

**READING CHECK**

What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

---

---

---

**VOCABULARY STRATEGY**

What does the word *predominant* mean in the underlined sentence? The prefix *pre-* means “before in rank” or “superior to.” The root *dominant* refers to something that dominates, controls, or has the greatest effect. Use these clues to help you figure out what *predominant* means.

---

---

---

**READING SKILL**

**Understand Effects** Which effect of World War II would help to prevent future wars?

---

---

---

As World War II drew to an end, Japan and Germany kept fighting long after their defeat was certain. The protracted fighting gave the Allies time to make plans for a postwar world. In February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met at Yalta on the Black Sea. At the **Yalta Conference**, they discussed final strategy and crucial questions concerning postwar Germany, Eastern Europe, and Asia. A few months later, the Big Three, now composed of Stalin, Truman, and Atlee, met at Potsdam to formalize the decision to divide Germany into four zones of occupation. The war ended Western European domination of the world. Two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—became the predominant nations of the postwar world.

Not all the changes that took place after the war ended were what the Allies had envisioned at Yalta and Potsdam. Communist and noncommunist interests clashed in Eastern Europe. Civil war resumed in China. Under American military occupation, Japan gained a new constitution that abolished the armed forces and enacted democratic reforms.

The United States, where industry had boomed during the war, helped to shape the postwar world economy. The United States also led the charge to establish the **United Nations (UN)**. While it was organized on the basis of the Great Powers, all member nations sat on the General Assembly. In 1948, the UN issued the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which condemns slavery and torture, upholds freedom of speech and religion, and affirms the right to an adequate standard of living.

During the war, the Axis Powers had repeatedly violated the **Geneva Convention**, which governs the humane treatment of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war. More than a thousand Japanese were tried for war crimes, and at the **Nuremberg Trials** key leaders of Nazi Germany were brought to justice for their crimes against humanity.

Americans had closely followed the war and learned to think in global terms. They defined themselves as democratic, tolerant, and peaceful. The war gave renewed vigor to the fight for civil rights at home. It also ushered in a period of economic growth and prosperity.

**Review Questions**

1. What happened at the Yalta Conference?

---

---

---

---

2. What long-term changes were brought about by World War II?

---

---

---

---