

Analyzing the World War II Conferences

Use the description of WWII conferences that follows to help you analyze Allied cooperation during the war.

International Conferences, Declarations, and Agreements, 1941—1945

1941

22 Dec. Prime Minister Winston Churchill arrived in Washington for a series of conferences with President Roosevelt. The fundamental basis of joint strategy was affirmed: to concentrate upon the defeat of the Axis in Europe (which was viewed as the decisive theater of war), and to follow a policy of containment in the Far East until military successes in Europe or mounting Allied resources permitted stronger blows against Japan. The last of this series of conferences was held on 14 Jan. 1942. The Declaration of the United Nations was drafted and the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Munitions Assignment Board was set up.

1942

1 Jan. United Nations Declaration was signed at Washington. Twenty-six nations, including the U.S., Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China, affirmed the principles of the Atlantic Charter, pledged the employment of their full military and economic resources against the Axis, and promised not to make a separate armistice or peace with the common enemies.

27 Jan. Anglo-American Combined Raw Materials Board established at Washington.

6 Feb. Joint Anglo-American War Council established at Washington.

29 May. The Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav M. Molotov, arrived in Washington for conferences with President Roosevelt and other high U.S. officials. Among the results of the meeting was a new Lend-Lease protocol with Russia. The agreement provided that materials or data received from the U.S. would not be transferred to other parties without U.S. consent and that materials still available at the end of the war would be returned to the U.S. The new agreement went into effect on 1 July.

July. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, meeting in London, decided to invade North Africa and to postpone a 2nd front in Europe as well as the Pacific offensive.

12-15 Aug. 1ST MOSCOW CONFERENCE. Principal participants were Soviet Premier Joseph V. Stalin, Prime Minister Churchill, and W. Averell Harriman, who represented President Roosevelt. Churchill, with the support of Harriman, informed Stalin that it was not possible to open a 2nd front in Europe in 1942.

1943

14-24 Jan. CASABLANCA CONFERENCE was held in French Morocco. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill declared that the war would be fought until the "unconditional surrender" of the enemy had been secured. Agreement in principle was reached on a second front, but not on its location. U.S. officials favored an invasion of the Continent through France. The British urged an assault on the "soft underbelly" of Europe (i.e., Italy and the Balkans). A compromise was reached on the invasion of Sicily and Italy without prejudice to the ultimate invasion of Europe from the west. No agreement was worked out on the conflicting claims for leadership of the Gens. Charles de Gaulle and Henri Giraud, who also attended the conference. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was placed in supreme command of the North African theater.

25 Apr. The Soviet Union broke off its relations with the Polish government-in-exile.

12-25 May. ANGLO-AMERICAN CONFERENCE (TRIDENT) at Washington planned global strategy and the opening of a 2nd front in Europe. President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Combined Chiefs of Staff, and many U.S. and British officials took part. The date (1 May 1944) for the Normandy invasion was definitely set and the seizure of the Azores authorized unless Portugal could be persuaded by negotiation to grant the use of bases on the islands. The conference also agreed to step up the quantity of aviation gasoline being flown over "the hump" from India to China.

22 May. Moscow announced the dissolution 15 May of the 3rd International (Comintern).

11-24 Aug. 1ST QUEBEC CONFERENCE (QUADRANT) attended by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and top-ranking advisers including the Combined Chiefs of State, reaffirmed 1 May 1944 as the target date for the Normandy invasion (OVERLORD), which was to be supplemented by landings in Southern France (ANVIL, later DRAGOON). Agreement was reached on stepping up military operations in the Far East, particularly in Burma, and a Southeast Asia Command was established, with Lord Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander. The Chiefs of the Naval Staffs reported that the Battle of the Atlantic against the U-boat had turned in favor of the Allies.

19-30 Oct. MOSCOW CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS was the first Allied 3-power meeting of World War II. It was attended by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov, together with U.S., British, and Soviet military officials. The most controversial point in the discussions involved the status of the Polish government-in-exile at London, which the Soviet Union refused to recognize. The U.S. and Great Britain assured the Russians that preparations for opening a 2nd front in Europe were under way. Stalin made an unconditional promise that after Germany's defeat Russia would enter the war against Japan. The conference established a European Advisory Commission for the purpose of formulating a postwar policy for Germany. The Moscow Declaration issued at the close of the conference recognized "the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organization, based on the principle of sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, and open to membership by all such states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security."

22-26 Nov. 1ST CAIRO CONFERENCE. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill conferred with Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek regarding the war in the Far East. The Declaration of Cairo (1 Dec.) affirmed that the 3 powers would prosecute the war against Japan until her unconditional surrender and that they had no desire for territorial expansion; that Japan should be deprived of all Pacific islands acquired since 1914, whether by capture or League of Nations mandate; that all territories which Japan had taken from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, should be restored to China; and that the 3 powers were "determined that in due course Korea should become free and independent."

At the **2nd Cairo Conference** (4-6 Dec.) Roosevelt and Churchill held discussions with the president of Turkey, Ismet Inönü. This conference affirmed the alliance between Great Britain and Turkey and noted "the firm friendship existing between the Turkish people," the U.S., and the Soviet Union. As a result of military decisions taken at the 2nd Cairo Conference, the command of the invasion of Western Europe was conferred on Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

28 Nov.-1 Dec. TEHERAN CONFERENCE, held at the capital of Iran, was attended by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Premier Stalin. It was the 1st 3-power war conference in which Stalin took a personal part. The chief subject of the meeting was the projected Anglo-American invasion of Western Europe, supported by a flanking invasion through Southern France, and the timing of this assault with the Soviet offensive against Germany. Stalin reaffirmed his promise to enter the war against Japan. The conference formulated a plan for an international organization to keep the peace.

1944

27 July. The Polish Committee of National Liberation, organized at Moscow, was recognized by the Soviet government. The committee, which later transferred its headquarters to Lublin, was entrusted with administrative control of Polish areas taken by the Red Army.

21 Aug.-7 Oct. DUMBARTON OAKS CONFERENCE, held near Washington, D.C., was attended by representatives of the U.S., Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China (with the last 2 meeting separately, since Russia was still at peace with Japan). The conference discussed the draft of a charter for a permanent postwar international organization for maintaining world peace and security. The tentative proposals (known as the Dumbarton Oaks Plan) served as the basis for the Charter of the United Nations. Agreement on the veto issue could not be reached, Russia refusing to agree to bar a member of the Security Council from voting on a question to which it was itself a party.

11-16 Sept. 2ND QUEBEC CONFERENCE, attended by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, considered strategic plans for final victory over Germany and Japan. The chief subjects of the conference were the demarcation of the zones of occupation following the conquest of Germany and the policy governing the postwar treatment of that nation. The Morgenthau plan (sponsored by Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr.) for reducing Germany to an agrarian economy was tentatively approved at this conference, but was rejected by President Roosevelt a month later.

9-18 Oct. 2ND MOSCOW CONFERENCE, attended by Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Joseph Stalin, divided the Balkans into spheres, Russia to predominate in Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, Great Britain in Greece, with Yugoslavia to be shared. It was generally agreed that the Curzon Line should bound Poland on the east and the Oder River on the west. Roosevelt, who was not a party to these arrangements, let it be known that he would not be bound by them.

1945

Jan. Malta Conference. Combined Chiefs of Staff planned final campaign against Hitler.

4-11 Feb. YALTA CONFERENCE, held in the Crimea, was attended by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Premier Stalin, together with their top diplomatic and military advisers. Most of the important agreements remained secret until the postwar period. In exchange for her pledge to enter the war in the Far East, Russia was given the Kurile Islands, the southern half of Sakhalin, and an occupation zone in Korea, and was granted privileged rights in Manchuria and in the Chinese cities of Dairen and Port Arthur. In addition, the U.S. and Great Britain agreed to recognize the autonomy of Outer Mongolia, which had severed its connections with China and come under Soviet influence. The U.S. and Great Britain also agreed to award eastern Poland to the Soviet Union. Poland's eastern border was fixed on the Curzon Line; and that nation was to receive territorial compensation in the north and west at the expense of Germany. Agreement was reached for reorganizing the Polish (Lublin) government on a broader democratic basis. The Russian demand of \$20 billion in reparation payments from Germany, to be taken out of current production, was referred to a reparations commission. The 3 powers reaffirmed the "unconditional surrender" formula and issued a Declaration of Liberated Europe pledging the Big Three to support postwar governments in the liberated states which would be representative of the popular will through free elections. The conferees announced they had worked out a formula for voting procedure in the Security Council and that a conference to elaborate the United Nations Charter would convene at San Francisco on 25 Apr. It was secretly agreed that the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia would be accorded full and equal membership in the United Nations organization on the footing of independent nations.

5 Apr. The Soviet Union denounced its 5-year nonaggression pact with Japan.

21 Apr. The Soviet Union concluded a 20-year mutual assistance pact with the Polish Provisional Government (the Lublin regime).

25 Apr.-26 June. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION, attended by delegates of 50 nations, assembled at San Francisco to draft the Charter of the United Nations Organization (UNO). The Russians at San Francisco interpreted the Yalta voting formula to mean that a nation could use the veto to forbid the Security Council from even discussing questions which might require force in their settlement. Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., threatened that the U.S. would not participate in the organization unless the Russians yielded. The deadlock was broken when President Truman directed Harry L. Hopkins, then in Moscow, to take the issue to Stalin. The latter agreed that the veto should not be used to prevent discussion. Following the announcement (7 June) of this compromise, a draft Charter was worked out. The Charter of the United Nations provided for six chief organs: (1) a General Assembly of all member nations as the policy-making body, each nation to have a single vote; (2) a Security Council of 11 members in continuous session for deciding diplomatic, political, or military disputes, the Big Five (the U.S., Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and China) to have permanent seats, the other 6 to be held for 2-yr. terms; (3) an Economic and Social Council of 18 members elected by the General Assembly for the purpose of dealing with human welfare and fundamental rights and freedoms; (4) an International Court of Justice (sitting at The Hague) for dealing with international legal disputes, its 15 judges to be elected by the General

Assembly and the Security Council; (5) a Trusteeship Council made up of states administering trust territories, the permanent members of the Security Council, and members elected by the General Assembly for a 3-yr. term; and (6) a Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General, for performing the routine administrative work of the UNO, the staff to be selected from nations holding membership in the UN. The Charter was unanimously approved on 25 June and signed on the following day.

5 June. EUROPEAN ADVISORY COMMISSION established German occupation zones, assigning eastern Germany to Russia, dividing the south between the U.S. and France, and placing Great Britain in charge of the west. Berlin was shared among the occupying powers and placed in the heart of the Soviet zone, leaving all ground approaches dominated by the Russians. The administration of Berlin was entrusted to a military Kommandatura.

17 July-2 Aug. POTSDAM CONFERENCE, held near Berlin, was attended by President Harry S. Truman, Prime Minister Churchill (who after 28 July was replaced by the newly chosen British Prime Minister, Clement R. Attlee, head of the Labour government), and Premier Stalin. Also present, in addition to other top-ranking officials, were Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden (who after 28 July was replaced by Ernest Bevin), and Foreign Secretary V.M. Molotov. The first declaration issued by the conference was the "unconditional surrender" ultimatum (26 July) presented to Japan. The chief questions before the conference were the plan for the occupation and control of Germany and the settlement of various European problems. A Council of Foreign Ministers, its members drawn from the Big Five, was established and entrusted with the preparation of draft treaties with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Finland, and with the proposal of settlements of outstanding territorial questions. The Council was also authorized to negotiate an agreement with a central German government whenever the latter should come into being. The occupation authorities were to conduct programs designed to denazify, decentralize, disarm, and democratize Germany, which was to be treated during the occupation period as a single economic unit. Provision was made for the trial of war criminals (shortly after the conference an International Military Tribunal was set up). Final delimitation of the Polish-German frontier was left to the peace treaty. The Soviet Union abandoned its \$20-billion reparations demand in exchange for a reparations schedule based on a percentage of useful capital equipment in the Western zone and materials in the Eastern zone. The conference agreed that Germany should make good for losses suffered at its hands by the United Nations. Provision was made for the mandatory transfer of 6,500,000 Germans from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Germany. Economic agreements were reached concerning German industry, foreign trade, finance, communications, and transportation. At the earliest practicable date the German economy was to be decentralized for the purpose of eliminating excessive centralization of economic power as exemplified by cartels, syndicates, and trusts. Primary emphasis in the German economy was to be given to the development of agriculture and peaceful domestic industries.

14 Aug. The Sino-Soviet treaty signed at Moscow formalized China's consent to the concessions granted to the Soviet at the Yalta Conference.¹

1. What basic wartime strategy was decided at the December 22, 1941, meeting of Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt?
2. What possible reason could the Soviets give for breaking off relations with the Polish government-in-exile? (25 April 1943)
3. What issue remained unsettled after the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers?
4. What decision at the first Cairo Conference apparently caused the Japanese to fight with more zeal?
5. Although Stalin was not primarily interested in defeating Japan, what seemed to convince him to join the Allies in this venture?
6. How did the Soviets plan to settle the Polish question?
7. At what point were the Soviets given primary responsibility for the Balkans?
8. What evidence can you find that the Soviets needed encouragement to join the war against Japan?
9. In spite of the news of the formation of the United Nations, what controversies remained between the West and the Soviet Union?
10. What was the most awkward decision made by the European Advisory Commission on June 5?
11. What countries were not mentioned at the Potsdam Conference?
12. What evidence is there that the West had justification to mistrust the Soviets? As you answer the question, think about further problems or puzzles that remained unanswered. Some subjects include Poland, United Nations, transfer of Germans, etc.