



Curriculum Guide

Franklin D. Roosevelt and WWII

World War II Conferences

The first of five wartime conferences between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill took place on naval vessels in August, 1941 in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. At subsequent conferences the leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, would be in attendance, thereby rounding out the Big Three. These conferences were important gatherings that allowed the Allied Leaders to discuss plans, debate strategies, and share the unique and enormous burden of leading nations in defending democracy on a global scale.

Below is a brief description of each of the five major wartime conferences.

Title: Atlantic Conference (code name: Riviera)

Date and Location: Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, Canada, August 9-12, 1941

Attendees: Franklin D. Roosevelt: President of the United States
Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of Great Britain

Agenda Topic: The conference was primarily a 'getting to know you' meeting between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. With events heating up in Europe, Churchill was looking for an American commitment to actively join the war against Hitler's Germany. Roosevelt was interested in helping England, but was determined to do so in less direct measures.

Conference Results/Accomplishments: The Atlantic Charter, issued on August 14, 1941 laid out eight common principles in the national policies of the United States and Great Britain was the most notable accomplishment of the conference. These common principles are summarized below:

- 1) neither country sought aggrandizement, territorial or other
- 2) neither country desired to see territorial changes without the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned
- 3) each country respects the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live
- 4) each country will endeavor to further access for all nations, on equal terms, to trade and raw materials needed for economic prosperity
- 5) each country seeks to improve labor standards, economic advancement and social security between all nations
- 6) each country seeks to end Nazi tyranny, and establish a peace that will allow all nations to dwell safely within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all people may live in freedom from fear and want
- 7) each country seeks a peace that allows freedom of the seas
- 8) after having established a wider and permanent system of general security, each country believes that the disarmament of nations is essential



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Title: Casablanca Conference

Date and Location: Casablanca, Morocco, January 14-24, 1943

Attendees: Franklin D. Roosevelt: President of the United States
Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of Great Britain

Agenda Topic: The conference focus was primarily on strategies for the conduct of the war. Agreement had been reached that a massive cross-channel invasion of Europe would need to be mounted to rout the Nazi occupiers from France and drive them back to Germany for ultimate defeat. In addition, unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers to the Allied Powers was seen as the most desirable way to permanently put an end to the 'German problem'. All of this took place amid a variety of sub-themes. The British still clung to the hope that the post-war world would be one still dominated by the colonial system upon which their empire had been built. Roosevelt saw a different world emerging, one dominated by nationalism and anti-colonialism, and the ever increasing economic and military power of the United States. Both Roosevelt and Churchill sensed the growing suspicion of the Soviet Union's leader Joseph Stalin. Stalin desperately wanted a second front opened against the Germans in Europe to bring relief to his beleaguered forces in the East. Both the British and the Americans, and the Soviets were fearful that each would succumb to the pressure to seek a peace deal with Hitler. Adding to the conference drama was a spat between the French Generals, Charles De Gaulle and Henri Giraud over who was the true leader of the Free French movement. Despite these many conflicting concerns on the conference agenda, the meeting was a highpoint in wartime cooperation.

Conference Results/Accomplishments: Two significant developments came out of the conference. The first was an agreement to establish a combined staff in London to plan the massive cross-channel invasion that would be known officially as "Operation Overlord", and popularly as D-Day. The second was the Allied insistence on unconditional surrender. This declaration would later come under attack for having prolonged the war by forcing the German and Japanese armies to fiercely fight to the death long after ultimate Allied victory had become apparent.

Title: Cairo Conference (code name: Sextant)

Date and Location: Cairo, Egypt, November 22-26, 1943

Attendees: Franklin D. Roosevelt: President of the United States
Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of Great Britain
Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of China

Agenda Topic: The conference was held to discuss the progress of the war in the Far East, and to enhance the symbolic importance of China in the war and postwar planning. Roosevelt wanted to raise the stature of the Chinese leader, Chiang Kai-shek, hoping he would become one of the Big Four and serve as a stabilizing force in the post-war Pacific region. Churchill wanted the conference to focus on European concerns, particularly the plans for Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Nazi controlled Europe. To allay Stalin's suspicions, Roosevelt had asked him to attend but he refused out of a concern not to antagonize Japan. Roosevelt saw to it that a public statement, the Cairo Declaration, calling for an Allied commitment to return to China the territories lost to Japan in the war, was issued.



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Conference Results/Accomplishments: The general results of the conference were the bolstering of Chiang as a major ally, and a general agreement to a Far East operation involving Burma.

Title: Teheran Conference (code name Eureka)

Date and Location: Teheran, Iran, November 28 - December 1, 1943

Attendees: Franklin D. Roosevelt: President of the United States
Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of Great Britain
Joseph Stalin: Leader of the Soviet Union

Agenda Topic: This was the first conference actually attended by all members of the Big Three. Roosevelt came to the conference hoping to establish a personal relationship with Stalin as he had done with Churchill. He hoped to be able to press Stalin on important political issues that would be before Europe in the postwar period. His efforts to cozy up to Stalin put off Churchill who viewed Stalin as a rival for American favor. Roosevelt was able to get Stalin to agree generally to his vision for a post-war international organization to keep the peace. Roosevelt was concerned over the Soviet intentions in Poland and the Baltic States. He agreed to Soviet plans to redefine Polish borders to meet Soviet security concerns, but stressed the need for an independent Poland. Stalin agreed to enter the war against Japan and unsuccessfully pressed for discussion of the division of Germany after the war, which was left to the European Advisory Commission for consideration.

Conference Results/Accomplishments: This conference is seen as a high point in Allied Agreement and cooperation. The major result of the conference was the decision to go ahead with the cross-channel invasion of Europe – Operation Overlord – in May 1944. The date of the invasion would later be set for June 6, 1944. This decision to move forth with the invasion helped to defuse some long standing tensions about opening a second front.

Title: Yalta Conference

Date and Location: Yalta in the Soviet Crimea, February 4-12, 1945

Attendees: Franklin D. Roosevelt: President of the United States
Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of Great Britain
Joseph Stalin: Soviet Premier

Agenda Topic: This was the last of the war time conferences. With victory in sight, the Big Three turned their attention to the perplexing problems of how to treat the defeated Germans and Japanese nations, restoring the boundaries of war ravaged Europe, and creating a structure for the new United Nations. They agreed that Germany would be split into four zones, each administered by one of the Big Three and the fourth by France. They also agreed that war reparations should be paid, and that the Soviet Union would get about half the yet to be determined amount. Roosevelt pressed the Soviets about relaxing their control over Poland and Eastern Europe, but was able to get only a pledge that Washington would be kept up-to-date on the situation. Roosevelt's major concern was to get the Soviets to enter the war against Japan. In exchange for control over the Kuriles Islands, Stalin pledged to send troops within a few months of the defeat of Germany. Roosevelt also pushed for discussion of creating a new world security organization, the United Nations.



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Conference Results/Accomplishments: Roosevelt critics claim that because the President was in failing health (he died just two months after returning from the conference) he granted the Soviets too many concessions and allowed them to tighten their grip on Eastern Europe. In fact the conference successfully laid the groundwork for Germany and Japan to rebuild and recreate themselves as modern democracies, thereby acting as stabilizing forces in Europe and Asia. In addition, the final strategies for the defeat of the Axis powers were agreed to. But perhaps most significantly, the framework and structure of what would become the United Nations came from the meeting at Yalta.