America’s Changing Political & Military Roles from Post-WWI to the end of WWII

Attempts at Naval Reduction: Washington Naval Conference (1921-1922)

- Meeting of the world’s largest naval powers
- Determined to prevent the possibility of another World War
- Concerned with the rise of Japanese militarism and empire building

- Resulted in the development of the Five-Power Treaty agreeing to:
  - A moratorium on the building of larger size battleships
  - Reduction of the size of navies by scrapping older ships
- Lacked restrictions on smaller cruisers, resulting in a new naval race
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Attempts at Naval Reduction:
Geneva Naval Conference (1927)

• Meeting by leaders from the United States, Britain, and Japan
• Attempt to discuss joint limitations to naval capacities not covered by the previous treaty
• Concerned with the building of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines

• Disagreements arose between the leading nations concerning:
  ✓ Limitations based on tonnage of ships versus the total number of ships
  ✓ Size of fleets being based on size of territory versus other nations
• Inability to come to an agreement resulted in a continued naval race
Attempts at Naval Reduction:  
*London Naval Conference (1930)*

- Meeting by leaders from the United States, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy
- Attempt to finalize compromises on the reduction and tonnage restrictions of naval ships
- Concerned with avoiding an all out naval arms race

- Resulted in the development of some new agreements that included:
  - Limitations on the size and gun power on submarines and destroyers
  - Set tonnage limits for cruisers (UK=339,000; US=323,500; Japan=208,850)
  - Maximum number of heavy cruisers (US=18; UK=15; Japan=12)
Attempts at Naval Reduction:  
*London Naval Conference (1935)*

- Another meeting by leaders by the world’s naval powers to review the 1930 agreement
- Attempt by Japan to obtain an agreement to increase warship tonnage
- Meeting results were less than successful:
  - Japan left the conference after failing to gain increases in tonnage allowances and announcing their intention not to extend the previous treaties past 1936
  - Britain, France, and the U.S. agreed to a moratorium on large light cruisers (8,000 - 10,000 tons) and battleships (up to 35,000 tons)
  - Japan, Germany, and Italy failed to give their concurrence to the new agreements, thus making the treaty powerless
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Discussion Question: What events changed America’s political attitude concerning the naval arms race?

- Information on the German construction of the massive battleship *Bismarck* (1936)
  - 46,000 Tons (loaded)
  - 8 fifteen inch main guns
  - 12 six inch secondary guns
  - 16 four inch support guns

- Information on Japan’s construction of the massive battleship *Yamato* (1937)
  - 70,000 Tons (loaded)
  - 9 eighteen inch main guns
  - 12 six inch secondary guns
  - 12 five inch support guns
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**Discussion Question** What events changed America’s political attitude concerning the naval arms race?

- Formation of the Axis Alliance through the signing of the Tripartite Act (Sep 1940) by Germany, Italy, and Japan
- Atlantic raid by the German Battleship *Bismarck* (May 1941) in which the British Battleship *HMS Hood* was sunk
- Sinking of the *USS Reuben James* by a German Submarine (Oct 1941) during convoy escort duty
- Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor (7 Dec 1941) by aircraft from a Japanese Naval Task Force
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The Growth of America’s Naval Fleet during WWII

North Carolina class battleships:
(first launched in June 1940)
40,000 tons (full wartime load)
9 each 16” guns (main armament)
20 each 5” guns (secondary guns)

South Dakota class battleships:
(first launched in June 1941)
44,000 tons (full wartime load)
9 each 16” guns (main armament)
20 each 5” guns (secondary guns)

(Included the USS South Dakota, USS Indiana,
USS Massachusetts, and USS Alabama)
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The Growth of America’s Naval Fleet during WWII

Iowa class battleships:
(first launched in Aug 1942)
52,000 tons (full wartime load)
9 each 16” guns (main armament)
20 each 5” guns (secondary guns)

(Included the USS Iowa, USS Missouri, USS New Jersey, and USS Wisconsin)
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Discussion Question: What motivated the United States to improve its Military Aviation capabilities?

- Formation of the Axis Alliance through the signing of the Tripartite Act (Sep 1940) by Germany, Italy, and Japan
- Ineffectiveness of U.S. Military Aircraft provided to the British for use during the Battle of Britain (July-Oct 1940)
- Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor (7 Dec 1941) by aircraft from a Japanese Naval Task Force
- The need to improve Naval Air Superiority in the Pacific using Aircraft Carriers
- Allied desires to conduct Strategic Bombing missions on the German homeland
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Discussion Question: What motivated the United States to improve its Military Aviation capabilities?

- British reports that U.S. built aircraft could not compete against the German Messerschmidt Me 109 or Focke-Wulf
- Caused the U.S. to build the faster and more maneuverable P51 Mustang
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**Discussion Question** What motivated the United States to improve its Military Aviation capabilities?

- The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by highly maneuverable *Japanese Zeroes*
- Caused the U.S. to build the equally maneuverable and more durable *F6F Hellcat* and *F4U Corsair*
What motivated the United States to improve its Military Aviation capabilities?

- The Desire to conduct Strategic Bombing of important railways, military bases, and ammunition plants in Germany and Japan.
- Caused the U.S. to build the B17 Flying Fortress, B24 Liberator (used on the Doolittle Raid), and the larger B29 Superfortress (used to drop the A-Bomb)
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Discussion Question: How did the political decisions of the United States and its Allies change over time?

- The Atlantic Charter (Aug 1941): The U.S. & U.K. expressed a desire to preserve free trade, self-determination of governments, & cooperation for the improvement of other world nations.


- The Casablanca Conference (Jan 1943): A Decision by the allies to require unconditional surrender by the Axis Powers.
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Discussion Question: How did the political decisions of the United States and its Allies change over time?

- The Cairo Conference (Nov 1943): Promoted the idea of an independent Korea and the return of Taiwan to China after the war.
- The Tehran Conference (Dec 1943): U.S. / U.K. agreement to invade Europe, Soviet agree to attack Japan, and Allied discussion on the demilitarization of Germany.
- The Quebec Conference (Sep 1944): Presented the United States' Morgenthau Plan for the allied occupation and partitioning of post-war Germany.
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Discussion Question: How did the political decisions of the United States and its Allies change over time?

- The Yalta Conference (Feb 1945) Resulted in:
  - The decision to disarm and divide post-war Germany into occupation zones
  - Soviet pledge to allow democratic elections
  - The need to conduct War Crimes Trials after the war

- The Potsdam Conference (Jul - Aug 1945):
  - Declared the need for the unconditional surrender or total destruction of Japan
  - Establishment of necessary process to establish post-war treaties
  - Truman also mentioned to Stalin that the U.S. now had a “powerful new weapon”
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Discussion Question How did the United States bring about the greatest change in modern weaponry?

An Atomic Research and Development Program between 1942 - 1945 known as the Manhattan Project
Discussion Question Why did the Manhattan Project develop into America’s most important wartime program?

- 1920’s: The epicenter of the early nuclear research programs were at the universities of Berlin and Gottingen in Nazi Germany.

- The German physics apprenticeship program included young men like Albert Einstein, Edward Teller, Hans Bethe, Enrico Fermi, and J. Robert Oppenheimer, among others.
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**Discussion Question** Why did the Manhattan Project develop into America’s most important wartime program?

- **1930’s**: When Hitler and the Nazis assumed control of Germany, the predominantly Jewish Scientists decided they needed to keep their research secret.
- **Eventually**, many of the scientists fled their homeland and made their way to the United States.
- **By 1938**: Germany was beginning to develop an atomic weapons program by acquiring high-grade uranium, building a heavy-water plant, and mobilizing its best scientists.
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Discussion Question

Why did the Manhattan Project develop into America’s most important wartime program?

• “On March 3, 1939, Dr. Walter Zinn and I performed a simple experiment at Columbia University. When we saw the neutrons which came off the fission process of uranium, there was little doubt in my mind that the world was headed for trouble.”

Leo Szilard

2 Aug 1939:

Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard wrote a letter to FDR advising him that Germany was secretly trying to develop an atomic weapon and urged the U.S. to do the same.
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Discussion Question: Why did the Manhattan Project develop into America’s most important wartime program?

- “The duty of scientists is to see that the most effective weapons would be available if necessary. We would stand morally guilty before the free world if we refused to lend our talents to the cause of freedom.”
  
  FDR

- “I left the meeting feeling I was committed to do whatever I could . . . in the defense of freedom.”
  
  Edward Teller

Work began in 1942 after a controlled nuclear reaction test was successfully conducted at the University of Chicago.

Over 600,000 people worked on the project at numerous locations across the United States.
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Enrico Fermi
Director of the Scientists on the Project responsible for developing the Nuclear Fission Chain Reaction

J. Robert Oppenheimer
Scientific Director known as the “Father of the Atomic Bomb”

Edward Teller
Promoted the project and worked on bomb research, becoming known as the “Father of the Hydrogen Bomb”

Leo Szilard
Promoted the project and headed the research team at the University of Chicago

Edward Lawrence
Supervised Uranium production at Oak Ridge and was known as the “Atom Smasher”
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Hanford Lab, OR
Los Alamos, NM
University of Chicago, IL
Oak Ridge, TN
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- Two atomic reactors were built at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Hanford, Washington to create Uranium and Plutonium.

- The laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, was built with the purpose of creating the A-Bomb.
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Project Success

Uranium
Atomic Number: 92
Atomic Mass: 238.03

Plutonium
Atomic Number: 94
Atomic Mass: 244

July 16, 1945:
The first atomic bomb was exploded at the Alamogordo air base in New Mexico.

A ball of fire rose rapidly, followed by a mushroom cloud extending to 40,000 feet.

The bomb generated an explosive power equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT.

Detonation of the first bomb named “Gadget” became known as the “Trinity” Test.
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Project Success or Global Disaster?

August 6, 1945: “Little Boy” was dropped on Hiroshima

August 9, 1945: “Fat Man” was dropped on Nagasaki
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Project Success or Global Disaster?

Devastation of the Atomic Bombs dropped on Japan