

SSUSH19 – Examine the origins, major developments, and the domestic impact of World War II, including the growth of the federal government.

b. Examine the Pacific Theater including the difficulties the U.S. faced in delivering weapons, food, and medical supplies to troops, the Battle of Midway, Manhattan Project and the dropping of the atomic bombs.

The United States entered World War II after the attack at Pearl Harbor. There were two theaters of war. American forces fought in both the Pacific and in Europe. Fighting in the Pacific Theater presented some extra strategic difficulties and ultimately led to the use of atomic weapons to end the war.

The distance across the Pacific was three times the distance from New York to Great Britain. It could take up to five months for supplies to get from California to Australia. The decision to prioritize the war in Europe sent the best and greatest amount of equipment to Europe. This allocation of resources meant that forces in the Pacific faced outdated equipment and shortages until the United States' industrial capacity could catch up with demand. Additionally, there was little or no infrastructure to transport and store supplies in the Pacific once they arrived in the theater. Finally, the climate of the Pacific region was difficult to manage and caused food supplies to spoil. These conditions led to the Allied policy of Island Hopping across islands that served as landing strips. These locations allowed air-bombardments of Japanese fortifications. The Pacific Theater presented unique challenges for the United States in delivering food, weapons, and medical supplies to troops in the region during World War II.

Headway was made in the Pacific six months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States won a sea battle against the Japanese Navy that was a turning point in World War II. The Japanese tried to trap and sink America's aircraft carriers near Midway Island, which was an American refueling station for ships and airplanes. The United States had gained intelligence information that the attack was coming and lured the Japanese into the waiting American forces. In the Battle at Midway, the United States destroyed four Japanese aircraft carriers while losing only one American carrier. The American victory at Midway is regarded as the most important naval engagement of the Pacific campaign. The success was also a huge morale boost for the United States. The Japanese never recovered from this defeat, which enabled the United States to gain control of other strategic Pacific Islands.

Eventually, the Island Hopping campaign in the Pacific led President Truman to a critical juncture. President Roosevelt had died in early 1945 and Harry Truman was the new President responsible for making the decisions regarding the conduct of the war. Should the United States use a new atomic weapon or would a military invasion of Japan's mainland be necessary to achieve victory in the Pacific? The development of the atomic weapon had been a tightly held secret and would certainly cause significant damage if used in battle.

The Manhattan Project was a code name for a secret research and development program whose goal was to build an atomic weapon during World War II. European scientists who fled Germany in the early 1930s, including Albert Einstein, feared that German physicists were developing an atomic weapon for Hitler. The scientists urged Roosevelt and Churchill to create a similar program. United States General Leslie Groves led the development of numerous research labs, where three atomic weapons were ultimately created. One of the research labs was the Los Alamos facility in New Mexico.

The Los Alamos facility was the location of the first atomic weapon test. Plans for an Allied invasion of Japan were underway and estimates suggested there could be as many as one million Allied casualties. The successful atomic weapon test led to the creation of two working bombs that were subsequently used against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a successful bid to convince the Japanese to surrender. The use of the bombs eliminated the need for an invasion of the Japanese mainland- thus saving countless American lives. The military's use of these atomic bombs led to two important developments. First, the surrender of the Japanese government was secured, which ended World War II. Second, the development of the atomic bomb spurred a new, more dangerous arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The creation of government sponsored and financed research-and-development labs became a model for future weapons development programs. These programs were led by military officers and used research scientists to produce technology necessary for national defense. Similar research-and-development models were used by civilian corporations

for creating goods that could be used by the government and civilians. The mass production of isotopes led to the development of nuclear medicine and the use of atomic energy for electrical power.

Define

Pacific Theater

Battle of Midway

Manhattan Project

- 1. What were the difficulties the U.S. faced in delivering weapons, food, and medical supplies to troops?**
- 2. How did the Battle of Midway impact WWII?**
- 3. What was Los Alamos?**
- 4. What was the Manhattan Project?**
- 5. How did the Manhattan Project impact WWII?**