

Ch12.5 The Cost of War – Economic, Social Political Info

The Costs of World War II

Background: World War II was the deadliest war in history. The war affected the entire world and will be the first war that more civilians will die than soldiers. Over 60 million people were killed, which was over 2.5% of the world's population.

Human Cost Casualties of WWII

Country	Civilian	Military
United States	none	292,000
Britain	400,000	65,000
France	200,000	170,000
Soviet Union	15 million	14 million
China	10 million	8.5 million
Japan	1.5 million	950,000
Italy	158,000	240,000
Germany	5 million	8 million

Human Cost Questions:

1. What country had the most total casualties and why?

2. What country had the least casualties and why?

3. How did the German "Blitzkrieg" strategy result in such a high number of casualties? -----
4. Why did the British abandon their "precision bombing" strategy?

5. U.S. General LeMay said after the March 9th Tokyo bombing, "There are no innocent civilians...the entire population got into the act and worked to make those airplanes or munitions...men, women, and children." Do you agree or disagree with LeMay?

The Bombing of Civilians

Before World War II, most nations condemned targeting civilians in bombing raids. As the war went on, the nations at war expanded their bombing targets from military to industrial ones, then to workers' houses, and finally to entire cities and their civilian populations.

In the years leading up to World War II, Japan became the first power to attack civilians from the air. In 1932, Japanese warplanes bombed a worker district in Shanghai, China, an incident that produced worldwide outrage. The outrage did not stop Japan from bombing civilian areas of other Chinese cities.

In 1936, Mussolini ordered his Italian troops to attack a largely defenseless east African country of Ethiopia. When Mussolini's warplanes struck the capital city, causing many civilian casualties, the world again condemned the slaughter of innocent people.

Hitler introduced a new form of aggression in 1939 - "Blitzkrieg". This strategy of using lightning fast assaults targeted both military and civilians. The bombing of London cost the lives of 30,000 people.

In 1942 the British abandoned their "precision bombing" strategy and for the rest of the war concentrated on the systematic widespread destruction of German cities by RAF night time air raids. One reason the British took this fateful step was to "de-house" the German people, which hopefully would shatter their morale and will to continue the war.

After Germany surrendered the Allies wanted to end the war quickly against Japan. On March 9, 1945 B-29 bombers attacked Tokyo, a city of 6 million people. Nearly 600 bombers dropped 1,665 tons of fire bombs on the Japanese capital, destroying 16 square miles of the city. The resulting firestorm killed 100,000 people more than died at Hiroshima or Nagasaki from the atomic bombs a few months later. Most of the victims were women, children and old men. The B-29 crew members put on oxygen masks to keep from vomiting at the smell of burning human flesh.

The allied area bombing of civilians played an important role in undermining the will of the German and Japanese people to continue the war. But unlike the predictions of military strategists before the war, this did not happen quickly. For a long time, the bombing of German and Japanese civilians only stiffened their resolve to fight on. They wanted to surrender only after their countries lay in ruins, hundreds of thousands had perished, and all hope of victory was lost.

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Economic Cost Questions

6. Which country had the highest economic cost? _____ . Why? _____

7. Who had the lowest economic cost? _____
_____ Why? _____

Economic Cost

-USA —————> \$288 Billion
-Britain ———> \$117 Billion
-France ———> \$111 Billion
-USSR ———> \$98 Billion
-Germany ———> \$212 Billion
-Japan ———> \$41 Billion



Political Cost

Germany - was totally defeated and Nazi regime gone. Its leaders were tried for crimes against humanity. German cities were in ruins from a massive bombing campaign. Germany was divided into 4 zones of occupation by the victorious powers, pending a more permanent political settlement.

Italy - At the conclusion of the war, communism gains in popularity, as Italy's experience with democracy/capitalism in post-WWI years was unpleasant. The U.S. conducts a massive PR campaign to prevent the communist party from taking power in Italy, helping to tilt Italy toward the democratic side. Consequently, a democratic republic is established in 1948 after a popular election, bringing Italy under influence of the West rather than the USSR.

Japan - in ruins from extensive bombing. Prominent military leaders were tried and convicted of war crimes, but the emperor was allowed to retain his position. Japan was placed under temporary military control.

Britain - devastated by the war especially the blitz of 1940. It had to phase out most of its political holdings due to economic losses.

France - would have to recover from the effects of Nazi occupation. Would have to give up some of its colonies which will result in conflict.

Soviet Union - The Russian people had suffered immeasurably during the war, and western Russia was devastated by the land warfare which was primarily on Russian territory. But, in the process of defeating the Germans, the Russians had built a large and powerful army, which occupied most of Eastern Europe at the end of the war. The great resources and population of Russia assured that the Soviet Union would be, along with the United States, one of two super-powers.

The United States - economy was greatly stimulated by the war, even more so than in World War I. The Depression was brought decisively to an end, and new industrial complexes were built all over the United States. Spared the physical destruction of war, the U.S. economy dominated the world economy. After 4 years of military buildup, the U.S. had also become the leading military power. The position of the United States as world leader was now more obvious than ever.

Political Cost Questions

8. Most countries will eventually give up its colonies after World War II. Give two reasons for this: _____

9. What two countries will become the world leaders after World War II? _____
How could this lead to conflict? _____

10. Predict what four countries will occupy Germany after World War II: _____,
_____, _____, _____

11. How will the Allies treat the losers of World War II differently than they did after World War I? Explain your answer: _____

Wrap-Up: You will write a detailed paragraph describing what you think was the greatest cost of World War II - human cost, political cost or economic cost. You must defend your answer using the sources provided.