

The end of the WWII

The final phase of the Second World War unfolded differently in Europe and in Asia but led to a global reshaping of power.

Europe

By 1944–1945, Germany was collapsing under pressure from two sides: the Soviets advancing from the east and the Allies from the west. Major battles such as the Battle of the Bulge failed to reverse German losses. In April 1945, Soviet troops entered Berlin. Adolf Hitler committed suicide on April 30, and shortly after, Germany surrendered unconditionally on **May 8, 1945**, celebrated as **Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day)**.

Asia

Japan, however, continued fighting despite heavy defeats in the Pacific. The Allies prepared for a costly invasion of the Japanese home islands, but the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs — on **Hiroshima** (August 6) and **Nagasaki** (August 9). Combined with the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Japan and invasion of Manchuria, this forced Japan's surrender on **August 15, 1945 (V-J Day)**. The formal signing took place on **September 2** aboard the battleship *USS Missouri*.

Aftermath and Consequences

- **Human cost:** The war caused over 70 million deaths, destroyed entire cities, and left millions displaced. The Holocaust revealed the horrors of genocide on an industrial scale.
- **Political changes:** Fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan collapsed. Trials at Nuremberg and Tokyo sought to hold leaders accountable for war crimes.
- **Global order:** The **United Nations** was founded in October 1945 to foster peace and cooperation. The U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged as the two dominant superpowers, entering into the ideological, political, and military rivalry known as the **Cold War**.
- **Decolonization:** European empires, weakened by the war, began losing control over their colonies, paving the way for independence movements across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.
- **Economic recovery:** The U.S. launched the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe, while Japan underwent occupation and democratic reforms under American guidance.