs, but also full of communists. During the 1930s, Hitler repeatedly expressed his belief that communism was one of the greatest threats to German society and culture, despite acknowledging that a temporary alliance with the Soviet Union could work in Germany's interests. Hitler's military endgame, therefore, always had the Soviet Union in its sights. Even in the early stages of the war, his attention was drawn to the East and to planning for the attack, and he was clearly frustrated by Britain's refusal to make peace, which thus delayed his plans for Russia. In the end, he decided to leave Britain undefeated, believing that it would not be in a strong enough position to open a second front and that the Soviet Union would easily be defeated. He was also anxious to launch an attack on the USSR to put a stop to Stalin's own territorial gains.

Plans for the invasion, codenamed Operation *Barbarossa*, were drawn up at the end of 1940. The plan envisaged a three-pronged attack: in the north towards Leningrad, in the centre towards Moscow and in the south through the agriculturally and industrially rich Ukraine.

The invasion started on 22 June 1941, and involved 121 divisions of the *Heer* (German Army) backed up by massive air support in a *Blitzkrieg* attack. Although the Soviets actually had greater numbers of men, tanks and aircraft, the Germans were able to take advantage of the element of surprise. The Soviets had ignored both the warnings of Churchill concerning the impending invasion and also their own intelligence, Stalin presumably believing that Hitler would honour the Nazi–Soviet Pact and continue to avoid a war on two fronts. The Soviets were also still re-equipping their army and air force following the humiliating war



◀ The German advance during Operation Barbarossa.

with Finland, and the army was recovering from the impact of Stalin's purges, which had wiped out the cream of the Red Army's command.

In contrast to the Soviets' vulnerable position, the Germans attacked with the psychological advantage of knowing that their *Blitzkrieg* tactics had already been successful in conquering vast areas of Western Europe. Given this situation, the Germans were able to secure dramatic successes in the first months of the war. In the north, Leningrad was surrounded and besieged. In the south, Kiev was captured, and by mid October the German Army was within 80km of Moscow. The Soviets had lost some three million men in casualties and as prisoners of war. Yet the Germans failed to take Leningrad and Moscow. They were held back by the heavy rains of October, which turned the roads to mud, and then the severe Russian winter in which temperatures in some places fell as low as -38 degrees Celsius. The Germans, equipped only with their summer uniforms in the expectation that they would be victorious by the winter, suffered terribly. Thousands experienced frostbite and equipment froze and failed to function. For the first time, *Blitzkrieg* had failed to achieve its objectives; the great Soviet commander Marshal Georgy Zhukov launched a counter-offensive and Moscow was saved.

In June 1942, Hitler made a massive offensive towards southern Russia and the oilfields of the Caucasus. By August, the German attack had reached the city of Stalingrad and had occupied most of the city by the end of September. Yet the Russians refused to



### 1 Leningrad

The siege of Leningrad lasted from September 1941 to January 1944 and resulted in as many as 1.5 million dead, which is more than the total combined British and American casualties for the whole of the war. The inhabitants of Leningrad suffered from desperate food shortages and brought in supplies across an 'ice road' over Lake Ladoga. They were constantly bombed by the Germans, but the city never fell.

◀ An image of the terrible destruction at Stalingrad, 1942/43.

Access worksheet 8.1  
Operation Barbarossa,  
please visit www.  
marionbacconline.com  
and follow the on-screen  
instructions.

surrender, and in fact launched a counter-offensive, surrounding the Germans in a large **pincer movement**. Suffering from acute shortages of ammunition and food, and now overwhelmingly outnumbered, the Germans in Stalingrad had no choice but to surrender in early February 1943. Here was the turning point of the war on the Eastern Front.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

## Document analysis

*Contrary to later accounts, Stalingrad was not the decisive event of the Second World War. It was far from being the largest battle on the Eastern Front. The 90,000 troops who were captured numbered only half as many as the British were to take at the end of the North African campaigns. And on the scale of military disasters it was no more significant than Timoshenko's recent disaster before Kharkhov. Yet, Stalingrad, in psychological terms, was immensely significant. It showed for the first time, that Hitler's Wehrmacht was fallible. It showed that Stalin's Red Army was not the shambolic giant with feet of clay that many experts had predicted. It sent shivers through Berlin, and gladdened the hearts of all Hitler's enemies. One cannot exaggerate its impact on the minds of Britons and Americans who at the time had no single soldier fighting on European soil.*

From Norman Davies, *Europe at War 1939–1945*, 2006

## Question

According to Norman Davies, what was the significance of the Battle of Stalingrad?

In the summer of 1943, Hitler tried to launch another major attack. However, the Germans were again defeated, at the battle of Kursk, where a German tank army 17 divisions strong was destroyed. For the rest of 1943, the German Army was in retreat along nearly all the Eastern Front. By 1944, Leningrad was liberated and the Germans were pushed out of the Ukraine. In August, the Soviets reached Poland and Romania, and by January 1945 they were in East Prussia. They finally reached Berlin on 2 May.

## Why were the Soviets able to defeat the German Army?

Despite the German successes, the Soviets ended up defeating the German Army. The Germans made several mistakes that contributed to their defeat:

- The Germans were not prepared for a long campaign and they suffered from lack of supplies and inadequate equipment to face their first harsh Russian winter.
- In 1941, Hitler took over the command of the army himself, which had a disastrous impact on the conduct of the war in the Soviet Union.
- During their invasion, the Germans carried out brutal attacks against the civilian population, which made Russian resistance much stronger (see below).
- The supply lines of the German armed forces became hopelessly overstretched.
- The German Army faced continual losses of aircraft and tanks that could not be replaced. Armoured divisions began the war with 328 tanks per division, whereas by the summer of 1943, they averaged only 73. The German Army increasingly fell back on the use of horses, concentrating their air and tank power in only a few divisions.

In contrast to the German situation, the Soviets underwent a programme of reform and modernization. Learning from the devastating invasion of 1941, and adapting to circumstances, the Soviet Army structure was reorganized to include a much greater reliance on tanks and artillery. The air force was also reformed; now fighter-bombers and ground-attack aircraft were put together to form a concentrated air striking force, centrally coordinated using radio communications so that it could give effective support

to ground troops. The installation of radios in tanks and aircraft was indeed crucial for improving overall communications. Richard Overy argues that 'the revolution in Soviet communications was perhaps the most important single reform ... [It] gave the Soviet commanders the ability to direct large and complex operations and to hold the battlefield together' (Overy, 'The Improbable Victory', *Modern History Review*, November 1998).

Another important army reform involved Stalin withdrawing himself from military responsibility and allowing his commanders – such as Aleksandr Vasilevsky and Georgy Zhukov – much more freedom in how they conducted the war. Stalin also agreed to remove political influence over the army and restore the more traditional command structure, giving the troops back more confidence and pride.

Another key factor in the Soviet victory was the impact of patriotism. Spurred on by the atrocities committed by the Germans during their advance, which indicated what a German victory could mean, and fortified by the fact that Stalin did not abandon Moscow but remained with its civilians to resist the German attack, the Russian population united in a way not seen since the Revolution. Stalin, realizing that he could not call on the Soviets to mobilize in the name of communism, fed this patriotism by calling on them to save 'Mother Russia'. In addition, the Russian Orthodox Church, previously persecuted by the Soviet authorities, was reinstated to provide spiritual strength.

The Soviet Union lost three-quarters of its supplies of iron ore, coal and steel, one-third of its rail network and 40 per cent of its electricity generation in the German invasion. Yet it still managed to out-produce the Germans in guns and tanks and aircraft between 1942 and 1943. This was partly due to the fact that the Soviets moved huge quantities of industrial equipment east of the Ural mountains during the German invasion – 1,360 factories in 1942 alone. In addition, the centralized nature of the Soviet state enabled the Soviet leadership to create a successful war economy. Top priority was given to producing armaments, and all factories as well as all the labour camps (gulags) were set to work for the war effort. As in the army, political supervision was decreased in the critical years to allow the planners and managers in industry to work more effectively, even to take initiative.

The Allies also contributed to Soviet success. Weapons from the UK and USA only made up 4 per cent of the amount used by the Soviets, but there were other supplies in the form of food, raw materials and equipment that were crucial to the Soviet war effort. The Soviets also benefited from Lend-Lease agreements similar to those negotiated between Britain and the USA.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

## Review questions

- 1 Why were the Germans so successful with *Blitzkrieg* in Europe?
- 2 Why did *Blitzkrieg* tactics fail in the Soviet Union?
- 3 Summarize in bullet points or in a spider diagram the reasons for the Soviet victory over the Nazis. Which factor or combination of factors stands out as the main reason for Soviet success?

## The defeat of Nazi Germany

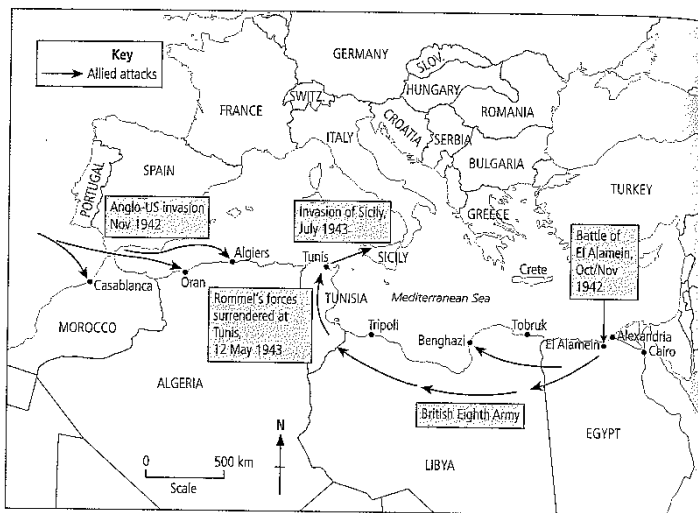
While Stalin was fighting a very bloody war in the Soviet Union, Britain – joined by America from December 1941 – was predominantly fighting an air and sea war. Although Stalin was desperate for Britain and America to open up a second front and thus divert the Germans away from the Soviet Union, this was not possible in 1942. Roosevelt agreed that defeating Nazi Germany quickly was a priority (even though it was the Japanese who had brought America into the war), but neither the USA nor Britain yet had the resources needed to launch a major invasion of mainland Europe.



▲ A Soviet propaganda poster. The text reads 'Soldier, save us!', imploring the Red Army to fight hard for its citizens.

### El Alamein (1942)

Map showing war in the Mediterranean, 1942–43.



Instead, Britain decided to carry on the fighting in North Africa. Rommel's forces were finally defeated in October/November 1942 at El Alamein and were forced into retreat across Libya. Early in November, Anglo-American forces landed in French North Africa in Operation *Torch*, and by May 1943 the whole of northern Africa had been secured.

This campaign was important for the following reasons:

- It prevented Egypt and the Suez Canal from falling to Hitler
- It gave the Allies experience in large-scale seaborne offensives
- It provided a launching position for the next Allied target – Italy.

### The fall of Italy (1943–45)

The southern offensive on 'fortress Europe' began on 10 July 1943, and within six weeks Sicily was in Allied hands. This event caused the downfall of Mussolini, who was dismissed by the Italian King. In October, Allied troops crossed to Salerno, Reggio and Taranto on the Italian mainland and captured Naples.

Mussolini's successor, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, signed an armistice and brought Italy into the war on the Allied side. The Germans, however, were determined to hold on to Italy. German divisions were diverted to Italy and the Allies had to fight their way slowly up the peninsula. Rome was not captured until June 1944 and northern Italy did not come under Allied control until April 1945. Despite the slow nature of the campaign, the Italian war had important consequences for the Allies:

- Fascism had ended in Italy, and Germany was deprived of its most important ally
- It tied down German divisions that were needed in Russia
- It meant that the Allies could not be accused by Stalin of leaving all of the fighting in Europe to the Soviet forces.

#### The war in Italy

While the price for the Allies of the Italian invasion was high, the Italians suffered not only in terms of casualties but also in the damage caused to the cultural heritage of their country. Beautiful buildings, such as the monastery at Monte Cassino, were destroyed as the Allies fought their way up the peninsula. In addition, the domestic economic situation was desperate and the government collapsed. Mussolini, ousted from government, was captured by partisans, shot and his body hung from a meat hook in a Milanese petrol station.

### Operation Overlord (June 1944)

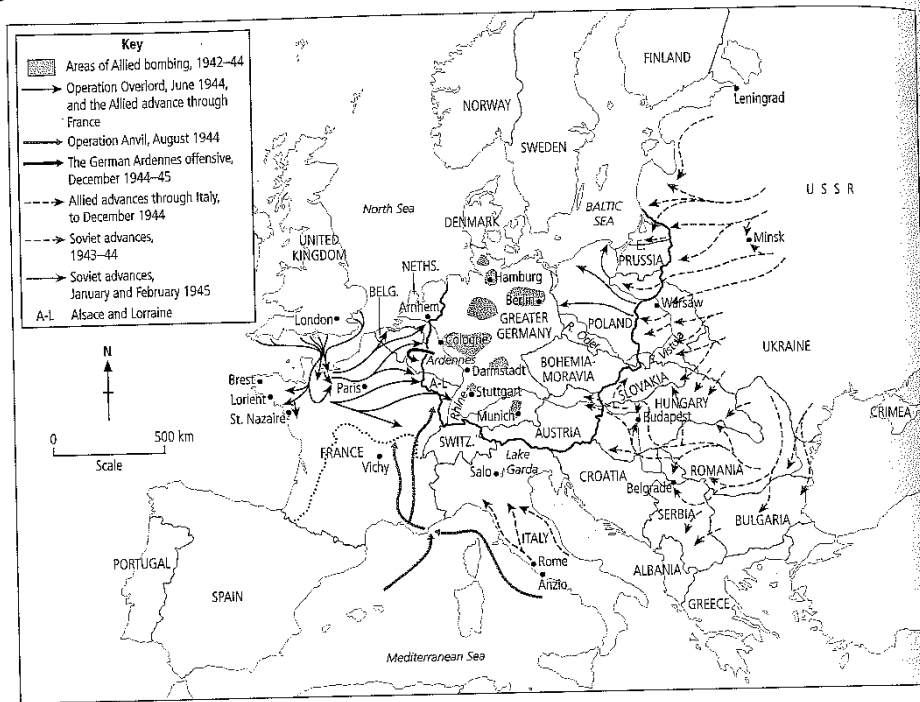


US soldiers approach the Normandy beaches during the D-Day landings, 6 June 1944.

The invasion of France, codenamed Operation *Overlord*, began on 6 June 1944, a moment in history known as D-Day. The landings by 326,000 British, Canadian and American troops took place from sea and air on an 80km stretch of Normandy beaches. The invasion was a result of extremely complex preparations involving a huge amount of resources. Mulberry harbours – prefabricated, temporary harbours – were built to provide anchorages for supply ships; oil pipelines were laid across the Channel; 4,000 ships supported the invasion; the whole assault was backed by massive airpower (12,000 aircraft in the sky on the first day of the invasion). Secrecy was also key to the success of the operation, and complex subterfuge plans were put into operation to convince the Germans (successfully) that the invasion would land at Calais rather than in Normandy.

Within a month, a million men had landed in Normandy. In the next few weeks, most of northern France was liberated, then Brussels and Antwerp were freed in the first week of September. However, German forces continued to resist and to enjoy successes. They defeated an Allied attempt to outflank the Siegfried Line at Arnhem in September 1944, and also temporarily regained ground in the Ardennes offensive (known in the West as the 'Battle of the Bulge') in December 1944–January 1945. Yet the losses in men and tanks sustained by the Germans in these battles could no longer be replaced, and the first months of 1945 saw the steady disintegration of the *Wehrmacht* (German armed forces). The Allies crossed the Rhine in March 1945. Germany was now being invaded on two fronts, and in Berlin on 30 April, Hitler killed himself. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander in Europe, refused to race for Berlin to get there before the Soviets, and thus Stalin's forces were the first to arrive. On 7 May, the German government surrendered unconditionally to the combined Allied forces.

To access worksheet 8.2 on D-Day, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.



The collapse and defeat of Germany, 1944-45.

## Why did the Allies defeat Hitler?

### The weakness of the Axis powers

By not committing Germany's full military capacity to the invasion of Britain in 1941, Hitler allowed Britain to survive. Britain therefore kept the war going in the West, and also the Atlantic and Africa. The British resistance was to cause increasing problems for Germany, especially after 1942, as it had to divert resources away from the war in the East. Britain also acted as the launching pad for the bombing of Germany and Operation Overlord.

The invasion of the Soviet Union was to prove a huge mistake. It undid all the gains made by the Nazi-Soviet Pact and once again pushed Germany into a war on two fronts:

*The effect of Operation Barbarossa was to commit Germany to war with a power which was three times her size in population, eighty times as large in area, and of much greater industrial capacity. It is hardly surprising that the major military setbacks experienced by the Wehrmacht occurred in Russia. These in turn, took the pressure off Britain and greatly assisted the latter's peripheral war effort in the Mediterranean and North Africa.*

From Stephen Lee, *Aspects of European History, 1789-1980*, 1991

Declaring war on the USA, which Germany did on 11 September 1941, was also a major error, and showed a serious lack of judgement on Hitler's part. He was too dismissive of

America's capabilities and believed that the USA would remain in the Pacific fighting the Japanese. However, President Roosevelt made the defeat of Hitler his top priority, and US and British forces worked together to achieve this task. The USA's entry into the war allowed the Allies to invade Italy, carry out devastating bombing raids on Germany and open up the Second Front in 1944. Meanwhile, Hitler was unable to attack the USA directly and also did not face the same unity with his allies; Mussolini in fact was a constant drain on Hitler's resources.

Hitler's personal conduct of military operations was also disastrous. This can be seen most clearly in the USSR, where he did not prepare for a winter campaign and did not allow the forces at Stalingrad to conduct an orderly retreat or breakout from the Russian trap, with the result that it had to surrender in January 1943. Another serious mistake was to concentrate on producing V-rockets when Germany could have been developing jet aircraft, which might have restored German air superiority and weakened the Allied bombing campaign of 1944 and 1945.

Hitler's mistakes in the conduct of the war ensured that it went on much longer than he had expected. Germany increasingly suffered from material shortages as the war continued, particularly in rubber, cotton, nickel and, after mid 1944, oil. Although military production continued, and even increased right up until 1945, the emphasis on diversification of weapons (such as working on the V1 and V2 rockets) reduced the effectiveness of its efforts in this area. Women, for example, were not employed in munitions factories until late in the war. In addition, the German and Japanese military also resented and rejected interference and direction from civilians, which prevented any useful collaboration between civilian and military experts.

### The strengths of the Allies

While Hitler faced increasing economic difficulties after 1942, the resources of the Allies grew stronger. As we have seen, the USSR's economy rapidly transformed to a wartime economy and, in the factories east of the Ural mountains, Russia was producing more armaments and better-quality armaments than Germany by 1943. The centralized state economy of the USSR proved more able than Hitler's Nazi state to produce what was needed to fight a prolonged war. Similarly, once the American economy geared up for wartime production, it also overtook the Axis powers in production of weapons. When the American war industry reached full capacity, it could turn out over 70,000 tanks and 120,000 aircraft a year.

Richard Overy points out, however, that greater economic resources and more armaments did not in themselves guarantee victory for the Allies. Key to Allied success was the fact that they 'turned their economic strength into effective fighting power' (Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 2006). They learned from their mistakes of 1941 and took steps to increase the effectiveness of future combat forces. These steps involved:

- Improving the quality as well as the quantity of military forces and technology.
- Ensuring that there were excellent back-up services. In the Pacific theatre, there were 18 American support personnel for every one serviceman at the front, compared to a ratio of one to one in the Japanese forces. Stalin also paid close attention to the service of the Red Army. The chief of the Main Directorate of the Red Army Rear, General Khrulev, was responsible for the supply of the army and was treated equally with the military commanders. This was in contrast to the Axis powers, who put emphasis on operations and combat rather than on back-up organization and supplies. Men with the best organizational skills were fighting in the German Army rather than helping on the civilian front with planning.

### V-rockets

The V-rockets were unmanned long-range missiles that Hitler used against Britain in 1944 and 1945, in what became known as the 'Second Blitz'. The V1 and V2 were to be weapons of revenge – the *Vergeltungswaffen*. These were the secret weapons that Hitler boasted about: the weapons that he previously hinted would win the war for Nazi Germany. The V1s carried an 850kg high-explosive warhead and travelled at 650km/h. Between 8,000 and 9,000 V1s were launched against southern England, primarily London. Yet although they caused initial shock, their impact was limited, as V1s could be shot out of the sky by anti-aircraft fire. The V2 – the world's first ballistic missile – was far more dangerous. It carried a similar warhead, but travelled at such a speed that it could not be seen or heard until it exploded. These weapons spread considerable fear in London. About 1,000 V2s were fired at Britain before their launch sites were overrun by the advancing Allies. In total, they killed or wounded about 1,500 people.

- Setting up a large civilian apparatus to support the Allied forces, which allowed them to mobilize their economic, intellectual and organizational strengths for the purpose of waging war.

Strategic decisions made by the Allies were also vital for victory. First, the Allies made the decision to concentrate the mass of their attack on Germany; they realized that the defeat of this formidable military opponent was central to success. Thus 85 per cent of America's war effort was devoted to defeating Germany and only 15 per cent to the war with Japan. Second, the Allies poured massive amounts of money and effort into the **strategic bombing** campaign, and this had a serious effect on Germany's capacity to fight effectively at the front. Germany had to curtail its own bombing offensives and divert funds into an anti-aircraft strategy. Finally, the Allies had a tremendous will to win. Most people on the Allied side believed that this contest did not just involve the military forces, but concerned issues of life and death for whole communities and that it was a 'just' war worth fighting.

#### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

##### Review/essay question

Richard Overly argues that 'The war was won in 1945 not from German weaknesses but from Allied strengths'. How far do you agree with this statement?

### War in the East: an overview

As we have seen, the USA was brought into the war by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The attack was brilliantly organized by Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. There was no declaration of war. At 7.49am on 7 December, the first wave of Japanese planes, launched from nearby aircraft carriers, struck Pearl Harbor.

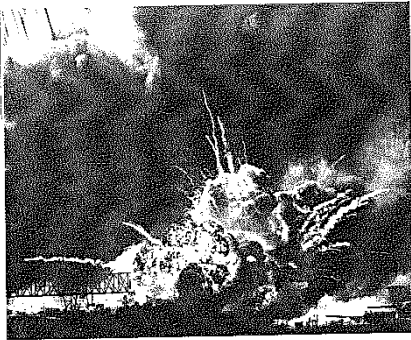
Roosevelt, calling the attack by Japan 'unprovoked and dastardly', asked Congress to declare war on Japan, which it duly did. Britain declared war on Japan the same day. They were followed by the Latin American states of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Cuba, Guatemala and Panama. On 11 December, Germany declared war on America, thus justifying those Americans like Roosevelt who believed that America should help Europe in the fight against Hitler. The conflict was now a world war.

Meanwhile, Japan caused devastation and shock throughout the Pacific. Within hours of the Pearl Harbor attack, Japanese forces attacked Wake, Guam, the Philippines, Malaya and Hong Kong. British naval defence depended on a new battleship, the *Prince of Wales*, and the old battlecruiser, the *Repulse*. Both were sunk by Japanese bombers on

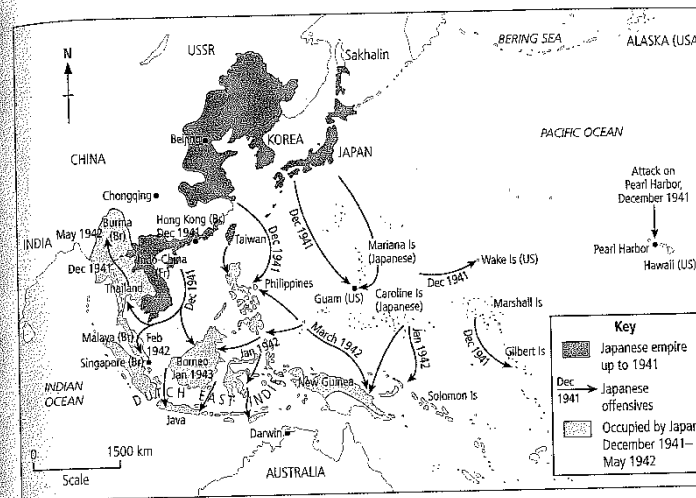
10 December, leaving Singapore undefended. In mid December, the Japanese also invaded Burma.

On 25 and 26 December, Hong Kong and 12,000 prisoners fell into Japanese hands. Japanese troops invaded the Dutch East Indies on 6 January 1942, and before the end of the month, British, Australian and Indian forces had retreated from the tip of the Malay peninsula to Singapore. This, too, was attacked and forced to surrender, along with 80,000 soldiers, one of the worst defeats in British history.

By mid 1942, the Japanese had successfully captured the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and Burma. They now held a vast empire, which they labelled the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere (see above, p.136).



Scene of the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 1941.



The Japanese offensive in the East and South-East Asia and the Pacific, December 1941–May 1942.

### The battle of Midway (June 1942)

After these successes, however, the Japanese suffered two serious setbacks when they failed to capture Port Moresby on the south coast of New Guinea (which would have brought the north coast of Australia within reach of their bombers), or to take Midway Island in June 1942. The Japanese had hoped that an offensive against Midway Island would draw out the US Navy's vital aircraft carriers, which could then be destroyed and tip the naval balance in the Pacific in Japan's favour. However, partly due to the fact that the Americans had broken the Japanese codes and knew exactly when and where the attack was to be launched, the Americans were able to beat off the powerful Japanese naval force and to destroy three of the Japanese aircraft carriers (a fourth was sunk later in the day).

The American success at Midway proved to be a crucial turning point for the war in the Pacific:

*Not only did the balance in the Pacific between fleet carriers now stand equal ... the advantage the Japanese had lost could never be made good... Six fleet carriers would join the Japanese navy in 1942–4; America would launch fourteen, as well as nine light carrier and sixty-six escort carriers, creating a fleet against which Japan could not stand. It was now to be condemned to the defensive.*

From John Keegan, *The Second World War*, 1997

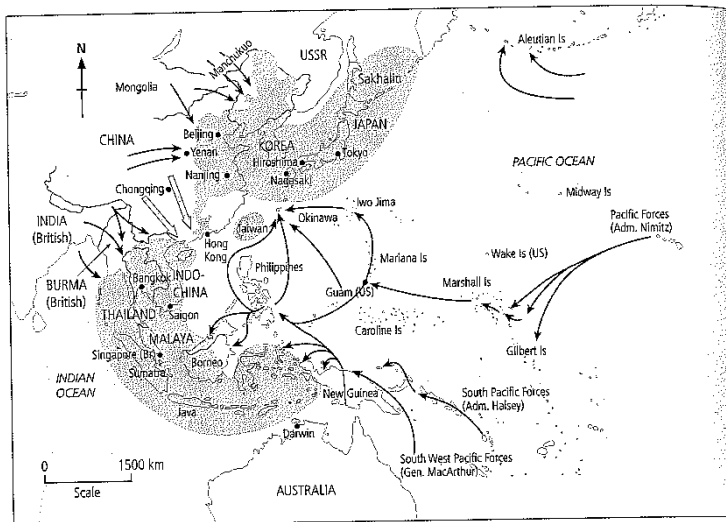
### Japanese retreat

Although a catastrophic defeat for Japan, the battle of Midway did not mean that Japan had lost any territory, and America had an extremely tough time in pushing back the Japanese occupation. Beginning in January 1942 with landings in the Solomon Islands, General Douglas MacArthur (Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area) slowly began to recover the Pacific islands in a process nicknamed 'island hopping' or 'atoll hopping'. Superiority at sea and in the air enabled the Americans to conquer these stepping stones towards Japan.

In a two-pronged assault, Admiral Chester Nimitz (Commander-in-Chief, US Pacific Fleet) advanced through the Central Pacific, while MacArthur continued along a south-western



The Allied onslaught against Japan, 1943–45.



### Kamikaze

In fighting the Japanese, the Americans faced a formidable enemy. Japanese troops on the whole preferred death to surrender. Japanese warrior tradition prescribed surrender to be dishonourable, and thus many soldiers committed suicide rather than be captured. In fact, Japanese Army regulations laid down that their surrender was a crime punishable by death. Another horrific aspect of the fighting for the Americans was the *kamikaze* suicide tactics used by the Japanese, in which pilots would literally fly their bomb-laden aircraft into American ships. The 1,900 suicide missions between 6 April and 22 June sank 25 ships and scored 182 hits. Ironically, *kamikaze* attacks also damaged the Japanese Air Force by reducing the numbers of available aircraft.

route from New Guinea. In 1943, Nimitz's forces took the Gilbert Islands, then the Marshall Islands in February 1944, and began landing in the Marianas in June 1944 after the battle of the Philippine Sea. The US victories opened up the route to the occupied Philippines, and also Japan's sea route to oil supplies in the East Indies. In October 1944, the largest naval battle of all time, involving 282 warships and hundreds of aircraft, clashed in the battle of Leyte Gulf. Facing fanatical resistance from the Japanese, American forces now had to clear the Japanese out of the Philippines, and then the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1945. Okinawa was the grimmest of all of these battles. The US Army divisions lost 4,675 dead and missing, and the US Marine Corps 2,938. The US Navy lost a further 4,900 dead, and 763 aircraft were destroyed and 38 ships sunk. The population of Okinawa suffered terribly, with perhaps as many as 160,000 dying in the fighting. The Japanese lost 16 ships and 7,800 aircraft – a thousand of these in *kamikaze* missions. Although the Americans took 7,400 prisoners, 110,000 other Japanese died refusing to surrender.

Meanwhile, the Allies had set up a new South-East Asia Command under Admiral Louis Mountbatten, whose objective was to clear the Japanese out of Burma and open the Burma Road to China. This objective was finally achieved in May 1945.

## The atomic bomb and the Japanese surrender

With the Germans defeated in May 1945, it was possible for the Americans to focus all of their might on the defeat of Japan. The Soviets had also promised to bring their troops to the East to help with the final assault.

Japan was clearly on the verge of defeat. Not only were the American ground forces nearly at Japan itself, through their strategy of 'island hopping', but Japan had been consistently bombed since November 1944, with devastating effects on its cities. The new Japanese Prime Minister, Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, tried to get the Americans to agree to a peace that would preserve the position of the Emperor. However, the Allies would not accept anything other than 'unconditional surrender'. In addition, they were alarmed about the Soviets getting involved in a war that would ensure that Stalin received land in the East in return

for his efforts, and they were also concerned about the number of casualties that the US Army would suffer in a land invasion.

These were some of the factors that influenced President Harry S Truman (the US President following the death of Roosevelt in April 1945) to use the new weapon possessed by the USA – the atomic bomb, or 'A-bomb'. The Americans and British had been secretly developing this weapon to use against Nazi Germany, in the Manhattan Project, but Germany had surrendered before it was ready.

The first A-bomb, 'Little Boy', was dropped over Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 with devastating effects, killing some 80,000 people and injuring 80,000 more. On 9 August, a second bomb was dropped, on the port of Nagasaki, and another 40,000 Japanese died. After this, the Japanese government surrendered. The war was finally over.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Review question

From what you have read, what arguments do you think Truman would have given for using the atomic bomb?

#### Document analysis

##### Document A

Based on detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945 and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.

From the report of the US Strategic Bombing Survey Group, July 1946, assigned to study the effects of air attacks on Japan.

##### Document B

It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and were ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing of conventional weapons. It was my reaction that the scientists and others wanted to make this test because of the vast sums that had been spent on the Project. Truman knew that and so did the other people involved. My own feeling was that in being the first to use it we had adopted the ethical standards common to barbarians in the dark ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion.

Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the President of the United States, from his autobiography *I Was There* (1950)

##### Document C

Part of the appeal of the atomic bomb was that it allowed one plane ... to achieve what had previously been achieved by hundreds. In more than 30,000 sorties between June 1944 and August 1945, only seventy-four B-29s were lost, a casualty rate of 0.24%. ... Yet seventy-four B-29s translates into nearly 900 highly trained men. Since 1940, the Allies had been applying the principle of maximum enemy casualties for minimum Allied casualties. The creation of the atomic bomb required a revolution in physics. But it did not require a revolution in the political economy of total war. Rather it was the logical culmination of the Allied way of war.

From Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World*, 2006

##### Document D

Most importantly, the bomb was part of an 'atomic diplomacy', in which the US tried to establish a post-war advantage over the Soviet Union (and, it may be argued, Britain) in Europe and Asia. In May 1945 Henry Stimson wrote that US economic power and the bomb were 'a royal straight flush and we mustn't be a fool about the way we play it'. Following this advice, Truman even delayed the

To access worksheet 8.3 on the atomic bomb, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.

Potsdam Conference with Churchill and Stalin to await the first test of the new weapon. As soon as he received news of success, the president took a tough line over issues such as Germany and downplayed the prospect of Soviet entry into the war against Japan. Truman explained, 'I have an ace in the hole and another one showing. So, unless [Stalin] has three-of-a-kind or two pairs (and I know he has nothing), we are sitting all right.' Stimson admitted, on the day after the second bomb at Nagasaki, that the US wanted to end the war, 'before the Russians could put in any substantial claim to occupy and help rule [Manchuria and Japan].'

From Scott Lucas, 'Hiroshima and History', *Modern History Review*, 1996

#### Questions

- 1 Identify the key points being made in Documents A–D concerning the use of the atomic bomb.
- 2 Compare and contrast Documents A and B in their arguments against the use of the atomic bomb.
- 3 With reference to their origin and purpose, what are the value and limitations of Sources A and B for the historian?

#### Research and discussion

List the arguments for and against using the atomic bomb, as identified in the text above and in the documents. Research these arguments in more detail using websites. Now divide the class into two groups and organize a debate on the motion: 'This house believes that the dropping of the atomic bomb was necessary to save American and Japanese lives.'

## Why were the Allies successful in defeating the Japanese?

The Allied victory in the Pacific and South-East Asia had several factors in common with the defeat of the Germans – the emphasis on effective back-up support for the military, and the involvement of the civilians in the military in planning and logistics, for example. As with Germany, these were areas that the Japanese had neglected. The post-war bombing survey of Japan noted the failure of the Japanese Air Force to provide 'adequate maintenance, logistic support, communications and control, or airfields and bases...'

Technologically, the Americans gradually overtook the Japanese in producing new fighting weapons. Although at a disadvantage at the beginning of the war, as in Europe, America learned from early mistakes and quickly pulled ahead, building up naval and air superiority, developing new planes and realizing the importance of aircraft carriers.

A critical factor behind the Allied victory lay in isolating Japan from its empire by destroying its merchant marine, navy and naval airpower. Japan had overstretched itself in the huge amount of territory it was trying to occupy. Denied use of the empire's manpower, equipment, food supplies and raw materials by US submarines, surface vessels and aircraft, the nation could not possibly survive. Japan being a small island with limited industrial power, the Japanese economy simply could not match the American capacity for rapid expansion. At the end of the war, the destruction of Japan's industries and cities by systematic bombing was also an important factor in Japan's ultimate defeat. By 1945, the national infrastructure was destroyed and industry was unable to produce the weapons it needed.

## How was World War II fought?

### The war on land

World War I not only had an impact on the causes of World War II, as you have read in the previous chapter, but it also had an impact on the way the war was fought. Germany

had learnt from the 1918 Ludendorff offensive that in order to break through the enemy's ranks, concentrated attacks by stormtroopers, along with tactical air cover, were critical. In fact, strategists in Britain, France and Germany had all written about the need for rapid mobile attacks based on large numbers of tanks, but it was the German leadership that put these theories into practice. The result was *Blitzkrieg*. Now, instead of the defensive war of World War I, there was offensive war that consisted of surprise, speed and movement using tanks, armoured vehicles, mechanized transport and the aeroplane. An air strike took out the opposing air force and communications centres on the ground and parachutists were dropped behind enemy lines. The swift-moving tanks and motorized infantry – supported by air power – would then split the enemy lines, and allow rapid penetration into the unprotected territories beyond, with the aim of encircling the main enemy forces and destroying them. Thus a rapid, decisive victory was achieved.

Although many historians now doubt that *Blitzkrieg* was a coherent well thought-out strategy and believe that it was more of an improvised response, it was nevertheless well suited to Hitler's needs. He was not expecting a major war in 1939; his planning was for a widespread European war in 1943–45, and in 1939 the German economy was not yet ready for the demands of a long war. Thus *Blitzkrieg* allowed Hitler to achieve quick victories that were not too demanding in terms of casualties and resources. The speed and surprise elements of Germany's success prevented other countries from mobilizing fully for total war, and had a devastating impact on morale.

### The successes and failures of *Blitzkrieg*

Up until 1941, *Blitzkrieg* in Europe was very successful. Although the German Army was not superior in terms of actual equipment, the surprise of a *Blitzkrieg* attack against an enemy that lacked the same levels of organization and morale allowed for dramatic German victories. Operation Barbarossa, however, showed the weakness of *Blitzkrieg*. Despite the massive advances in the first six months, the German Army was not sufficiently equipped to deal with such a large operation. The circumstances in which *Blitzkrieg* was effective – short wars in confined areas – did not exist in the USSR. With its huge areas of land and resources, the USSR was able to withstand the initial losses, reorganize its economy and military and fight back. By 1943, Germany had lost the key 'surprise' element of *Blitzkrieg* and its enemies had learnt from their initial mistakes of 1939–41. The Allies increasingly fought a war in the same attacking style as the Germans, with heavy use of tanks, mobile vehicles and, most importantly, air power. From 1944, the Allies had dominance of the skies on all fronts.

### The war at sea

#### The battle for the Atlantic

For Britain, naval power was critical for maintaining the vital trade routes on which the British population depended for survival. It also allowed Britain to defend its empire and was essential to any army operation outside home waters. Thus, until 1944, Britain fought mainly a naval war. Yet even more so than in 1914–18, sea warfare was no longer about battles between large fleets and huge battleships. German naval prestige suffered a blow after the scuttling of the *Graf Spee* in 1939 (the battleship was trapped by British warships in Montevideo harbour, Uruguay) and the sinking of the prestigious battleship *Bismarck* in the Atlantic in 1941. German capital warships were then removed from the Atlantic and as a result, there were no major surface engagements in the Mediterranean and Atlantic that compared to the battle of Jutland in World War I.

Sea warfare was now about controlling supply lines, and from 1940 to 1943 Britain and Germany fought to see who could dominate the Atlantic. Although the German U-boat

**Enigma codes**

The German military used the Enigma cipher machine during World War II to keep their communications secret. The Enigma machine is an electro-mechanical device that relied on a series of rotating 'wheels' or rotors to scramble plain text messages into incoherent cipher text. The machine's variable elements could be set in many billions of combinations, each one generating a completely different cipher text message. The recipients of messages would know how the machine had been set up, so could type the cipher text back in; the machine would then unscramble the message. Without knowing the Enigma setting, the message would remain indecipherable.

The German authorities believed in the absolute security of the Enigma. However, with the help of Polish mathematicians who had managed to acquire a machine prior to the outbreak of World War II, British code breakers stationed at Bletchley Park managed to crack the Enigma code.

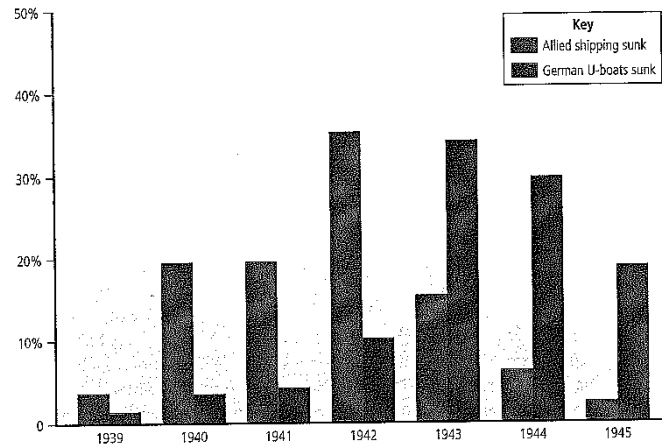
The U-boat war – annual loss of Allied shipping and U-boats as a percentage of total war losses.

fleet was small in 1939, it was developed quickly. Hitler needed the U-boats to keep Britain and the USA occupied while Germany was tied up in the Soviet Union. They were also a possible way of defeating Britain outright, and at first the German U-boats were very successful at harrying Britain's lifeline. In 1941, submarines sank 1,299 ships, and in 1942 1,662 ships were sunk with a total tonnage of almost 8 million tonnes. By 1943, Britain's survival was being seriously threatened by the losses of Allied shipping.

To combat the U-boats, the Allies had both to avoid them and attack them. Both strategies depended on precise knowledge of the position and movement of the U-boats. Fortunately for the Allies, mid 1943 saw the culmination of several factors that allowed them to do this, thereby eliminating the U-boat as a decisive threat:

- Britain was able to crack the Enigma codes (see Interesting Facts box). Also, in 1943 the codes of the Royal Navy were changed, after it was discovered that the Germans had been deciphering them all along. Thus from mid 1943, the Allies had an intelligence advantage.
- By May 1943, convoys were protected by various technical innovations. Included in these was the High-Frequency Direction Finder (HF/DF, known as 'Huff-Duff'), which provided an accurate bearing towards any submarine that used its radio.
- Air power was used effectively to attack the U-boats. Long-range Liberator aircraft with short-wave radar and searchlights were able to pick out the U-boats on the surface at night. Small aircraft carrier escorts started accompanying the convoys to give protection when the Liberators were unavailable or out of range. In 1943, 149 out of the 237 German vessels sunk were victims of aircraft.

By the end of 1943, it was clear that the Allies had won the battle for the Atlantic. Richard Overly points to the importance of the British and American willingness to recognize and undertake a revolution in maritime strategy, something that the Germans were reluctant to do. After 1943, the Allies also managed to produce more ships than were being lost thanks to the dramatic increase in US shipbuilding.

**Naval war in the Pacific**

The revolutionary effect of aircraft in sea warfare was demonstrated even more clearly in the war with Japan. Japan used air power highly effectively at the start of the war in

the attack on Pearl Harbor and also against British and Dutch ships in the Pacific. Like Germany, Japan hoped to intercept Allied shipping to prevent any reinforcements reaching the Pacific. It also hoped to destroy the rest of the US fleet, as explained. However, the Americans had huge shipbuilding capability and also had realized – even before the Europeans – that aircraft were vital to naval combat. Thus the USA already had large aircraft carriers at the outbreak of war. American ships also had radar and access to Japanese codes. These factors were crucial in their success at the battles of Coral Sea and Midway in 1942. As explained on p.157, the loss of the Japanese carrier force in the battle of Midway put the Japanese into a position from which they could not recover, given their limited shipbuilding capacity. (In 1943 and 1944, Japanese shipyards produced seven aircraft carriers, whereas the American shipyards produced 90.)

**What was the significance of the naval war for the outcome of World War II?**

Naval warfare played a key role in both the course and the outcome of World War II. In Europe, the German U-boat campaign, as well as bringing the British close to subsistence levels of existence, delayed the opening of a second front, preventing the build-up of the American forces in Europe until after 1943. Taking routes to avoid the U-boats also made getting supplies to the USSR and the Allied armies in Africa much more difficult than it would normally have been.

The victory of the Allies in the battle for the Atlantic was vital, therefore, in allowing Britain and the USA to prepare for D-Day. John Keegan writes that 'Had it been lost ... the course, perhaps the outcome, of the Second World War would have been entirely otherwise.' The victory of the Allies on the seas also allowed them to impose crippling sea blockades on Italy and Japan, which dramatically affected the industrial strength of these countries and prevented them from sending out reinforcements to other fronts.

**The war in the air**

Both the war on land and the war at sea were transformed by aircraft. Both sides used aircraft as a tactical support for armies on the ground. Radio communication was used to coordinate air support, with ground-attack aircraft attacking enemy strongpoints, supply lines, troops and vehicles. At sea, aircraft now were used to attack surface vessels and also submarines, as well as to protect convoys. In supply and reconnaissance, aircraft were also applied to great effect. Supplies were now dropped by aircraft (as were soldiers in several campaigns), and aircraft were essential in supplying partisan movements behind enemy lines. Camera technology was greatly improved throughout the course of the war, making photo-reconnaissance aircraft even more effective. Aircraft were used for identifying troop movements and also targets for bombing.

**Strategic bombing**

While aircraft played a *supportive* role, World War II also saw an even more radical and independent use for aircraft in strategic bombing. This type of bombing focused on destroying the military and industrial infrastructure of a country. It could also, however, be directed against civilians in an attempt to crush civilian morale. By focusing on the home front, strategic bombing blurred further the distinction between combatant and non-combatant, and its use in World War II remains highly controversial.

**Strategic bombing in Europe**

At the beginning of the war, the RAF was forbidden from indiscriminate bombing, and in fact both sides held back from being the first to attack cities directly in Western Europe. This policy changed when a *Luftwaffe* crew bombed East London in error, which was followed with a retaliatory raid by Churchill against Berlin. Hitler used the

Berlin attack as an excuse to launch a full-scale air assault against London and other British cities (the Blitz).

Apart from retaliation for the Blitz, the switch to **area bombing** by the British and Americans was also caused by the fact that precision attacks on German industrial targets in daylight led to high casualties, and localized night-time attacks were too inaccurate. In addition, strategic bombing allowed the Allies to show Stalin that they were playing their part in the war.

The key advocate of the bombing campaign in Britain was Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, who was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command at the beginning of 1942. Initially, bombing raids on Germany did not bring about the results that Bomber Command hoped for, and the high losses of RAF planes in 1942–43 were making the strategy unacceptable. The effects on parts of Germany were still horrific – 40,000 dying in Hamburg in a firestorm, for instance – but they did not lead to a collapse in civilian morale and German industrial production continued to rise into 1944. However, with the introduction of the P-51B Mustang in 1944, the bombing campaign became far more devastating. This plane was fitted with auxiliary fuel tanks so that it could accompany the bombers all the way to the target; it was thus able to take on the *Luftwaffe* fighters, causing huge losses in German planes and giving the bombers easier bomb runs. In February and March 1944, the Germans lost a total of 900 fighters, a situation from which they never recovered. By June 1944, the Allies had total air superiority.

With the *Luftwaffe* defeated, Bomber Command was able to bomb in daylight and to carry out 'precision' attacks on industrial targets such as the steel industry in the Ruhr. (The US Army Air Forces – USAAF – bombed almost exclusively in daylight. Previously the RAF largely bombed at night, while the USAAF took over in the day.) However, cities in eastern Germany such as Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz were also attacked in the spring of 1945. Joint Anglo-American attacks on Dresden in February 1945 created a firestorm that killed approximately 50,000 civilians.

The aftermath of the Allied air raids on Dresden, February 1945.



The Germans, who lacked a proper strategic bomber force, responded to the Allied attacks from 1944 with the V1, a pilotless flying bomb, and the V2 ballistic missile. These were targeted at London and did cause significant casualties. They could not be mass-produced, however, and were unreliable and inaccurate. They also came too late in the war to have any effect on the outcome. In fact, the rocket project did not help the German war effort, as it used up resources that would have been better spent on building more fighter planes.

### Strategic bombing in the Pacific

Japan was also subjected to intense bombing. From November 1944, the USAAF, flying from the captured island bases of Saipan and Guam, began relentlessly hitting the Japanese mainland. Initially they carried out precision attacks on aircraft factories, but these gave way from March 1945 to area bombing using mainly incendiary munitions. The results were horrific for Japanese civilians living in houses made mainly of wood, bamboo and paper. In an attack on Tokyo on 9 March 1945, B-29s flying from Iwo Jima destroyed a quarter of the city – 1 million homes – and killed approximately 80,000 people. In the six months between April and August 1945, 21st Bomber Command under the direction of General Curtis LeMay devastated most of Japan's major cities. Terrified Japanese fled to the villages; absenteeism in the factories rose to 50 per cent. A combination of sea blockade and bombing devastated the economy and left Japan on the verge of defeat. However, the ultimate expression of strategic bombing came with the use of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, after which Japan surrendered. Thus it was air power alone that caused the final collapse of Japan; no land invasion was necessary.

### The debate about strategic bombing

There have been two major criticisms made against strategic bombing: that it was morally wrong and that it was ineffective. With regard to the first point, the justifications given by the Allies were that the Germans started it (Churchill quoted Hosea 8:7 saying 'now those who sow the wind are reaping the whirlwind'), that it was the only means that Britain had of hitting back at Germany, and that it would help end the war more quickly. It was thus a strategy of necessity. Yet critics at the time, and since 1945, maintained that the devastating effects on civilian populations did not justify such use of bombing.

With regard to its effectiveness, there is again much controversy. Some historians argue that the dramatic drop in German production in 1944–45 was due to the attacks of Bomber Command, while other historians argue that Germany's declining production figures were owed as much to the general attrition of the war as to the bombing. The sources below set out these arguments more fully.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Document analysis

##### Document A

*There has always seemed something fundamentally implausible about the contention of bombing's critics that dropping almost 2.5 million tons of bombs on tautly stretched industrial systems and war-weary urban populations would not seriously weaken them. Germany and Japan had no special immunity. Japan's military economy was devoured in the flames; her population desperately longed for escape from bombing. German forces lost half of the weapons needed, at the front, millions of workers absented themselves from work, and the economy gradually creaked almost to a halt. Bombing turned the whole of Germany, in Speer's words, into a 'gigantic front'. It was a front the Allies were determined to win; it absorbed huge resources on both sides. It was a battlefield in which only the infantry were missing. The final victory of the bombing in 1944 was, Speer concluded, 'the greatest lost battle on the German side... For all the arguments over the morality or operational effectiveness of the bombing campaigns, the air offensive was one of the decisive elements in Allied victory.'*

From Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 2006.

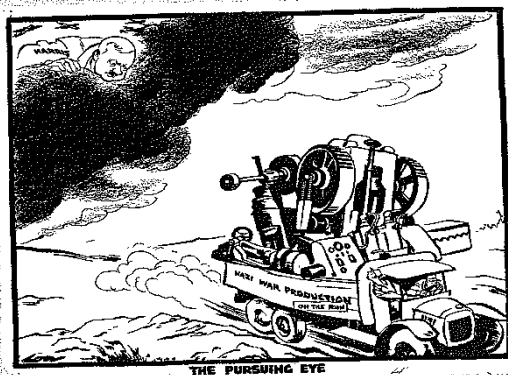
##### Document B

*Harris later claimed that the bombers could have won the war on their own, had they been given the required resources. There is little evidence to suggest that area bombing (whatever we may say about its morality) contributed directly to the Allied victory. There was, for example, despite Harris'*

confident predictions, no general collapse in German morale. German productive capacity was reduced by about 9% in 1943 and about 17% in 1944. In mitigation, however, it is important to note three points. First, that in the dark days of 1940–41, after London and other cities had been blitzed and British forces had been expelled from Norway and France, the British felt they had to be doing something to hit back at the enemy; bombing was arguably of psychological importance. Second, that as the war dragged on, there was a need to placate Stalin, in the absence of a second ground front, to be seen to be carrying the war to the enemy, above all to deter the Soviets from signing a separate peace with Germany. Third, that area bombing operations against Germany, whatever their real effect on the ground, caused a substantial portion of German resources to be re-directed to home defence and reconstruction from other fronts; they also saved civilian lives in Britain by putting the Luftwaffe on the defensive.

From Peter Riddick, 'Strategic Bombing', in *Modern History Review*, 1994

#### Document C



#### Questions

- 1 Identify the key points made in Document A and explain what they reveal about the impact of strategic bombing on the outcome of the war.
- 2 To what extent are the views expressed about strategic bombing in Document A supported by Document B?
- 3 What is the message of the cartoon? In what ways does this cartoon support the views of Richard Overly?

#### Review questions

What was the impact of a) the war at sea, and b) the war in the air, on the final outcome of the war? What technological developments in each of these areas had an impact on the nature of the fighting and the outcome?

## World War II as a total war

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Review question

Before reading this section, review the key features of total war by referring to p.2. You may also want to copy out the spider diagram on p.61 and add to it as you read the following section.

World War II is considered to be more of a total war than World War I, for the following reasons:

- Learning from World War I, governments made every effort to ensure the fullest mobilization and most efficient utilization of the human and material resources of the state.
- Because World War I had shown that the productivity of the home front was the key to victory, so World War II saw the home front under direct attack in a way that had not occurred in the previous conflict.
- Governments used all weapons at their disposal and developed new ones during the course of the war, weapons that were capable of killing far greater numbers of civilians than ever before.
- In both the war in Europe and the war in the Far East, racial hatred led to the killing or relocation of vast numbers of civilians deemed to be untrustworthy or inferior.

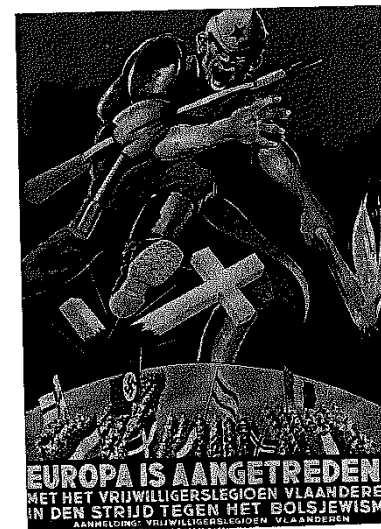
### The aims of the belligerents

As with World War I, the aims of the powers involved in the war were 'total'. Hitler's aims for Europe were clear; total domination and the takeover of the USSR to provide living space for the German peoples. They also involved the elimination of races considered inferior – Jews in particular – in all areas taken over by the Nazis. In combating these aims, the Allies could afford no compromise peace. They saw themselves as fighting for the freedom of Europe. The same was true in the Pacific, where the Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere, with its aims of political, economic and racial domination, were considered unacceptable. Although Japan called for a negotiated peace in 1945, this was rejected by the Allies, who demanded total surrender.

The racial aspect of the fighting, involving as it did whole populations, injected a greater intensity into the struggle and ensured a bitter fight to the finish. As with World War I, propaganda on both sides reinforced the need for unrestrained warfare, while also demonizing the enemy and making total victory the only goal.



▲ A 1943 US poster makes an historical link between fighting the Nazis and Japanese, and the American revolution of the late 18th century.



▲ 'Bolshevism is treading on Europe.' A German poster distributed in Belgium in 1943.

▶ The pursuing eye, a cartoon by David Low in the *Evening Standard*, 29 November 1943.

## The use of weaponry

As you have read, both sides used all weapons in their arsenals, and developed deadly new weapons during the course of the war in an attempt to win at all costs.

### The future impact of wartime technological innovations

World War II saw major developments in military technology – radar, U-boat detection equipment, long-distance bombing, V1 and V2 rockets and, of course, the atomic bomb. Of these, radar was to have a huge impact in future air and sea navigation, the V2 weapons led indirectly to rockets for space exploration and nuclear missiles, while the jet engine would revolutionize air travel. The atomic bomb, as you will read later, would affect how the Cold War was to be fought. There were other developments, stimulated by wartime needs, that would have a big impact in peacetime. The large-scale production of the new sulphonamide drugs and of penicillin (which had been discovered in 1929) saved thousands of soldiers' lives and would save thousands of civilian lives after the war. The war also saw research into improved techniques for storing blood and plasma, and also plastic surgery for helping badly injured or burnt service personnel. Synthetic fibres such as nylon, which were used to make parachutes, would soon appear in all types of consumer products.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Review question

Go back over this chapter, add examples to your spider diagram of weaponry that show how both sides used every means possible to achieve victory.

## The role of civilians

As we have seen, civilians were attacked in new ways during World War I and also suffered the effects of war in terms of rationing and deprivation. However, the large casualty figures were made up mainly of the men of the armed forces. In World War II these proportions changed profoundly. Whereas in World War I, civilians counted for only one-twentieth of the war dead, in World War II they counted for up to two-thirds of the deaths (see Chapter 9). This shift was because of the power of the new weaponry – the bombers, for example – and also because the new mobility of war brought the fighting to far greater numbers of people than had been the case in World War I.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Review question

Go back over this chapter, pull out examples of where civilians were either caught up in the fighting or deliberately targeted as a strategy for winning the war. Add to your spider diagram the examples and the impact on civilians.

## Deportation and genocide

There was an ideological and racial aspect to World War II that meant that certain sections of populations were deliberately targeted, with the intent that they should be deported or even eliminated entirely. In Europe, this was particularly evident on the Eastern Front following the German invasion of Poland and the Soviet Union. Hitler believed that certain races – in particular Jews but also Slavs – were *Untermenschen* or subhuman. The space that was necessary for the Greater German Reich also meant that the existing populations in Poland and the USSR had to be destroyed or displaced. In one of the plans for German settlement drawn up by the Reich, it was estimated that the unwanted population would be closer to fifty or even fifty-seven million, assuming that 15 percent of Poles, 25 percent

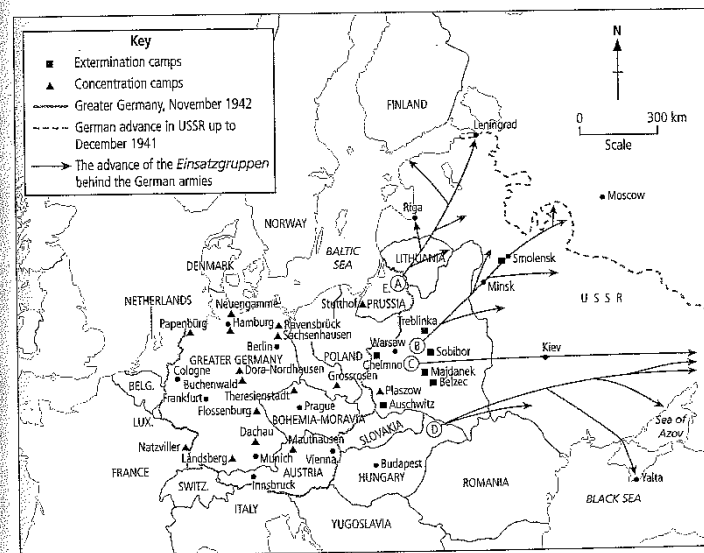
of Ruthenians and 35 percent of Ukrainians would need to be retained as agricultural labourers, the rest being deported to Siberia. The Russian population would wither away through the use of contraception, abortion and sterilization. The Jews would be exterminated' (Niall Ferguson, *War of the World*, 2006).

Many Poles and Russians were deported to the factories and mines of the Third Reich, where the work there ensured almost certain death for most of them. For the Jews, special SS squads called *Einsatzgruppen* accompanied the German Army as it invaded Poland and the USSR, and had the dedicated job to kill all Jews, communist officials and resisters they encountered. By the end of July 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* had murdered around 63,000 men, women and children, 90 per cent of whom were Jews. Groups other than Jews were also at risk, such as the Gypsies and mental patients.

The method of killing such large numbers of people was, however, very time-consuming and costly – mass groups of people were generally herded into remote locations and shot. The Nazis came up with a new method to deliver their 'final solution' to the 'Jewish question' – the transportation of Jews from across Europe to concentration and extermination camps, where they could be eliminated either by poison gas or through overwork and starvation. The extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau alone could kill 10,000 people a day.

The Soviet government also deported whole populations. It assumed that the minority peoples in the west were disloyal to the Soviet Union and thus the Germans on the Volga and the Tartars in the Crimea were deported. Estonians, Lithuanians and Poles were all dispersed to Siberia or other parts of the USSR.

A combination of lethal factors meant that the death tolls in Eastern Europe and the USSR during the war were terribly high. At least 20 million died in the Soviet Union (some estimates put the number much higher) and more than half of these were civilian deaths. Poland suffered the greatest proportional loss of life, with six million deaths out



### Rape of women in East Germany

As the Soviets pushed though to Berlin in the final year of the war, they took revenge on the German population for three years of brutal warfare and the atrocities that the Germans had inflicted on the Russian population. Tony Judt writes that: 'Chief among the victims were adult males (if any remained) and women of any age. 87,000 women in Vienna were reported by clinics and doctors to have been raped by Soviet soldiers in the three weeks following the Red Army's arrival in the city. A slightly larger number of women in Berlin were raped in the week of May 2nd–7th, immediately preceding the German surrender. Both of these figures are surely an underestimate, and they do not include the uncounted number of assaults on women in the villages and towns that lay in the path of the Soviet forces in their advance into Austria and across western Poland into Germany' (Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, 2005).

Map showing the main extermination and concentration camps in German-occupied Europe by 1942.



Allied prisoners of the Japanese in the Pacific War, 1941–45.

were commonplace, hence the genocidal Japanese treatment of the Chinese in 'the rape of Nanjing'. Such brutality continued during the takeover of South-East Asia following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Between 5,000 and 50,000 Chinese were massacred in Singapore in a series of 'purification-by-elimination' operations. Overall, 10 million Chinese died at the hands of the Japanese. Filipinos, Indonesians and Malays were also used as slave workers, resulting in thousands of deaths. Allied prisoners of war also suffered terribly from physical overwork, malnutrition and abuse.

#### Internment

German and Japanese civilians who found themselves living in Britain and America also suffered. It was assumed that their first loyalties would be to their country of origin. Thus Germans and Austrians in Britain were rounded up and put in internment camps. In America, more than 100,000 Japanese were relocated into camps, losing their property or being forced to sell at very low prices. In 1988, the US Congress agreed on an apology for this policy and gave \$20,000 compensation to all surviving internees.

of a population of 30 million. Three million of these were Jews and only 150,000 of these casualty figures represent deaths in military action. Overall an estimated one million Gypsies and six million Jewish civilians were killed by the Nazis in their racial extermination programme.

The Japanese also had ambitions linked to racial superiority. 'The Chinese people', wrote General Sakai Ryu, the Chief of Staff of the Japanese forces in North China in 1937, 'are bacteria infesting world civilization.' Such attitudes

#### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

##### Document analysis

*As the Turks had treated the Armenians, as Stalin's henchmen were treating the kulaks, Poles and other enemies of the people, as the Nazis were soon to start treating the Jews, Gypsies and mentally ill, so the Japanese now thought of and treated the Chinese as sub-humans. This capacity to treat other human beings as members of an inferior and indeed malignant species – as mere vermin – was one of the crucial reasons why Twentieth Century conflict was so violent. Only make this mental leap, and warfare ceases to be a formalised encounter between uniformed armies; it becomes a war of annihilation, in which everyone on the other side – men, women, children, the elderly – can legitimately be killed.*

From Nial Ferguson, *War of the World*, 2006

##### Questions

- 1 What point is Ferguson making about war in the 20th century?
- 2 What recent examples are there of where contempt for one race of people by another has led to violence?

### Civilians as part of the war effort

As with World War I, civilians were mobilized in all countries to help with the war effort. This effort was, however, on a much vaster scale than in World War I. The major combatants mobilized between a half and two-thirds of their industrial workforce, and devoted up to three-quarters of their national product to waging war. This meant that, apart from in the USA, the vital resources of the country were directed to the war effort and the populations were therefore forced to live on a restricted range of rationed food and household goods.

The number of people required to both fight and to work in the factories to produce the necessary amount of war materials was vast, and countries used different methods to get the workforce that they required.

#### Britain

In Britain, military conscription was introduced from the beginning of the conflict (unlike in World War I), but it was carefully controlled to ensure that key workers were left in the important industries, such as coal mining. Industrial conscription was also introduced for women, and thus women played an even bigger role in British industry, agriculture and administration in World War II than in World War I.

#### Germany

In Germany, there was little change to the economy at the beginning of the war, as the early victories did not put much strain on the home front. When Albert Speer, the Minister of Armaments and War Production, tried to organize the deployment of human resources more effectively from 1942 onwards, he found little support. The regional and police authorities were reluctant to accept national schemes that affected their regions, and having women in the workplace went against Hitler's idea that women should focus on *Kinder, Kirche, Küche* ('Children, Church, Kitchen'). Hitler also insisted that consumer goods production remain a priority, and so workers in non-essential industries could not be transferred.

#### Soviet Union

In the Soviet Union, the already centralized nature of the state allowed civilians to be mobilized effectively from the beginning. Coercion also played a key role. Workers were forced to move to those areas of the Soviet Union in which they were most needed, hours of work increased, and crash training programmes were developed to make up for the shortage of skilled labour. Slacking or absenteeism could be punished by labour camps or death.

Women made up most of the workforce, but also volunteered to serve in the armed forces. They joined the Red Army or the Red Air Force; the latter had three regiments (two bomber and one fighter) consisting entirely of women. They also played a vital role in the Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations, and in civil defence and fire-watching operations. Richard Overy calls the civilians of Russia the 'real heroes' of the Soviet Union's economic revival after the Nazi invasion, due to the appalling conditions in which many of them worked, suffering under long hours, poor nutrition and political scrutiny.

#### America

In America, women also played a key role in war industries, doing semi-skilled jobs such as crane operators, tool makers, shell loaders, aircraft makers and lumberjacks. An estimated 350,000 women also joined uniformed groups such as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve and the Navy Nurse Corps.

#### Japan

As in Germany, the Japanese government was reluctant to use women in the workforce, preferring to use conscript students rather than women. Though more than two and a half million extra women did enter the workforce between 1940 and 1945, a much larger number did not.

#### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

##### Research activity

Research one resistance group from one of the following occupied countries: Denmark, France, Belgium, Norway, Holland. Find out how it was organized, its activities and to what extent it had an impact on the final defeat of the Germans.



A poster of 'Rosie the Riveter', a fictional female worker used by the US government in a propaganda poster campaign to encourage women to join the war effort.

#### Resistance fighters

In all countries occupied by the Nazis, there were civilians who joined resistance groups. Also called partisans, they gathered intelligence for the Allies, used sabotage and murder against the occupiers, helped rescue shot-down Allied pilots or took Jews into safety. Their work was vital for the Allies, but extremely dangerous, as can be seen by the contents of this poster that was put up on the walls of the French city of Nantes in 1941: 'Cowardly criminals in the pay of England and Moscow have killed, by shooting in the back, the Field Commander of Nantes on the morning of 20 October 1941. In expiation for this crime I have already ordered that fifty hostages be shot ... fifty more hostages will be shot if the guilty parties are not arrested by midnight 23 October 1941. I offer an award totalling 15 million francs to those citizens who contribute to the discovery of the guilty parties.'

## The growth of government power

### Britain

As in World War I, the British government extended its powers to cope with organizing its human and economic resources. Churchill formed a **coalition government** and exercised supreme political and military power. However, Ernest Bevin was able to get on with his job as Minister of Labour and National Service much more effectively than Albert Speer was able to perform a similar role under Hitler.

Mines, shipping and railways again came under state control. Rationing was introduced and, as we have seen, conscription for both men and women. Bevin also intervened extensively in the health and welfare of the nation, improving health care, setting up nurseries to look after children of working mothers, and making sure all factories employing more than 250 people had a canteen and a welfare officer. Bevin took the idea of national welfare still further by making special food rations and vitamin supplements available to young children and mothers, rationalizing the chaotic health system and ensuring that public transport became a public service rather than a private business. This programme was to lay the foundations for the legislation that set up the National Health Service and the Welfare State after World War II.

### Germany

In Germany, a single-party state already existed. Yet German planning remained confused and decentralized. In 1942 Albert Speer was put in charge of the Central Planning Board and in 1944, Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister, was appointed Commissioner for Total Mobilization of Resources for War. Yet neither appointment overcame the problems of a system that was 'poorly co-ordinated, uncooperative and obstructive' (Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, 2006). Until 1943, Germany also focused on high quality and technical sophistication rather than trying to mass produce large quantities of standard weapons. It thus failed to produce weapons on a large enough scale and, as you have read, the Soviet Union, although having a smaller industrial base, greatly out-produced the German empire throughout the war.

### Soviet Union

In the Soviet Union, the centralized all-powerful state already existed. Its survival after 1941 was due to careful planning and mass production, as well as the efforts of the Soviet people. The USSR was turned into Stalin's 'single war camp', where war production was the only priority. A single national war plan was drawn up in 1943 and the planners were given the powers for getting their objectives completed. Unlike in Germany, Soviet planners concentrated on large numbers of weapons to be produced as simply and quickly as possible.

### USA

In the USA, the government also took control of industrial production. The War Production Board, which was established in January 1942, changed production priorities to the needs of the military. Thus car factories now produced tanks and planes. The War Commission recruited workers for where they were needed most and new industries were created, particularly for the production of synthetic materials. However, the USA mainly relied on American business, with its expertise in mass production and technical innovation, and it granted contracts out to the big industries to produce what was needed. Thus without changing the free-market nature of the American economy, the USA was able to expand its manufacturing capacity immensely, ending the war as the most powerful economy in the world.

### Japan

Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the military government in Japan had strengthened its powers. In 1940, all the main political parties went into 'voluntary' dissolution, and in their place a monolithic party of national unity, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, was set up. Trade unions were also closed down, being replaced with the Great Japan Patriotic Industrial Association, which included employers and workers. As in Germany, however, it was difficult for the government to maintain tight control of war production due to the independent positions of the *Zaibatsu* (big companies) and the rivalries between the army and the navy.

## Propaganda

Propaganda remained a key weapon of all governments in attempting to win support for the war effort. Germany and the USSR already had propaganda machines in constant action, and these played a key role in convincing their populations of the justification of their actions. Goebbels stoked the German fear of communism in the East, and Stalin cleverly dubbed the war as the 'Great Patriotic War', in which defence of the 'motherland' rather than of the brutal communist state was to be the driving motivation of the people.

The Western democracies faced a problem in 1939 in that pacifism in Britain, and isolationism in the USA, were the main attitudes to a new war. The change in public opinion, however, came not so much from propaganda as the actions of the Axis powers. After the war scare in 1938, public opinion in Britain hardened and generally the British were ready for war by 1939 and determined to fight, though lacking the enthusiastic response of the soldiers of 1914. In America, it was the attack on Pearl Harbor and the German declaration of war that changed attitudes.

Propaganda nevertheless remained important to the governments of both countries, and was controlled by special offices – Churchill, for example, established the Political Warfare Executive. In America, the Office of War Information was set up to help Americans understand that the purpose of the war was to defend the national belief in freedom and liberty. Propaganda and censorship were used to help maintain morale, encourage civilians to be more thrifty, get women to work and, of course, to stress the evil nature of the enemy regime against which they were fighting.



To access worksheet 8.4 on propaganda and total war, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### Student activity

Look at the propaganda posters shown in this chapter. For each poster explain the message and how the message has been conveyed.

#### Research activity

Research the propaganda methods of Goebbels in Nazi Germany. What different types of propaganda were used? Give examples of each type. Which were the most effective?

Propaganda was also used directly in the fight against the Nazis. The radio was the most important weapon in this war. The BBC's news broadcasts came to be seen as reliable reports and were listened to in occupied countries to maintain morale and also to inform resistance movements.

British and American propaganda against the Japanese was very different to that used against the Germans. Whereas the propaganda against Germany stressed that the Nazis specifically were the evil enemy, not the whole German population, with Japan the attack was of an openly racial nature and aimed at all Japanese, not just the leaders. The attitude



towards the Japanese was that they were primitive, uncivilized and very much inferior, also that they were treacherous and barbaric. The *Daily Mail* newspaper in Britain referred to a Japan that is 'dominated by a fanatical belief in the superiority of the Japanese race and its mission to spread the paternal rule of the divine Emperor ... the natural outcome of a primitive tribalism which has persisted beneath the veneer of different cultures borrowed from other countries'. In cartoons they were portrayed as apes.

What is the message of this cartoon from the *Daily Mail*, 18 February 1942 (three days after the fall of British Singapore to the Japanese)?



#### Planning for essay writing on World War I and World War II

When going over the key features of World War II, it is helpful to compare them to World War I both to enhance your understanding and also to help prepare for comparative essays. The introduction to this chapter identified some differences between the two wars. From what you have now read, brainstorm further differences. You may want to copy out and fill in the grid below to help you work out the differences between the conflicts.

	World War I	World War II	Conditions, or similarities, with the 21st century
<b>Aims and ideologies</b>			
<b>Scope and scale of fighting in the war (also casualties)</b>			
<b>Strategy and tactics on land</b>			
<b>War at sea</b>			
<b>War in the air</b>			
<b>Impact on civilians</b>			
<b>Power of governments</b>			

Turn to Chapter 15, where you will find comparative questions on the two world wars. Try planning these essays in pairs using the grid above as a guide. Also try the following question using World War II:

#### Question

What do you understand by 'total war'? Choose one example of a 20th-century war to support your explanation.

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#### Examiner's hint

You can address the first part of the question in your introduction. (Go back to Chapter 1 to remind yourself of the characteristics of total war.) You will need to keep coming back to your definition of total war throughout your essay. If you completed the mind map exercise on total war on p.61, this can help you with your essay planning, and it should give you the examples you need to support your definition. Don't forget that you can give examples from both the European and the Asian/Pacific wars.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF WORLD WAR II

As you read through this chapter, consider the following essay questions:

- Why did the USA and the USSR emerge as superpowers following World War II, and what impact did this have on Europe up to 1949?
- What were the effects of the war on Asia?

### The impact of the war in Europe

#### Human cost

No other war has recorded such a loss of life in so short a time. Some estimates put the number of dead at more than 50 million, with nearly 40 million of them in Europe. As you have read in the section on total war in the previous chapter, the impact on civilians in this war was huge. Perhaps as many as two-thirds of the war dead were civilians, the most extreme example of this situation being Poland, which lost a fifth of its population, almost all of them civilians. In fact, in Europe only Germany and the UK suffered military losses significantly greater than civilian losses. America's casualties, meanwhile, were almost exclusively military.

	Mobilized (thousands)	Military killed (thousands)	Civilians killed (thousands)
Germany	11,000	3,250	700
Italy	4,500	330	500
Japan	6,095	1,700	360
British Empire	8,720	452	80
France	6,000	250	360
Poland	1,000	120	5,300
USSR	12,500	9,500	21,500 (est.)
USA	14,900	407	Small number
China	8,000	1,500	7,800
Total from above countries	72,715	17,509	36,600

◀ Military and civilian death toll in World War II.

The horror for civilians did not end with the conclusion of hostilities. More than 20 million people had been displaced during the course of the war, not just as a result of the fighting, but also due to the actions of different countries in expelling and deporting whole groups of people. Stalin and Hitler alone were responsible for the forced removals of some 30 million people.

In addition, many people were forced to move from their homes once the war was over. In German-speaking areas in Hungary, Romania and Poland, Germans were driven from their homes and forced to move to Germany, which at this time was a bombed ruin. This also happened in German lands taken at the end of the war by Russia and Poland. In all, between 1945 and 1947, approximately 16 million Germans were expelled from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and many died as a result of this flight to Western Europe. Thus, although the war was over, the suffering continued for many.