

Yalta Conference History Simulation

Historical Context for the Three Countries

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Three times before the end of World War Two, the leaders of Great Britain, Soviet Union, and the United States met to decide how to bring the war to a quick conclusion and how the world would look after World War Two. Only the top leader from each country was authorized to speak on behalf of their nation's interests. Not only were they influenced by the immediate decisions needed to end the war, but also they were consciously or unconsciously influenced by their nation's history while they negotiated with each other. These meetings sometimes took weeks to complete. During the breaks during the meetings, the leaders conferred with their staff to discuss negotiation strategies. These strategies changed dynamically based on the flow of conversations. Reaching agreements was difficult since it required the unanimous agreement of all three nations. Since two of the three countries (Great Britain and the U.S.) represented democratic political systems, the USSR was naturally suspicious when they both agreed on a negotiating item since they feared it would be harmful to interests of the Soviet Union who employed a totalitarian government system.



The second of these three meetings was the Yalta Conference. It was held February 4-11, 1945 among leaders of the three major Allied powers fighting against Hitler's Germany: President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and Premier Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union. These leaders sought to defeat Nazi Germany as rapidly as possible, but they were already concerned about the future. Anticipating conflict, American and Soviet leaders sought to establish a post-war world in their own best interests of

collective security and economic power. The British were uncomfortable as a much weaker world power after centuries as an undisputed military and political force in Europe and through their world-wide empire. At their height of power in the early 1900s, the British Empire included 25% of the earth's land surface and their navy transportation and warships were the strongest in the world. They sought to protect their power base and hoped to emerge as the leader of a powerful post-war Western Europe. The decisions that these three men made at Yalta shaped the direction of European and Asian history for the next forty-five years. Many Cold War disputes have their origin in the agreements and disagreements at Yalta. In addition to the decisions made by these three men at the conference, many other world leaders were not there to advocate for their country's issues. For example, the East European countries had no voice to object to the Soviet Sphere of Influence granted by Churchill and Roosevelt over them. Mao was not at the table to advocate for the emerging Chinese nation which vastly predated the cultures at the table by over 3,000 years.

A third conference was held at the very end of the European part of World War Two in Potsdam. The results were to basically affirm decisions from the Yalta Conference. Even though the United States had successfully tested the atomic bomb in secret in the Nevada testing grounds, it was unsure whether the U.S. could rely on the weapons working each time and also that a sufficient number could be produced to use against Japan to avoid a land invasion of their home islands. Therefore, the need for the Soviets to commit one a million men to the potential invasion was still needed and the agreements negotiated at the earlier Yalta Conference were maintained. While the other two countries continued with Stalin and Churchill as experienced negotiators for their countries, the U.S. changed negotiator after the death of President Roosevelt and replacement by Vice President Harry S. Truman. Most historians argue his inexperience was exploited by General Stalin during this final conference.

Simulation Learning Objectives

1. Connect the historical context for the relationships and previous disputes among the three countries during negotiations at the Yalta conference.
2. Recognize how historical context shaped the national goals of each country and their negotiation strategies. How could have events turned out different? What are the forces of history at work that make this process for change so difficult?
3. Assess each nation's success in achieving their goals in short term and long term.
4. Consider the merits of those goals considering the ensuing historical events.
5. Speculate about new dynamics and possible changed outcomes if the smaller European countries whose fates were heavily influenced by the decisions by the three leaders at Yalta were involved in the negotiations as well.
6. Experience the challenges and skills needed for effective negotiations.

Your Task: You are members of the Yalta Conference negotiation team composed of leaders from Britain, Soviet Union, and the United States. You know the decisions you make are important to end World War Two and to shape the post-WWII world. Use the following information to justify your negotiating priorities. Focus on the needs of your country. Obviously, the decisions that are agreed by all three countries will impact many of the countries throughout the world. Those countries will not be represented in these negotiations.

Historical Context for Each Nation

Each nation involved with the Yalta Conference was deeply impacted by previous historical events and especially the wars. It is important to take those events into consideration with assuming the role of one of the countries during the negotiation process. See the event through their eyes, needs, fears, desires and shared histories.

Russian Empire/Soviet Union Delegation

Stalin as Leader of Soviet Union



Premier Joseph Stalin was the lead negotiator for the Soviet Union. Among the Bolshevik revolutionaries who took part in the Russian Revolution of 1917, Stalin was appointed General Secretary of the party's Central Committee in 1922. His role was to be the leader of the eventual Communist political party while Lenin was the political leader and Trotsky was the military leader. Stalin subsequently consolidated power following the 1924 death of Vladimir Lenin and expanding his role, all the while eliminating any opposition. He remained General Secretary until the post was abolished in 1952, concurrently serving as the Premier of the Soviet Union from 1941 onward. Between 1934 and 1939 he organized and led a massive purge (known as "Great Purge") of the party, government, armed forces and intelligentsia, in which millions of so-called "enemies of the Soviet people" were imprisoned, exiled or executed. In a period that lasted from 1936 to 1939, Stalin instituted a campaign against enemies within his regime. Major figures in the Communist Party, such as the old Bolsheviks, General Leon Trotsky, and most of the Red Army generals, were killed after being convicted of plotting to overthrow the government and Stalin. Stalin led the Soviet Union through its post-war reconstruction phase, which saw a significant rise in tension with the Western world that would later be known as the Cold War. He is also attributed responsible for 20 to 40 million deaths of Russian citizens, military officers, and politicians as a result of his paranoid actions.

History of the Russian Empire. Before the Communist Revolution, the Soviet Union was called the Russian Empire dating back hundreds of years. Due to geographically location in both Eastern Europe and Asia, the Russians were not as culturally, economically, and politically engaged with the Western European countries. The Russian empire was enormously complicated with many different nationalities, cultures, languages, religions, and histories. It was a rich blend of European and Asian cultures that made them different from Western European countries. Some within Germany perceived the Russian blend of cultures as inferior and deserved elimination to reduce contamination of European cultures, especially the Germans based on Social Darwinism and racial hatred.

Noninvolvement with Imperialism and Industrial Revolution. Unlike most of European countries, Russia did not participate with worldwide imperialism through establishment of colonies and direct or indirect control over the inhabitants of other countries. After the Communists take over control of Russia, they often used their new political philosophy to denounce the Western Europeans for taking advantage of smaller countries and exploiting them. This was consistent with their view of history as conflict between the working class of farm peasants and factory workers (proletariat) and smaller elite class of land or factory owners and bankers (bourgeoisie).

Russia did not participate in the Industrial Revolution that was dominated by the Western European countries led by Great Britain. Russia remained a primarily

agricultural empire, even though that had the needed raw resources for an Industrial Revolution such as coal and iron deposits. With no worldwide imperialistic empire to provide markets for the sales of items produced in the factories, the country focused on domestic consumption of the goods. Lifestyles of the peasants located in the mostly rural Russian empire changed little over this time period. There were few incentives for the ruling aristocratic and growingly corrupt Tsar Family to engage in the Industrial Revolution since their economy was based on agriculture, not production of industrial goods. There was no significant industrial middle class of bankers and factory owners who would benefit from an Industrial Revolution. The small wealthy class in society gained their power and influence through land ownership of enormous farms that employed the peasants who benefited little.

Anger with European Interference with Russia. The Communist Russians resented interference of the Europeans during their civil war for control of the country following the fall of the previous empire of the Tsar and other aristocratic rulers. At the end of World War One, some units from armies of Great Britain, France, Japan, and the United States still in Europe sought to influence the Russian Civil War between the Red and White Russians. The Allies supported the White Russians (Socialists but opposed to fighting against Lenin and his followers) and fought against the Red Russians (future Communists led by Lenin) in what they perceived as their Revolutionary Independence War. This would cause deep mistrust of the Red Russians (eventually the ruling socialist/communist power of the new Soviet Union) with the Western Europeans and the United States. Lenin believed they should have been left alone to work out their independence movement as the United States sought during its war for independence against the British despite interference by the Germans.

The Russian Empire had not been aggressors against Western European countries. On the contrary, the Russians have been invaded three times by European countries (France, WWI Germany, WWII Germany) with loss of 50,000,000+ civilians and troops with massive destructive of their land and economy. The first of the invasions was by the French under the command of Napoleon in the early 1800s. Then the invasions by the Germans during World War One and World War Two. Due to the numerous invasions over 150 years, the Soviet Union wanted a buffer zone between its country and Western Europe.

The Russians sometimes have been forced to make agreements with Western European governments for short-term advantages or to stem the loss of soldiers and civilians. At the end of World War One, they violated agreements with other Allied countries and signed a separate peace treaty with Germany. They were desperate to stop the destruction of their country at the hands of the Germans and were angry that the other Allied countries with which they had a military defensive pact, did not work harder to help them. Land that had been part of the Russian empire for centuries was given to the Germans.

Relationship of the Soviets with Germans. The Soviets wanted to regain some of this land hold onto the land they acquired from the Germans in their agreement in 1939 such as Poland. These former bitter enemies signed an agreement that temporarily provided advantages to both. As a result, Poland was divided in half between Germany and Russia. This action returned some of the land that had been taken away by Germany at the end of World War One, but much more remained until control by the Germans. Stalin later justified the decision to sign this agreement as

necessary to provide more time for his country to prepare for the invasion of Germany. The Soviet Union was furiously developing its Industrial Revolution with a focus on developing heavy machinery and military weapons as Stalin believed a war against Germany would occur soon. Stalin thought it best to do whatever was necessary to buy a few more years of peace between the two countries so the Soviet Union could produce more war weapons.

Relationship of the Soviets with other WWII Allies. While the Soviet Union was pleased that Great Britain and the United States provided food and military weapons for them during World War Two in their conflict against Germany, they were still losing millions of soldiers and civilians during the battles. Top Russian leaders believed the Allies intentionally delaying invasion of France. They thought this was deliberate to weaken the Soviet Union through huge losses of troops fighting the Germans on Russian land.

The Russians began a nuclear weapon program during WWII after their spies discovered the program begun by Britain and the U.S. This created great fear by the Soviets since their partners in WWII denied sharing this knowledge with them or inviting their help. Their fear was that the new weapon would be used against them after WWII ended. In 1942, Soviet physicist Georgy Flyorov encouraged Stalin to start their own program. With the heavy commitment to the invasion of Germany, not as many resources were placed with the Soviet nuclear program. However, the Russian program quickly caught-up with the Britain and the U.S. through spy activities, acquiring some of German rocket and nuclear scientists, and some historians argue that Soviet troops captured nuclear technology developed by Japan with their own bomb program.

Strategic Timing of the Yalta Conference. The Yalta Conference occurred following the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944 and early 1945. After battles at Leningrad, Stalingrad, and other locations, the Germans were forced to retreat. Russian troops advanced quickly and crossed the border of Germany and moved to capture their capital city of Berlin. At the same time, the armies of the U.S. and Britain were slowing recovering from the Battle of the Bulge. It appeared the Soviet soldiers would overrun Germany without need of the allies and occupy Germany as well as other Eastern European countries. The leaders of Great Britain and the United States felt compelled to give the Soviet Union more than they wanted to stop the Soviets to not take over all of Germany and Eastern Europe. Stalin thought he was generous to the United States and Great Britain when he was willing to sacrifice one million Soviet troops for invasion of Japan if the benefits were high enough for the Soviet Union.

Soviets Wanted a Protective Buffer Zone. An important objective for the Soviet Union was developing a buffer zone between it and the Western European countries that invaded Russia during the previous 150 years. At a minimum, they wanted the countries that were in this buffer zone to have governments friendly to the Soviet Union and would not militarize themselves and place troops on the Soviet border that could be part of an invasion force. The Soviets were concerned that the East European countries occupied by the Soviet at the end of WWII might become part of the British Empire or elect political leaders that would join a military alliance with Great Britain and the U.S. A buffer zone was also wanted on the Eastern side of the Soviet Union by taking control of islands conquered by Japan at the beginning of WWII from China. These were the Southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands and their long-term lease for Port Arthur would

be restored. These islands and the port were originally part of China but they were not consulted or provided approval for these areas to be assigned to the Soviet Union.

Poland was an independent country during the early Middle Ages of the 11th century. Then, the country ceased to officially exist and was heavily dominated by the Russian Empire which considered it part of them since Slavic people from Russia emigrated into what became Poland. Poland reappeared as an independent nation following WW One and existed until Germany and the Soviet Union divided it into half in 1939 with each country claiming half. As part of the Soviet advance against Germany in WW Two, their troops occupied this area and did not leave at the end of the war. Following WW Two, a new Poland was reestablished with smaller borders and shifted towards Western Europe. However, promises to allow independent elections of political leaders did not occur and the Soviet troops did not leave until the 1980s.

A particular objective of the Soviets was to weaken or eliminate Germany. They were weary of the invasions by them during World War One and World War Two. Both Germany and Poland were frequently used invasion routes by other European countries in the previous 150 years. Russia was angry for the war reparations they were forced to pay Germany at the end of World War One that helped bankrupt Russia. In addition, the land taken from Russia contained iron and coal reserves desperately needed for their Industrial Revolution. Russia wanted to take revenge upon Germany and bankrupt them at the end of World War Two to help pay for the devastation by the German troops when they burned farm fields and destroyed cities when they invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviets desired that Germany be eliminated as a country. In particular, the Soviets wanted to take control of Berlin and destroy it as a symbol of destruction of German power. The Soviets were however open to negotiations to weaken Germany and even share part control of Berlin if they were able to gain other agreements from Britain and the U.S. The Soviets did demand unconditional surrender of the Germans and supportive of the same of Japan to protect the Soviet Union from invasion by them. By the end of WW Two, the Soviet troops occupied eastern Germany which included Berlin. The other half was occupied by troops from Britain, France, and the U.S.

Soviets Opposed Imperialistic Empires. Stalin and other leaders were angry at the other Western European countries for their frequent imperialist control of other countries around the world for more than 500 years. They wanted to denounce their previous colonial empires and gain their promise to never again reestablish or expand them. This position was consistent with the Marxist philosophy of stopping exploitation or the proletariat around the world. On the other hand, the Soviet Union wanted to regain lost territory that was previously inside the Old Russian Empire. They believed this was returning land that was rightfully theirs. Obviously, the British wanted to maintain their large-scale world-wide empire. The U.S. did not express strong support for either the Soviet or British position. However, the U.S. also had strong colonial interests in Central and South America along with oil interests in the Middle East.

Countries not on the Soviet border, such as Greece, were not a high priority for them becoming socialist and under control by the Soviets. Stalin was a pragmatic leader and did not allow his political views about the superiority of socialism and communism to get in the way of negotiating with the United States and Great Britain. He was willing to do what was necessary to achieve the long-term defensive needs of his country, even if that meant committing a million troops to their deaths with an invasion of Japan if in return he better protected the Soviet Union from further invasions.

Great Britain Delegation

Churchill as Leader of Great Britain



Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister, served as the chief negotiator for the British at the Yalta Conference. Churchill was selected as Prime Minister shortly after the beginning of Hitler's war against Europe. Widely regarded as one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century, Churchill was also an officer in the British Army, a historian, a writer, and an artist. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and was the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States. At the forefront of politics for fifty years, he held many political and cabinet positions. During the First World War, he served as First Lord of the Admiralty. Out of office and politically "in the wilderness" during the 1930s, Churchill took the lead in warning about Nazi Germany and in campaigning for rearmament. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was again appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. Following the resignation of Neville Chamberlain on 10 May 1940, Churchill became Prime Minister. His steadfast refusal to consider surrender helped inspire British resistance, especially during the difficult early days of the war when the British Commonwealth and Empire stood alone in its active opposition to Adolf Hitler. Churchill was particularly noted for his speeches and radio broadcasts, which helped inspire the British people. He led Britain as Prime Minister until victory over Nazi Germany had been secured. Churchill is widely regarded as among the most influential person in British history and the most influential person of the 20th century.

England's World-Wide Imperial Empire. Great Britain was a leader of Western European Imperialism during the 1800s and early 1900s. Interrelated with their involvement with worldwide imperialism was their world leadership with the Industrial Revolution. Great Britain had multiple reasons for world-wide imperialism: bringing Western culture and religion to other countries, economic gain for the British, political influence and control of other nations, spread of democratic ideas, and improving the quality of life for people in other countries. Great Britain had a long tradition as a colonial power that occupied or indirectly controlled other countries. This also led to local protest movements that eventually led to the British departure from colonies like India. Overall, the British were proud of imperialistic and industrial power and did not want denouncements of those achievements or to restrict reestablishment or expansion of them by the leaders of the Soviet Union and the U.S. at the Yalta Conference. This was a high priority by the Soviets and not important to the U.S. since they had their own economic interests with an informal economic imperialistic countries.

At the end of World War Two, the British were worried final peace negotiations and establishment of the new United Nations might force Great Britain and other countries with colonies and mandates (political control over a weaker nation) to give up control of these often profitable colonies to allow them to become independent nations. Britain hoped that with the Yalta Conference the status quo would be maintained and a political statement would be made that these colonies and mandates would continue for the near future with perhaps independence for these areas at some point. Major

countries without historic colonial systems were not interested in that statement. Since the U.S. was supporting Great Britain and France during WWII, they took no position supporting or opposing since both had extensive colonial empires over a century throughout the world. Besides, the U.S. had its own imperialist empire (more of an economic empire rather than a military occupation) in Central and South America along with oil interests in the Middle East. The Soviet Union wanted a joint statement by other nations that denounced these imperialistic colonial systems and called for immediate independence.

Importance of Geography to England. Geography had an important impact on British history. The English Channel that separated it from the mainland of Europe provided a great defensive barrier as well as permitted English culture to develop independently from that of many other Western European cultures. This insulated them from other European countries because of difficulty of crossing the English Channel. Great Britain was a smaller country than many others with powerful military forces such as the U.S., Germany, and the Soviet Union. Because of this, Great Britain sought to divide power among a number of European countries. They believed more countries with equal power would balance one another and reduce wars. There was one country they did not want to diminish.

Great Britain did not want to divide or eliminate Germany at the end of the war. It was in their interest of their historic advocacy of “balance of power” in Europe to have numerous countries since none were large enough to militarily overwhelm others. A strong Germany would serve as a first line of defense with the Soviet Union in case they decide to invade Western Europe. They did not want Germany to pay war reparations to any countries due to destruction from WWII. Such an action would have bankrupted Germany and made it weaker and less able to defend itself from an aggressive Soviet Union who could threaten the rest of Western Europe. This helps to explain the British opposition to the Soviet demand for “unconditional surrender” by Germany and demand by the Soviet Union and the U.S. for the same of Japan. Unconditional surrender would lead to elimination of their military capacity. Great Britain wanted moderate power for Germany and Japan to provide a threat to the Soviet Union to not make aggressive moves towards Western Europe or Southeast Asia which contained British economic and military interests.

Churchill was more open to negotiations about the fate of the East European countries that were occupied by the Soviet troops at the end of WW Two. The British leader was trusting of Stalin that free elections would occur in these countries if they made promises to being “friendly” to the Soviet Union and not join military alliances with the British or the U.S. He strongly advocated for establishment of an official Polish country though he was open to the borders being moved towards Germany and allow the Soviet Union to retain part of the land which they gained with the 1939 agreement with Germany. Churchill was sympathetic to the Soviet complaint of invasions by the Western Europeans and their need for a defensive buffer zone. This would eventually lead to recognizing a Soviet “Sphere of Influence” and control in the occupied Eastern European countries. The U.S. was not as sympathetic, but the American public was not supportive of a war against the Soviets to push them back into pre-WW Two borders.

England Sought to Spread Democracy World-Wide. As one of the founders of democracy in the world, Great Britain was a strong champion for the spread of this political system throughout the world. They were so committed to this system that they

kept troops in Europe at the end of World War One to help the anti-communist forces (White Russians) in Russia to defeat the Red Army of the Bolsheviks (eventually renamed the Communist Party). Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill was a leader opposed to communists worldwide. Following the political saying that "*the enemy of my enemy is my temporary friend*", Great Britain reluctantly supported the Soviet Union fight against Germany so that World War Two would be a two-sided war for the Germans, (Soviets on the East and Britain and U.S. on the West), thus reducing the military threat against Great Britain. Churchill recognized that the land occupied by the Soviet Union at the end of World War Two was probably lost to their influence. He advocated for democratic government in many other countries. Churchill sought Greece to be democratic due to its strategic location in the Mediterranean Sea and closeness to other democratic countries in Southwest Europe. Churchill advocated for democratic Eastern European countries that were friendly and not an immediate military threat to the Soviet Union. However, it was not clear what a "friendly" government would look like to the Soviets and what they would have to agree to appease the Soviets.

Strategic Timing of the Yalta Conference. The Yalta Conference occurred following the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944 and early 1945 that placed the English and American troops in a defensive position and slowed their advance into Germany while Russian was quickly advancing and might take occupy the entire country as well as all of Eastern Europe. President Roosevelt's health continued to decline during this time period, perhaps influencing him to not as strongly contest the Russian demands. Within months following the Yalta Conference, Roosevelt would die and Vice President Harry S. Truman would take over leadership of the U.S. during the final months of World War Two. It would be President Truman at the third and final conference, the Potsdam Conference. While the atomic bomb had been tested successfully, it was unclear if it would be reliable and available in sufficient numbers to end the war quickly. This lack of knowledge had an impact on the negotiations of both Roosevelt and Truman.

England Supported Creation of the U.N. Great Britain was supportive of creating the United Nations (U.N.) as a stronger version of the old League of Nations. The new U.N. would have the authority to create a military force to oppose aggression by other nations. It was recognized by Britain and the U.S. that the Soviet Union and other pro-Communist countries would become members of this new organization. To help balance their influence against the democratic countries, Great Britain supported creation of the U.N. Security Council. This small group inside the larger United Nations would have special power. Composed of a few countries, any member of this small group could veto a majority vote by the entire U.N. assembly. Great Britain believed France would be a good member of this small group since they had been oppressed so badly during WWI and WWII and did not trust the Soviet Union or other Communist countries. With the U.N. Security Council composed of the United States, Great Britain, and France, any one of them could stop decisions that favored the Communists. The U.N. Security Council would also include the Soviet Union to help appease them along with several other smaller countries that served for a few years. The U.S., France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union were permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. China was added to this group of five since it appeared that the democratic Nationalist group would win the long-running civil war against the Communists led by Mao. While the U.S. tried to have China ejected from the Security Council after the Communists took over control of the country after WW Two, Great Britain and other countries did not seek to change the decision.

England and Development of the Atomic Bomb. The British were involved in development of the atomic bomb during WWII. Scientists from Britain and the U.S. worked from 1939 through the early 1940s. However, the British scientists were excluded from final development of the atomic bombs used at the end of the war. The British were shocked when the U.S. excluded British involvement with the postwar control and use of atomic technology. President Truman stated the U.S. would ensure international security of the technology for the benefit of all countries. During the Cold War period, the British would purchase nuclear weapon systems from the U.S. for their defense.

United States Delegation

Roosevelt as Leader of the United States



President F. D. Roosevelt was the chief negotiator for the U.S. at the Yalta Conference. A leading member of the Democratic political party, he won a record four consecutive elections and served from March 1933 to his death in April 1945. He was a central figure in world events during the mid-20th century, leading the U.S. during a time of worldwide economic depression and total war. A dominant leader of the Democratic Party, he built a New Deal Coalition that realigned American politics after 1932, as his New Deal domestic policies defined American liberalism for the middle third of the 20th century. As World War II loomed after 1938, with the Japanese invasion of China and the aggression of Nazi Germany, Roosevelt gave strong diplomatic and financial support to China and Great Britain, while remaining officially neutral. His goal was to make America the "Arsenal of Democracy," which would supply munitions to the Allies. In March 1941, Roosevelt, with Congressional approval, provided Lend-Lease aid to the countries fighting against Nazi Germany with the United Kingdom. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill were close personal friends who shared a common vision. Roosevelt suffered from many serious physical illnesses throughout his life. At the Yalta Conference, Roosevelt's health continued to decline and he died a few months later. This may have influenced him to not be as aggressive towards Joseph Stalin and weaken his negotiation skills. Also, the major issue on President Roosevelt's mind was ending the war with Japan and not thinking strategically as did Prime Minister Churchill about the postwar world and beginning of the Cold War between the Soviets and the democratic countries.

The U.S. Position on Imperialism and Industrial Revolution. The U.S. was a late leader with worldwide imperialism and the Industrial Revolution. It was still consolidating and expanding within the North American continent and was less involved with world economic, military, and political events in the 1800s. The U.S. did not want to denounce the colonial empires of France and Great Britain since the U.S. was involved in economic activities that were imperialistic in Central and South America. Also, the U.S. did not want to not uncut its British and French allied war partners. While the Russians saw their colonies as oppressive, the U.S. also saw they were part of the capitalistic system of which they were a part. They opposed the Soviet denouncement.

Besides, the U.S. had their own economic control over countries in Central and South America along with economic interests of oil in the Middle East.

Importance of Geography to the U.S. Geography was an important factor for the U.S. since it allowed it to escape much of the devastation of the land wars of the Western European countries in the 1800s and 1900s. The U.S. was insulated from European and most other countries in the world due to its geographic isolated location with the Atlantic and Pacific oceans on the coasts and peaceful borders with Canada and Mexico. This geographic isolationism was matched by historic political isolationism. President George Washington, the first U.S. president, stated in his final address to the American people to avoid “foreign entanglements” with Europe and other countries. Most Americans were uninterested in world political and military involvements due to ongoing wars and the tremendous losses of men and destruction of the country.

Due to the need of the U.S. to gain other military partners for an invasion of Japan, the U.S. was willing to grant demands of the Soviet Union. This is part of the reason that the U.S. followed the British with permitting established of a Soviet “Sphere of Influence” over Eastern Europe with permitting Soviet troops to stay in their countries at the end of WW Two. Roosevelt was less trusting of Stalin, but followed Churchill’s hope that those countries would be allowed to establish democratically-elected governments and retain their autonomy as independent nations. With the number of Polish immigrants in England the U.S., their maintenance as a nation was important to both the British and the U.S. The U.S. also supported Greece independence for them to choose their form of democratically-selected government system since it was an imperative for the British and also due to lobbying by Greek immigrants to the U.S.

The U.S. Position Regarding Germany and Japan. Just as with Great Britain, the U.S. had a strong democratic political system opposed to Communists worldwide. Until the Cold War time period, it was less concerned with Communism than Great Britain located much closer to the Soviet Union. The U.S. was less interested than Great Britain with reducing the power of Germany at the end of the war. Part of that could be explained since Germany had not directly attacked the soil of the U.S. during the war. It was in the interest of the United States that Germany not pose an immediate threat to anyone at the end of World War Two, but also it not be destroyed since it could serve as a buffer against the Soviet Union in case it changed its historic decision to not invade Western Europe. Therefore, the United States did not want to see Germany eliminated, divided in half, or to have high war reparations placed against it, making it so economically weakened it is unable to defend itself against an invasion or political overthrow by the Communists. The U.S. opposed unconditional surrender of the Germans if that meant that their nation would be dissolved, their military eliminated, and that their land be added to the Soviet Union. The U.S. also did not want to see Berlin controlled only by the Soviet Union with the defeat of Germany. Berlin was both a strategic and symbolic symbol of the German Empire. Since Great Britain, U.S., and other allies lost many troops with the defeat of Germany, they did not want to see the Soviet Union have sole control of this capital city. While it will be agreed to divide Germany in half, it was not acceptable to give total control of Berlin to the Soviet Union since it was in the half of Germany that they controlled. The U.S. did demand unconditional surrender of Japan as also did the Soviet Union who wanted to punish them for early aggression in WW Two. Great Britain did not seek unconditional

surrender of either Germany or Japan since both could be a potential threat against the Soviet Union and slow down if not stop their military aggression.

U.S. Development of the Atomic Bomb. The British and U.S. scientists worked together to develop nuclear technology in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Russians were aware of this work through spy activity. When Stalin confronted Roosevelt about this weapon research, the U.S. denied it. This caused much concern for the Russians since they thought the technology might be used against them in the future. Before the end of WWII, the U.S. excluded the British from the final development of the bombs which was taken as a great insult to the British people. The British, Russians, the U.S. were unaware that also the Japanese had a nuclear weapon program during WWII. However, Japan's scientists were unsuccessful in their weapon development.

U.S. Initially Uncomfortable as a World Leader. The United States lost far fewer troops than other countries, especially the Soviet Union. They did not want to harshly punish other countries and leave large numbers of troops in Europe to enforce its political goals. The U.S. was initially uncomfortable as a world military leader. Most of their history has been to avoid "foreign entanglements" as President Washington had warned in his final message to the American people and the political leaders. Washington felt that the Europeans were too war-like and it was not in the U.S. interest to be pulled into their continual wars. The historic position of the U.S. was of neutrality with other countries, even those that sent large numbers of immigrants to the U.S. as with England, Italy, and other European countries. The U.S. did not press its advantages militarily until it became more aggressive after the initial Containment Period with the Soviets with the start of the Korean Conflict.

Strategic Timing of the Yalta Conference. The Yalta Conference occurred immediately following the Battle of the Bulge that placed the English and American troops in a defensive position and stopped their advance into Germany. Since the effectiveness of the atomic bomb was still unknown at the time of the Yalta Conference, the U.S. was desperate for other Allied countries to join the U.S. with a potentially bloody invasion of the home islands of Japan to end the war in the Pacific. It was estimated three to five million Allied troops would die during this invasion with millions more Japanese perishing among their soldiers and civilians.

U.S. Support for a Stronger United Nations. The United States felt they failed the international community at the end of World War One when they did not become immediately involved in the League of Nations nor used their military power to serve as a world leader for peace. This is why they wanted to have a revised version of the old League of Nations, now called the United Nations to not only serve as a place to talk, but also have the power to take military intervention against countries that threatened world security. The U.S. vowed to be an important leader within the new U.N. To be sure the U.N. did not make decisions that were negative for the U.S. or for other democratic countries, the U.S. wanted a small group to have veto powers over decisions by the entire U.N. In the future this ability to overrule the majority vote of other countries in the U.N. by a veto by a single member of the Security Council will create much anger and seen as hypocritical of a democratic country. This small group was called the U.N. Security Council. This group would have five permanent members and several other seats on this Council rotated among other nations. The U.S. was pragmatic that it had to include the Soviet Union or the Security Council or even the entire U.N. be created. Great Britain and France earned seats based on their historic

dominance in the world through imperialism and their military might. The U.S. earned a seat due to its economic and military power.

The U.N. does not automatically admit nations to become members. Since the beginning, an applicant country had to first be approved by all five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Then, the entire membership of the U.N. had to approve their admission by a simple majority vote. Fifty-one nations were initially approved for U.N. membership in October 1945. As an aside, due to the requirement of a unanimous vote of the U.N. Security Council, Palestine has not been admitted since the U.S. and Great Britain have threatened to veto the application.

The U.S. advocated for China to have a seat on the permanent U.N. Security Council. This was done partially due to their contribution to the war effort against Japan (the enemy of my enemy is my friend) and also as a counterpoint to the Soviet Union. At the time that China was admitted to the U.N. and appointed to the Security Council, it appeared China would be democratic. In the Chinese civil war, it appeared the Communists led by Mao would be defeated by the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek. China and Russia have maintained historic conflict with one another. The U.N. Security Council helps to ensure that nothing negative for the democratic countries would occur since the veto by one member of the U.N. Security Council stops the decision. Also, by elevating China to high status by a seat on the U.N. Security Council, the United States hoped it would fill the void of power with the defeat of Japan and forcing them to completely demilitarize them. Someone needed to fill the power vacuum and the United States did not want to extend itself to an area so far away geographically.

Geography and Influence on Decisions by the Three Nations

Following are maps that illustrate changes in political boundaries that influenced priorities of Great Britain, Soviet Union, and the U.S. The Russian Empire lost land to Germany at the end of WWI. New countries were formed along the Russian border. Part of this land was regained through the 1939 agreement with Germany. After WWII, the Soviet Union kept control of land it conquered as it moved towards Germany. Some land was directly annexed back into the Soviet Union and other countries appear to maintain their independence. However, they will be indirectly or directly controlled by the USSR. Germany was divided. East Germany was controlled and occupied by the Soviet Union. West Germany will be temporarily administered by the France, Great Britain, and the U.S. who soon after grant independence to West Germany. Berlin is located deep inside East Germany. The city will be divided in half between control by the Russians and the other half by France, Great Britain, and the U.S.



Source: *Regional Extensions*, 1999

